

In Brief

Minister reviews monsoon preparedness in Mizoram

Aizawl: Prof. Lalnilawma, Minister for Disaster Management and Rehabilitation (DM&R), chaired a high-level coordination meeting in Aizawl on Friday to review preparedness for the upcoming monsoon season in Mizoram. The meeting focused on mitigating potential disasters and streamlining emergency response strategies across the state. While officials from the DM&R Department and the Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Aizawl attended in person, Deputy Commissioners from all other districts participated via video conferencing as Chairmen of their respective District Disaster Management Authorities (DDMA). During the session, Minister Lalnilawma expressed satisfaction with the proactive steps being taken to safeguard the public. “The government is fully prepared to provide rapid assistance in the event of any calamity,” the Minister stated.

Potato Festival Boosts Nagaland Farm Trade

Kohima: The third edition of the Nagaland Potato Festival was held at Jakhama ground in Kohima on Friday with Minister for Horticulture, Salhoutuonuo Kruse attending the event as the special guest. Speaking at the event, Kruse applauded and encouraged the farmers for their immense effort and their contribution towards such an event. The Minister said that such a festival can showcase the state’s agriculture potential where the farmers can have a lot of exposure, tell their stories and connect to the market. The festival, featuring 64 stalls, focused on organic produce, agriculture and local entrepreneurship. It has been organised to boost market access for farmers and promote sustainable and modern farming techniques.

Himanta Says Assam Budget Will Outline Development Roadmap

Guwahati: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has said the first full-fledged annual Budget of the new state government, expected to be presented in July, will lay out the administration’s development plans and policy priorities for the next five years. Speaking to reporters after offering prayers at Batadrava Than in Nagaon district, the Chief Minister said the Budget session of the Assam Assembly is likely to begin on July 5 or 6. Sarma said the annual Budget could not be presented earlier in February or March because the state was preparing for the Assembly elections. “The upcoming Budget will reflect our government’s plans and priorities for the next five years,” the Chief Minister said. He stated that the government has already started consultations with various departments to prepare the Budget and include both pending development projects and suggestions received from people during the election campaign.

Drugs worth over Rs 36 cr destroyed in Nagaland

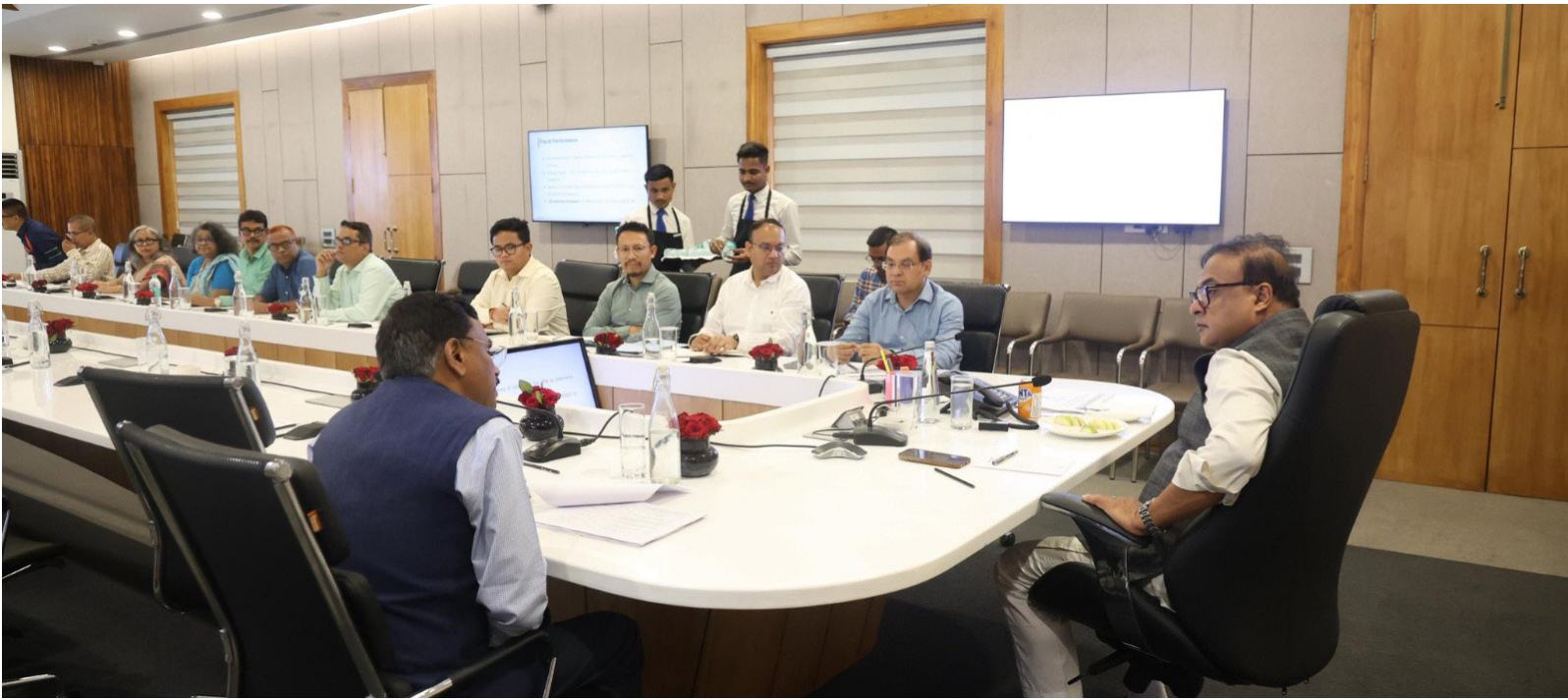
Kohima, May 16: Nagaland police today carried out the disposal of seized narcotic drugs and psychotropic drugs (NDPS) worth over Rs 36.57 crore at a dumping site in Kohima. Superintendent of Police and Member Drug Disposal Committee for State Level Police Stations, Poolicharla Ramanaiah, said that the Drug Disposal Committee has approved the disposal and destruction of NDPS including 8 kgs heroin, 31 kgs opium, and 370 kgs ganja. The operation was carried out following court orders issued under the NDPS Act, he said.



Himanta Biswa Sarma Reviews Key Departments in Six-Hour Meeting to Accelerate ‘Viksit Assam’ Vision

Guwahati, May 16: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Friday said he held a six-hour marathon meeting with officials from multiple departments to accelerate governance and development initiatives aimed at building a “Viksit Assam”. In a post on X, the Chief Minister said the meeting focused on restoring momentum in key government programmes and ensuring faster implementation of development projects under the NDA 3.0 government.

During the meeting, Sarma reviewed the functioning of the Food and Public Distribution Department, particularly the status of paddy procurement from farmers across the state. He directed officials to make the procurement process more farmer-friendly and asked them to improve performance so that farmers receive fair returns for their produce. “I have instructed officials to make the procurement process farmer friendly and to break our own records to ensure that Assam’s Annadatas are fairly rewarded for their hard work,” Sarma said. The Chief Minister also reviewed the financial position of the state with the Finance Department ahead of the presentation of the full



budget. He said discussions were held on the fiscal health of Assam and ways to fulfil promises made by the government to the people. In addition, Sarma assessed the progress of major infrastructure and connectivity proj-

ects under the Public Works Department (PWD), including the flagship Asom Mala scheme. He instructed officials to speed up the construction of roads and bridges while maintaining quality standards to ensure better

connectivity across Assam. “I have asked officials to boost the pace of construction of roads and bridges with focus on quality, so that every part of Assam is well connected,” he said. The Chief Minister added that

with the NDA 3.0 government now functioning in full swing, all departments must work with greater speed and efficiency to implement schemes and projects aimed at building a “New Assam”.

Two Mizoram Men Held in Cachar Over Biometric Drive

Aizawl, May 16: Police in Assam’s Cachar district have arrested two men from Mizoram for allegedly collecting facial biometric data from local residents without proper authorisation during a registration exercise conducted in Silchar. The incident has raised concerns over the handling and collection of sensitive biometric information, particularly from young people who reportedly took part in the exercise without fully understanding how their personal data would be used. According to police, the biometric registration drive was organised earlier this week at a marriage hall in Silchar. Local youths were reportedly invited to participate in facial recognition and biometric scanning sessions in exchange for small payments.

The accused have been identified as Vanlalrinchhana (33) and Raymond Vatha Chozah (34), both residents of Mizoram. Police said the two men had been staying in Silchar for the past several months. Cachar Additional Superintendent of Police (Crime) Rajat Pal said the duo allegedly carried out the exercise without proper authorisation or supporting documents. “They collected biometric data from youths by offering them small amounts of money without proper authorisation or clear documentation,” Pal said. Police said more than 200 residents, most of them youths, had already submitted facial recognition details and biometric impressions before the operation came under police scrutiny. “They collected facial

recognition data and biometric impressions of more than 200 residents, mostly youths, but they are unable to show any valid reason for the exercise,” Pal added. Following initial complaints and scrutiny, police detained the two men for questioning before formally arresting them. A case has been registered at Silchar Sadar police station under cheating charges along with relevant provisions of the Information Technology Act. Investigators are now examining the nature of the alleged connection with an American multinational company that was reportedly mentioned during the registration process. According to police, several youths who participated in the exercise claimed they were told that the registration

was part of a “special scheme” linked to a US-based multinational firm. Authorities are trying to verify whether the accused had any official association with the company they allegedly referred to during the biometric collection process. The incident has triggered wider concerns over unauthorised collection of biometric and facial recognition data. Such information is considered highly sensitive because it includes unique personal identifiers that can be misused if not handled under proper legal safeguards and data protection measures. Police have not yet disclosed the exact purpose behind the data collection exercise or how the information gathered from participants was intended to be used.

Potato Festival Boosts Nagaland Farm Trade



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Speaking at the event, Kruse applauded and encouraged the farmers for their immense effort and their contribution towards such an event.

The Minister said that such a festival can showcase the state’s agriculture potential where the farmers can have a lot of exposure, tell their stories and connect to the market. The festival, featuring 64 stalls, fo-

cused on organic produce, agriculture and local entrepreneurship. It has been organised to boost market access for farmers and promote sustainable and modern farming techniques.

The event also showcased sale of local farm products, handicrafts and traditional games and more. “Honoured to be part of the 3rd Edition of the Nagaland Potato Festival 2026 at Jakhama Village. This festival is more than a celebration of potatoes, it is a celebration of our farmers, our land and the growing potential of Nagaland’s agri-trade sector,” Kruse later took to social media to state.

Minister reviews monsoon preparedness in Mizoram

Aizawl, May 16: Prof. Lalnilawma, Minister for Disaster Management and Rehabilitation (DM&R), chaired a high-level coordination meeting in Aizawl on Friday to review preparedness for the upcoming monsoon season in Mizoram. The meeting focused on mitigating potential disasters and streamlining emergency response strategies across the state. While officials from the DM&R Department and the Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Aizawl attended in person, Deputy Commissioners from all other districts participated via video conferencing as Chairmen of their respective District Disaster Management Authorities (DDMA). During the session, Minister Lalnilawma expressed satisfaction with the proactive steps being taken to safeguard the public. “The government is

fully prepared to provide rapid assistance in the event of any calamity,” the Minister stated. He commended the districts for establishing District Focal Persons, developing District Monsoon Action Plans, and conducting thorough Resource Assessments. He emphasized that inter-departmental synergy and swift action are non-negotiable for ensuring public safety, adding, “Through our collective efforts, we are well-equipped to face the challenges of the monsoon.” Udit Prakash Rai, Secretary and Commissioner (DM&R), provided an update on major initiatives undertaken over the past six months, including: National Landslide Risk Mitigation Project -- currently active in Aizawl, Saiha, Serchhip, and Champai districts. National Earthquake Risk Mitigation Project: Ongoing in Lunglei, Saiha, Cham-

phai, and Aizawl districts. Post Disaster Need Assessment (PDNA): Being implemented across Mizoram to streamline recovery efforts. The Secretary highlighted this recently launched mobile application, “Khuarel App”, which allows citizens to report disasters in real-time, and urged the public to utilize it effectively. The meeting also served as a forum to discuss the utilization and prioritization of projects under the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) and State Disaster Mitigation Fund (SDMF). District Deputy Commissioners presented progress reports on their local mitigation activities, shared administrative challenges, and offered suggestions for enhancing disaster resilience at the grassroots level. The meeting concluded with a call for heightened vigilance.

Manipur violence probe panel gets 6-month extension

Imphal, May 16: The Centre has given another six-month extension, till November 20, 2026, to a Commission of Inquiry to submit its report on the probe into the 2023 Manipur violence that claimed more than 260 lives, a government notification said.

The three-member panel, now headed by former Supreme Court judge Balbir Singh Chauhan, was formed on June 4, 2023, in the aftermath of the ethnic violence that broke out in the northeastern state in May that year.

It was initially headed by former Gauhati High Court chief justice Ajai Lamba, who resigned

with effect from February 28. Justice Chauhan took charge on March 1.

According to the notification, the commission shall submit its report to the Centre “as soon as possible but not later than the 20th November, 2026”.

The panel is probing the sequence of events and facts relating to the ethnic violence that broke out in the state on May 3, 2023, after a “Tribal Solidarity March” was organised in the hill districts.

The scope of the inquiry includes ascertaining whether there were any lapses or dereliction of duty on the part of any of the authorities or individuals responsible.

Himanta Says Assam Budget Will Outline Development Roadmap

Guwahati, May 18: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has said the first full-fledged annual Budget of the new state government, expected to be presented in July, will lay out the administration’s development plans and policy priorities for the next five years. Speaking to reporters after offering prayers at Batadrava Than in Nagaon district, the Chief Minister said the Budget session of the Assam Assembly is likely to begin on July 5 or 6. Sarma said the annual Budget could not be presented earlier in February or March because the state was preparing for the Assembly elections. “The upcoming Budget will reflect our government’s plans and priorities for the next five years,” the Chief Minister said. He stated that the government has already started consul-

tations with various departments to prepare the Budget and include both pending development projects and suggestions received from people during the election campaign. “There are projects we had planned earlier but could not implement. At the same time, we received valuable suggestions from the public during our campaign. These will also be reflected in the Budget,” he said. The Chief Minister further said that the government remains committed to implementing the promises made in the election manifesto of the Bharatiya Janata Party. According to Sarma, the party’s 2021 election manifesto had certain limitations because of the COVID-19 pandemic, but the new government now plans to focus on wider developmental initiatives across different sectors. Earlier in the day, the Chief



Minister visited Batadrava Than, the birthplace of medieval saint-scholar Srimanta Sankardeva. The visit marked Sarma’s first official programme outside Guwahati after taking oath for a second consecutive term as Chief Minister. Later in the evening, after returning to Guwahati, Sarma chaired separate review meet-

Over 23,000 affected as heavy rain triggers urban flooding in Assam

Guwahati, May 16: More than 23,000 people have been affected by urban flooding in different parts of Assam following heavy rainfall over the past few days, while the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has warned of more rain and thunderstorms across several districts in the state. Officials said urban flooding has been reported in Kamrup (Metropolitan), Cachar and Sribhumidistricts, disrupting normal life in many low-lying areas.

ings with officials of the Finance Department and the Food, Public Distribution and Consumer Affairs Department. According to the Chief Minister’s Office, discussions during the finance review meeting focused on improving Assam’s economic strength, reviewing fiscal indicators and increasing the state’s economic resilience. During the separate departmental review, the Chief Minister directed officials to speed up Aadhaar seeding and e-KYC verification of beneficiaries. He also asked the department to accelerate the distribution of essential commodities, including pulses, sugar and salt, and strengthen paddy procurement across the state. Sarma reiterated the government’s commitment to building a transparent and technology-driven food security system for the people of Assam.

The primary suspect in the Nagaon Morikolong robbery case was gravely hurt in a traffic accident

Guwahati, May 16: During a late-night operation near Borghat in Nagaon, a police car collided with the main culprit in the Morikolong robbery case in Nagaon town, seriously injuring him. Rajibur Rahman, a native of Lakhimpur who was detained in relation to the robbery case, has been identified as the injured accused. A late-night collision occurred between a police car and another vehicle as a team of Nagaon Police were searching for the stolen gold with the accused, according to sources. Rajibur Rahman was seriously hurt in the collision, and it is believed that both of his legs were severely damaged.



Officer Biman Gogoi was one of two Nagaon Police officers hurt in the crash. Rajibur Rahman is presently receiving treatment at Nagaon Medical College Hospital, and all the injured individuals were sent for medical attention. According to police officials, the robbery case is still being investigated.

Thadou Inpi Manipur calls for a stop to misrepresentations and states that the slain church leaders were Thadou



Imphal, May 16: The three church leaders who were slain in an ambush in Manipur's Kangpokpi district on May 13 were members of the Thadou community, not Kuki, according to Thadou Inpi Manipur (TIM), which has urged people and media outlets to refrain from misrepresenting their identities. Following the deaths of Pastor Paogoulou, Rev. Kaigoulou, and Dr. Rev. Vumthang Sithlou, head of the Thadou Baptist Association India (TBAI), the Thadou community was overcome with sadness and rage, according to a statement from TIM. In what the organization called a "targeted attack" in Kotlen in the Kangpokpi area, five more people were hurt. TIM claims that the murdered

leaders were mistakenly recognized as "Kuki" by a number of people and media outlets, adding to the grief and suffering of the devastated Thadou community. Regardless of whether it was the result of ignorance, false information, or intentional provocation, the organization declared that depicting the victims as Kuki was "inaccurate and deeply offensive." TIM asked everyone involved to honor the unique identity of the Thadou people and to refer to the victims only as Thadou rather than "Kuki" or "Thadou-Kuki." Referring to Dr. Rev. Vumthang Sithlou, TIM claimed that he had consistently upheld his identity as Thadou. The organisation cited an incident related to the "Kuki

Zo Flag" hoisting ceremony held at the KCC Community Hall on May 9, 2026, where his name was allegedly listed as a minister for the event. TIM stated that Rev Vumthang later clarified that he had neither consented to participate in nor attended the programme and had rejected any alleged misrepresentation of his identity. The organisation further claimed that Dr. Rev Vumthang and the TBAI leadership had been working towards the formation of a United Baptist Convention (UBC) involving the Thadou Baptist Association and several other Baptist bodies without including the term "Kuki" in the proposed name of the convention.

According to TIM, some Kuki church groups later withdrew from the initiative over disagreements related to the omission of the term "Kuki" from the proposed convention name. The organisation said the attack took place while the victims were returning to Kangpokpi after attending a UBC meeting in Chura-chandpur. TIM also announced that the three slain church leaders had been declared "Thadou Martyrs" by the organisation. It further alleged that some Kuki groups were attempting to politicise the incident and interfere in matters concerning Thadou identity and community affairs. The killings have further heightened tensions in the region amid the continuing ethnic sensitivities in Manipur.

Meghalaya Youth Congress Demonstrates Shillong's Alleged NEET UG 2026 Paper Leak

Shillong, May 16: In response to the NEET UG 2026 exam paper leak, the Meghalaya Pradesh Youth Congress protested at Congress Bhawan in Shillong, calling on the Indian government and the National Testing Agency to be transparent and take corrective action. Concerns about the validity of competitive exams were becoming more widespread across the country at the time of the protest. The demonstrators said that parents' and students' trust has been damaged by frequent anomalies in admission exams at the national level. Raising protests against the NTA and the

BJP-led federal government, they said that the problem was not political in origin but rather represented a grave crisis harming the goals of students nationwide who were getting ready for medical admission exams. The party demanded responsibility, openness, and immediate institutional reforms to rebuild public confidence in the administration of national exams, claiming that the purported leak revealed significant flaws in the testing system. Speaking to the crowd, Meghalaya Pradesh Congress Committee president Vincent H. Pala attacked the BJP.

The center approves the expansion of Agartala Government Medical College with Rs 273.46 crore

Agartala, May 16: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha said on Friday that the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has approved Rs 273.46 crore for the infrastructural development and extension of Agartala Government Medical College. In a social media post, the Chief Minister thanked Union Health and Family Welfare Minister J.P. Nadda and Prime Minister Narendra Modi for granting the significant financial aid intended to improve the state's healthcare system and medical education. Saha said on Facebook, "I would like to thank Hon. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi Ji and Hon. Union Health and Family Welfare Minister Shri J.P. Nadda Ji for approving Rs 273.46 crore for Agartala Government Medical College's infrastructural expansion. According to the



Chief Minister, the sanctioned funds would enable the state government to increase 100 MBBS seats and 83 Postgraduate seats across 19 critical and speciality disciplines from the academic session 2026-27. With the addition of these seats, Tripura will have a total of 550 MBBS seats (in three medical colleges) and 196 postgraduate seats,

marking a record increase in medical education capacity in the last four years, said Saha, who also holds the Health and Family Welfare portfolio.

"We are committed to improving healthcare services for citizens as well as strengthening medical education opportunities for young aspirants in the state," he added. (IANS)

The Army opens a military transit facility in Arunachal Pradesh

Itanagar, May 16: In an effort to improve troop welfare and operational readiness in forward regions, the Indian Army opened a new transit facility for soldiers at Sigar Military Station in the East Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh on Friday, May 15. The facility was created by the Spearhead Gunners under the auspices of the Spearhead Division, according to an official release, to offer soldiers traveling to and from isolated operations zones a pleasant and effective transit stop. Named Ashiyana, the facility has been equipped with essential amenities designed to enhance the convenience, morale, and overall well-being of troops deployed in strategically important frontier regions. Army officials said the initiative reflects the force's continued focus on building welfare-oriented infrastructure alongside maintaining operational readiness in challenging terrains. Senior military officers present during the inauguration highlighted the importance of robust support infrastructure in helping soldiers perform their duties with greater efficiency, confidence, and combat effectiveness. The newly inaugurated facility is expected to significantly improve logistical support and living conditions for troops operating in remote areas along the frontier.

The Arunachal Cabinet has approved a stronger ILP system, new exam regulations, and austerity measures

Itanagar, May 16: On Wednesday, the Arunachal Pradesh Cabinet, headed by Chief Minister Pema Khandu, made a number of significant decisions pertaining to government spending, recruitment tests, Inner Line Permit (ILP) enforcement, urban development, and tourist marketing. The adoption of the "Arunachal Pradesh Public Examination (Measures for Prevention of Unfair Means in Recruitment) Rules, 2026" was a significant Cabinet decision. The new regulations are intended to prevent unfair recruiting exam practices and question paper leaks. The Arunachal Pradesh Public Examination Act, 2024 will be implemented with the aid of the new regulations, which will also provide mechanisms for tracking, reporting, and looking into exam-related offenses. Additionally, new directions to improve the ILP system under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873, were accepted by the Cabinet. To stop fraudulent permits, the state will implement a computerized e-ILP platform with QR-code verification at checkpoints. Aadhaar-based



identification, obligatory police verification, and sponsor responsibility for work permits are further features of the updated system. Stricter penalties for ILP infractions, including a two-year ban for offenders, were declared by the government. District task teams and surprise inspections at markets, entrance ports, and workplaces will be carried out on a regular basis to guarantee proper implementation. The Cabinet also announced several austerity measures following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call for

reducing unnecessary expenditure and conserving resources. These measures include a 50% reduction in convoys of the Chief Minister, Deputy Chief Minister and ministers, along with a one-year ban on foreign travel by ministers and government officials. The government also adopted a "Virtual First" policy for official meetings and decided not to purchase new vehicles except for emergency services. Departments have been directed to fully adopt e-office systems by March 2027 and maintain air-conditioner tempera-

tures at 24°C or above to reduce electricity consumption. In the urban sector, the Cabinet approved the Arunachal Pradesh Tenancy Rules, 2026 for regulation of rental housing through Rent Authorities and Rent Tribunals. The Cabinet also approved the Pineapple Expo at Bagra in West Siang district as an annual event to promote agro-tourism and food processing. Additionally, financial assistance for gallantry award winners from the state was increased, with Param Vir Chakra recipients now set to receive Rs 1 crore.

At Leimaching Hill in Imphal East, locals and women demonstrate against reported extensive earth cutting



Imphal, May 16: On May 15, locals and women's organizations in the Imphal East district of Manipur mounted a demonstration in the Leimaching foothills, denouncing the purported extensive earth cutting occurring there and calling for prompt government action to safeguard the environment. Together with the local Meira Paibis, the Kshetrigao Nupi Lamjing Lup organized the protest.

At the foothills of Leimaching, protesters from towns close to the Nongmaiching forest range assembled with signs that read, "Save Leimaching Save Environment to Protect Ecosystem." The demonstrators claimed that ongoing, uncontrolled soil excavation at Leimaching Hill had seriously harmed the environment and endangered the local ecology. They pleaded with the authorities to halt all excavation work at the location right away.

Speaking during the demonstration, Pangambam Anita, Secretary of the Kshetrigao Nupi Lamjing Lup, stated that despite rising public concern, unregulated earth cutting at Leimaching persists despite many awareness efforts on environmental preservation and climate change. Anita questioned if the excavation was lawful and inquired

about the rules governing the cutting of the ground. The hill has been guarded by the local people for years, she said, and they would not permit its demolition. She further said that if soil is required for development-related works, it should be sourced from authorised locations rather than from hills conserved by local communities. Anita informed that memorandums have already been submitted to the Chief Minister and the Imphal East Deputy Commissioner seeking immediate intervention in the matter. Expressing concern over the continued excavation, she warned that Leimaching could soon lose its natural form if the earth cutting remains unchecked. She also stressed the ecological importance of hills in maintaining clean air and climate balance. The protesters demanded that the authorities publicly disclose who authorised the excavation and revoke any permissions granted for earth cutting at the hill.

A shipment of illicit gold valued at Rs 3 crore was found at the Delhi-Tripura Sampark Kranti Express in Bongaigaon

Dispur, May 16: The Government Railway Police (GRP) of Bongaigaon intercepted a massive shipment of illicit gold bars valued at around Rs 3 crore from the Delhi-Tripura bound Sampark Kranti Express train as part of a significant operation against interstate smuggling. Police sources claim that the operation was started in response to particular intelligence information about the smuggling of gold via the railroad. In response to the tip, GRP staff searched the train when it was traveling through the Bongaigaon area. During the search, the police reportedly noticed the suspicious behaviour and movements of a passenger. Upon questioning and checking his luggage, the officials recovered a large quantity of gold bars concealed inside the bag. The accused has been identified as Prabin Singha Rao. He has been detained at the Bongaigaon GRP police station and is currently being interrogated in



connection with the case. Police said further investigation is underway to determine the source and intended destination of the seized gold consignment.

Efforts are also being made to identify other individuals linked to the

suspected interstate gold smuggling network. The seizure of such a large quantity of illegal gold has triggered widespread attention across the region, with investigators suspecting the involvement of a larger organised smuggling syndicate.

A resolution of no confidence was made against the chairperson of the Dimapur Municipal Council

Kohima, May 16: On Friday, May 15, officials announced that Hukheto Yephthomi, the chairwoman of the Dimapur Municipal Council, was the target of a no-confidence motion. Two council members jointly proposed the proposal, which was supported by 12 of the 23 elected members of the civic

body, including the deputy chairwoman. A written notice stating the desire to initiate the no-confidence resolution was received on May 11 in accordance with the requirements of the Nagaland Municipal Act, 2023, according to an official announcement issued by Tinojongshi Chang.

CM Inaugurates India’s First Digital and AI-Powered Bank Branch in Guwahati

Guwahati, May 16: Taking a major leap in the digital and AI ecosystem, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma today inaugurated India’s first AI-powered “phygital” banking branch of Slice Small Finance Bank at GS Road in Guwahati. It may be noted that this next-generation banking space blends physical and digital services seamlessly through AI-enabled self-service kiosks, paperless cash deposits and withdrawals, and streamlined digital onboarding. The branch is designed to make banking more accessible, and inclusive for customers across segments, combining physical trust with digital convenience. Through an expanding physical presence and robust digital infrastructure, the bank will reportedly extend access to responsible credit, savings, and payment solutions to individuals and small businesses; particularly those who have historically had limited access to modern banking services. Speaking on the occasion, Chief Minister Sarma said that this new digital and AI enabled branch represents another step toward building a more inclusive financial ecosystem across urban and underserved communities alike. He said that the opening of the bank with its unique services represent the right kind of investment that the State government has been working for quite sometimes. He also said that that the partnership that the government has



with the Slice Small Finance Bank is the right kind of collaboration that Assam needs and deserve.

Chief Minister Sarma also said that inauguration of India’s first digital and AI-powered branch in Guwahati also speaks about Assam’s readiness in supporting and encouraging the future of Indian banking. Speaking about the unique advantage of this digital and AI powered branch, Sarma said that the customers in the bank would be able to access to credit directly through the UPI interface without a separate application for the same. This would help small store owners, woman entrepreneurs getting access to working capital for their business ventures on their phones in minutes. He also attributed this development to financial inclusion in its most practical and meaningful

form. Dr. Sarma on the occasion said that the State government is committed to making Assam a destination for responsible, technology-driven investment. He also said that government is relentless in creating conditions where businesses can thrive, where young people can find opportunity, and where every resident of this state has access to the financial tools they need to build for a better life. The Chief Minister thanked the bank authorities for setting up this new age bank branch in Guwahati.

Former Minister Health and Family Welfare Ashok Singhal, MD and CEO, Slice Small Finance Bank Rajan Bajaj, MD and CEO, NPCI (National Payments Corporation of India) Dilip Asbe among others were present on the occasion.

AASU Threatens Agitation Over Price Rise in Assam

Guwahati, May 16: The All Assam Students’ Union today criticised both the Centre and the Assam government over the continuous rise in prices of essential commodities, alleging that people across the state are facing increasing financial hardship due to unchecked inflation. In a statement issued from its headquarters at Gauhati University, the student organisation said the sharp increase in the prices of daily necessities has badly affected common people, particularly middle-class and economically weaker families. AASU president Utpal Sharma and general secretary Samiran Phukan said the rising prices have created an unbearable bur-

den on ordinary citizens while both the central and state governments have failed to provide relief. “The market has been set on fire due to the abnormal rise in prices of essential commodities,” the organisation said in the statement, adding that the governments have remained “indifferent and inactive” despite growing public difficulties. According to AASU, the prices of rice, pulses, edible oil, milk, sugar and vegetables have increased sharply in recent months. The organisation said the continued rise in prices has severely affected household budgets and pushed many families into financial stress. The student body also raised concern over the increasing

price of commercial LPG cylinders. It said small hotels, roadside eateries, restaurants and tea stalls are struggling to manage operational costs because of the price rise. AASU further claimed that hostels in educational institutions are also facing serious financial pressure due to higher cooking and food expenses. The organisation additionally pointed to the rise in petrol and diesel prices, stating that it has further increased transportation costs and contributed to overall inflation in the market. AASU alleged that inflation increased further after the completion of elections in five states and accused both the Centre and the Assam government of

failing to protect people from the economic crisis. Referring to the weakening value of the Indian rupee against the US dollar, the organisation also expressed concern over the country’s broader economic condition. It said recent calls for austerity by national leaders have added to public anxiety at a time when many families are already struggling with daily expenses. Reiterating its demand, AASU called for immediate government intervention to control prices and provide relief to the public. The organisation warned that if corrective measures are not taken soon, it would be compelled to launch democratic protests across the state.

Samthang Festival Highlights Mizoram’s Push for Ginger Processing Units

Aizawl, May 16: Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma today attended the Ginger Festival organised by the local community at Samthang Community Hall in Khawzawl district, where he stressed the need to promote organic ginger cultivation and strengthen ginger processing and value addition in the state. Addressing the programme, the Chief Minister said the government was steadily preparing to improve the ginger sector in Mizoram through sustainable farming and better processing infrastructure. He said Mizoram ginger is known for its high quality and is suitable for medicinal use because of its rich essential oil content and low fibre level. Highlighting its market potential, Lalduhoma said the state government had secured approval from the Ministry of Development of North East-

ern Region (DoNER) for the “Mizoram Ginger USP – Sustainable Cultivation & Value Chain Development Project” worth around Rs. 190 crore. According to the Chief Minister, Rs. 30.13 crore has already been sanctioned for setting up ginger processing units in the state. He informed that the main processing unit would be established at Mualkawi in Champhai district. Supporting units are also planned at Tualcheng, Vaphai and Zotlang to benefit ginger farmers across the region. Lalduhoma said sustainable and organic farming practices are important not only for improving the ginger market but also for protecting soil health. He also underlined the importance of processing and value addition in the sector, stating that farmers earn lower returns when

raw ginger is sold directly without processing. The Chief Minister said proper value addition would help reduce wastage and improve income opportunities for growers. Dr. KC Lalmsalsawmzaupa, Adviser to the Chief Minister, said the success of ginger procurement in the state was mainly due to the efforts of farmers from Samthang and nearby areas. He added that the government had already spent around Rs. 18 crore this year on support price procurement for ginger farmers. The programme was chaired by Pu Lianzika, Organising Chairman, while welcome remarks were delivered by Pu Lalchungnunga, VCP. Pu Lalparliana, President of the Ginger Association, also addressed the gathering during the event.

No-confidence motion moved against Dimapur Municipal Council chairperson

Kohima, May 16: A no-confidence motion has been moved against Hukheto Yepthomi, chairperson of the Dimapur Municipal Council. According to officials, the motion has been supported by 12 elected members of the council, including the deputy chairperson, out of a total of 23 elected members in the civic body. The proposal was jointly submitted by two council members seeking the removal of the chairperson through a no-confidence motion under the provisions of the Nagaland Municipal Act, 2023.



An official notification issued by Tinojongshi Chang stated that a written notice expressing the intention to move the motion was received on May 11. Following the submission of the notice, the Deputy Commissioner has convened a special meeting of the elected members of the council on May 22 at the DMC office in Dimapur. The meeting has been called to discuss and decide on the no-confidence motion against the chairperson. Officials said only elected members of the council will be allowed to participate in the voting process during the special session. Ex-officio members and nominated members will not be allowed to vote, in accordance with the provisions laid down under the Nagaland Municipal Act, 2023.

NE development key priority of Modi govt: Union minister Bambhaniya

Aizawl, May 16: Union Minister of State for Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, Nimuben Jayantibhai Bambhaniya said the development of Northeastern states is a key priority for the Narendra Modi government, which remains fully committed to delivering infrastructure and social welfare schemes to the last person. During her visit to Khawzawl district in Mizoram, Bambhaniya said the central government is committed to inclusive development. She emphasised that the government’s primary goal was to bring progress to every village, family, region, and citizen. During the tour, Bambhaniya inspected National Highway 6 and issued directives to NHIDCL officials regarding road construction and timely maintenance. Following this, she visited KVK Khawzawl, where she praised the innovations in the agricultural sector and

extended special congratulations to the five local farmers who have been honoured with national awards. She also suggested organizing larger agricultural exhibitions in the future to enhance the knowledge of school children. To strengthen the food security system, the Minister inspected the PDS godown at Kawnzar and the Fair Price Shop at Electric Veng. During her visit to the shop, the Minister engaged in direct dialogue with beneficiaries to verify the effective use of digital authentication for food distribution. She further emphasized the necessity of maintaining adequate monsoon stocks to ensure the smooth and uninterrupted availability of food grains for the community. While reviewing health services, she inspected the laboratory constructed under Ayushman Bharat (PM-ABHIM) at the District Hospital and discussed the process for the early commencement of the Jan Aushadhi center. Finally, she visited the Anganwadi Centre at Electric Veng and Little Flower Primary School, where she met with teachers

Seychelles Envoy Meets Assam Governor on Bilateral Ties

Guwahati, May 16: The High Commissioner of Seychelles to India, Harisoa Lalatiana Accouche, calls on Assam Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya, at Lok Bhavan in Guwahati today and discussed issues of mutual interest between Assam and Seychelles. Welcoming the High Commissioner, Governor Acharya said that Seychelles is globally admired for its natural beauty, ecological richness and unique biodiversity. Drawing attention of Seychelles envoy, Acharya said that Assam located in the northeastern part of India, is also

ple ties and deepen mutual understanding. He observed that despite geographical distances, Assam and Seychelles share common concerns and interests in areas such as biodiversity conservation, environmental protection and sustainable development. Acharya also underscored the importance of collaboration in ecological preservation, sustainable tourism practices, education and skill development. He welcomed the possibility of academic exchanges and opportunities for students from Seychelles to pursue studies



renowned for its scenic beauty, vibrant cultural heritage and rich biodiversity. Highlighting Assam’s strengths, the Governor said that the state is home to the world-famous Kaziranga National Park, known for the one-horned rhinoceros. Moreover, the sprawling tea gardens, the mighty Brahmaputra, unique muga silk, colourful festivals like Bihu and a deep spiritual and cultural heritage are the high points of Assam. He noted that the state offers immense potential as a destination for tourism and cultural engagement. The Governor expressed optimism about the scope for cultural exchange programmes between Assam and Seychelles to strengthen people-to-people

in educational institutions in Assam. The Governor further highlighted the rapid transformation taking place in Assam under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, particularly in the sectors like infrastructure, connectivity, education and economic growth. He stated that enhanced air, rail, road and inland waterway connectivity has opened new vistas for international engagement and partnerships. The High Commissioner of Seychelles invited the Governor to visit Seychelles as both of them expressed hope for a long-lasting friendship and meaningful cooperation between Assam and Seychelles in the coming days.

ZSI researchers discover two new spider species in Nagaland forests

Kohima, May 16: Researchers from the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) have discovered two new species of lace-sheet-weaver spiders from the forested hills of Nagaland and documented a major range extension of another species. The findings, published in the international journal Zootaxa, were made during a pre-monsoon faunal survey conducted in Peren and Tseminyu districts. The newly identified species belong to the genus Psecchus and have been named Psecchus ntu and Psecchus phenshunyu, after the villages of Ntu and Phenshunyu where they were discovered. These spiders are known for constructing large, horizontal sheet-like webs in humid forest habitats. They possess elongated and slightly flattened bodies along with long, slender legs, especially the front pair that helps them move swiftly across their webs. The species were found inhabiting shaded forest areas, rocky crevices, and spaces beneath rocks and tree roots. In addition to the new discoveries, researchers also recorded Psecchus himalayanus in Nagaland for the first time, extending its previously known Himalayan range into the Indo-Burma biodiversity hotspot of Northeast India. One of the most remarkable obser-

ventions during the study was a male P. himalayanus sharing a web with a female P. phenshunyu — a rare example of heterospecific cohabitation among psechrid spiders. The study was led by arachnologists Dr. Puthoor Pattammal Sudhin, Shouvik Mali and Dr. Souvik Sen. The team also acknowledged the support of local spider enthusiasts and the cooperation of villagers from Ntu and Phenshunyu. With these additions, India now has nine known species of Psecchus, many of which have highly restricted and fragmented distributions. Researchers believe that many more undiscovered species may still exist in the remote forests of the region.

No-confidence motion moved against Dimapur Municipal Council chairperson

Dimapur, May 16: The Dimapur district administration has issued a notice convening a special meeting of the elected members of the Dimapur Municipal Council (DMC) on May 22 for consideration of a motion of no-confidence against the incumbent Chairperson of the council Hukheto Yepthomi. According to the notice issued by the Deputy Commissioner of Dimapur, Dr. Tinojongshi Chang, the motion was initiated after 12 out of the 23 elected members of the DMC submitted a notice of intention to move the no-confidence motion. The notice was delivered by two elected members of the council and was received by the Deputy Commissioner. The notice further stated that the mo-

tion was scrutinized and found to be in conformity with the procedural and substantive requirements laid down under Chapter-II, Section 15 (1) and (2) of the Nagaland Municipal Act, 2023, including the requirement of support by not less than the statutorily mandated number of elected members. Following the verification, the Deputy Commissioner expressed satisfaction that the motion was procedurally valid and warranted the convening of a special meeting for consideration of the motion. The special meeting has been scheduled to be held at 11 am on May 22 at the office of the Dimapur Municipal Council, and elected members of the DMC have been directed to attend the meeting.



ment of the Jan Aushadhi center. Finally, she visited the Anganwadi Centre at Electric Veng and Little Flower Primary School, where she met with teachers

and students, reiterating the government’s priority to create an excellent and barrier-free learning environment for children.

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The Lack of Preparedness for Emergencies

Natural disasters, medical crises, and sudden accidents often expose how unprepared individuals and communities are for emergencies. Basic awareness about first aid, evacuation procedures, and emergency response remains limited. Many households lack even simple emergency plans or essential supplies. Public spaces and institutions, too, are not

always equipped to handle crises efficiently. Preparedness is frequently ignored until disaster strikes, turning manageable situations into larger tragedies. Building a culture of preparedness requires awareness campaigns, regular drills, and stronger community participation. Prevention and readiness are as important as response.

Hollow ceremony: An analysis of why tensions between the US and China persist despite Trump’s visit

This week, the presidents of China and the United States of America spent more than a day and a half in Beijing praising one another, discussing ways to strengthen their relationship, and seemingly putting aside their rivalry for world leadership. However, the harsh reality of US-China relations were once again evident as US President Donald Trump left the Chinese capital on Friday afternoon. For all of the scripted attempts at bonhomie, there is no evidence that either the US or China got the other to move on the key concerns that the two nations are wrestling with at the time. As a result, the conflicts that underlie this relationship are still simmering. Xi Jinping, the president of China, talked about making sure that the US and China avoid falling into the “Thucydides Trap,” which is the notion that a developing power opposing an established hegemon will inevitably lead to conflict. In response, Mr. Trump praised Mr. Xi as a great leader, expressed gratitude to his host, and discussed raising bilateral ties to previously unheard-of levels. The leaders of the IT and business world were with Mr. Trump as they discussed growing trade and investment links. However, Mr. Trump and Mr. Xi were unable to even agree on a



joint statement despite their several walks in picturesque locations. Since Tehran has shown the limits of Washington’s hard power, ending the war on Iran on a dignified basis is currently the US’s top foreign policy goal. US officials have been stating

for weeks that they want China to be more proactive in pressuring Iran to reopen the Strait of Hormuz. However, China made it apparent during Mr. Trump’s visit that it blames America for the problem even if it wants the Hormuz Strait to open and the

war to finish. It hasn’t expressed any intention of pressuring Iran to compromise on what Tehran considers to be its fundamental interests. Beijing’s main demand was for the US to reduce its military backing for Taiwan, but the US showed no signs of doing so. Even if their tit-for-tat use of rising tariffs last year is simply on hold for the time being, Mr. Trump told reporters on his trip back to Washington that the two presidents had not discussed their tariff fight at all. Remarkably, there was little convergence in the comments released by the two sides regarding the talks: the Chinese readout did not include the White House’s assertions that Beijing agreed to purchase US oil and that the presidents agreed to reduce Chinese fentanyl risks to the US. However, it was evident that neither party wished to further damage their already contentious relationship. That might be a small victory. A furious confrontation between the world’s two most powerful countries is not something that an unstable planet can afford. However, a partnership that is sustainable cannot be replaced by an uneasy understanding. The US-China relationship is no more stable than it was before two days of fanfare.

Sustainable development can be achieved through efficient information flow



Development initiatives aim to enhance people’s quality of life by improving social welfare, healthcare, education, infrastructure, and employment prospects. However, poor information flow among stakeholders is a major reason why many projects fall short of long-term success. Misunderstandings, mistrust, and ineffective participation are frequently caused by a communication gap between government agencies, donors, local authorities, implementing organizations, and beneficiaries. The sustainability of development projects is thus called into question. Governance in the contemporary state system involves more than just formulating policies and making choices; it also involves communicating those decisions to the general public. There are two ways to measure a state’s effectiveness: real governance and public perception. Citizens may view even successful projects as failures if there is a mismatch between these two aspects. The Informational Flow Theory provides a better understanding of this issue. The idea states that state information

passes via three crucial phases. First, decisions are finalized during the policy-making step. The public is supplied with an interpretation of those decisions at the second stage of communication. People comprehend and react to the information during the third step, known as reception. Crises typically arise in the second stage. The entire information flow breaks down if communication is still poor, ambiguous, or politically biased. In development undertakings, this reality is extremely pertinent. Even with sufficient finance, highly qualified personnel, and sophisticated planning, a project may nevertheless fail due to inadequate communication. Locals frequently don’t get adequate information about project goals, execution methods, or anticipated results. The communities who are immediately impacted are often not consulted when decisions are made at the highest level. As a result, when external assistance ceases, recipients could feel left out of the process and lose interest in continuing the project. The “top down” approach to development

planning is one prevalent issue. International donors and government officials frequently base project designs on statistics reports rather than local realities. Policymakers may not receive accurate field-level information because of institutional carelessness or bureaucratic obstacles. However, community input is frequently disregarded or given little weight. As a result, there is a gap between the creation of policies and the realities on the ground. For instance, when planners fail to take into account local cultural customs, environmental factors, or economic capabilities, irrigation projects, rural housing schemes, or sanitation programs may not succeed. Lack of transparency is another significant problem. Beneficiaries in many developing nations are unaware of how decisions are made or how project budgets are distributed. When information is not freely disseminated, corruption, political influence, and resource abuse become simpler. This undermines community involvement and public trust, both of which are essential for sustainability. Development

ment should foster a sense of ownership among people in addition to building infrastructure. The information gap is further widened by digital inequality. Rural and marginalized populations frequently lack internet connection, digital literacy, or technology resources, despite the fact that many development agencies now use digital platforms for communication. Important information consequently does not get to those who need it most. When vulnerable populations are left out of communication channels, sustainable development cannot be accomplished. In many development projects around the world, the effects of inadequate information flow are evident. Water infrastructures are abandoned, roads stay underutilized, and social programs lose their efficacy when donors stop contributing. Communities fail to acquire a sense of accountability for project upkeep in the absence of effective communication and local involvement. Sustainability requires not just financial continuity but social acceptance and participatory governance as well. Development professionals must give priority to participatory communication in order to overcome this obstacle. From the planning phase to the evaluation phase, local communities ought to be involved. Information should move both ways: from people to policymakers and from policymakers to people. Accountability and trust can be increased by regular consultative sessions, open reporting, communication in the local language, and community monitoring mechanisms. Additionally, fostering digital inclusiveness and bolstering grassroots institutions might aid in closing communication gaps. Therefore, development is about empowering people rather than just providing services. A project that disregards efficient information flow may provide results in the near term, but it will find it difficult to make a lasting impression. Transparency, involvement, and ongoing communication between all parties involved are essential to sustainable development. Without these, development initiatives run the risk of turning into short-term fixes rather than significant social change.

Assam’s achievements in endangered species protection



The first satellite-tagged Ganges soft-shell turtle in India was released at Kaziranga National Park, which is a commendable effort to improve Assamese endangered species protection. The campaign, which was started in response to the uncommon sighting of a gharial in the national park’s Burapahar range last month, coincides with Endangered Species Day on Friday and signifies ongoing efforts to conserve wildlife, paving the way for fresh conservation success stories in the state. Together, these achievements bolster Assam’s determination to preserve endangered species and safeguard their delicate habitat. Wildlife specialists are quite excited by the reported sighting of an endangered Hoolock Gibbon in the state’s Hollongapar Gibbon Sanctuary utilizing an artificial canopy bridge with a safety net to cross railway lines. According to the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), this is the first time that the endangered primate—India’s only ape—has been shown to use the canopy bridge to cross the railroad lines that run through the sanctuary. The canopy bridge was constructed by the Northeast Frontier Railways to lessen the risks that the electrification of the railway track between

Lumding and Dibrugarh posed to Gibbons of the sanctuary. The WII notes that there is a glimmer of hope for reducing the effects of linear infrastructure on India’s sole ape, but warns that long-term solutions, such as careful infrastructure planning, eco-conscious location, and the creation of reforested corridors to connect isolated populations, remain crucial for the long-term survival of threatened and exclusively arboreal species like gibbons. The state’s dedication to striking a balance between infrastructural development and animal conservation is demonstrated by the Assam Forest Department’s involvement in the canopy bridge’s design, implementation, and ongoing monitoring. The gharial, a critically endangered wildlife species that was thought to have vanished from the state’s rivers, was sighted in the Burapahar range on April 26 by a team of forest staff from Kaziranga National Park and again on May 8 by a tourist guide. These sightings have sparked new hopes for conservation. These developments highlight how crucial it is that government and non-government organizations provide sufficient financing and logistical support for scientific investigations started by

wildlife professionals. In order to maintain wildlife research, conservation, and mitigation efforts, it is equally important to strengthen the wildlife monitoring system in Kaziranga National Park and throughout all wildlife habitats in the state. This is especially crucial given that linear infrastructure projects pushed in ecologically significant areas for strategic needs continue to pose serious threats to endangered species. Even though these milestones contribute to raising awareness of the state’s endangered and threatened wildlife heritage, human-wildlife conflict continues to be a major conservation concern, posing serious threats to wild elephants, leopards, and other vulnerable and endangered species. Placing impacted populations at the center of mitigation strategies is crucial for any long-term solution for the protection of endangered species, safeguarding life and property, since these conflicts result in direct harmful interactions between animals and humans. The unpleasant reality of humans encroaching on elephants’ natural migratory routes was exposed by an increase in cases of herds of wild elephants regularly entering human dwellings in search of food and refuge. The

landscape-level mitigation strategies recommended by wildlife specialists are still mainly on paper, thus a long-term solution to the issue is still elusive. Interventions continue to take place in isolated and intermittent areas. The state government must continue the eviction operations to reclaim all encroached forest lands in order to sustain conservation initiatives and strengthen preventive measures to guarantee that the natural habitat of all endangered and vulnerable species remains secure forever. The crisis was caused by encroachment of forest areas. To guarantee that more robust and scientifically supported mitigation strategies are suggested, wildlife experts must closely examine infrastructure projects that involve the diversion of forest areas. If there isn’t a robust supervision system in place to make sure the project developers rigorously follow the mitigation measures, it won’t be enough to preserve endangered species from impending extinction risks. In addition to bolstering protection measures and stopping expansion into wildlife habitat, emphasis should be placed on raising awareness of co-existence in areas where human activities such as expanding the area under agriculture and illegal tree felling have posed serious threats to wildlife species and other biodiversity resources. Wildlife specialists, forest officials, and other government stakeholders cannot handle the conservation of endangered species in a vacuum. To allow for fair involvement, a more robust policy initiative is required, particularly for those who live in protected areas’ eco-sensitive zones and on the edges of forests. Only until awareness is raised throughout all societal segments—from elderly to students—will people be able to actively participate in conservation efforts. Growing conservation leadership is highlighted by the conservation milestones. In order to influence the conservation of endangered species for the next generation, empowered communities must continue to participate.

3 L&T Group stocks to turn ex-dividend



New Delhi: Three stocks belonging to the Larsen & Toubro (L&T) group are scheduled to go ex-dividend next week, providing rewards to their eligible shareholders. Below is all the information you require regarding the forthcoming record dates, dividend amounts, and annual general meetings (AGMs).In distinct filings to the stock exchange, Larsen & Toubro Ltd, L&T Technology Services Ltd (LTTS), and L&T Finance Ltd have each verified their respective dividend amounts for FY26. Importantly, all three companies have designated Friday, May 22, 2026, as the essential record date to ascertain shareholder eligibility. Just like its parent company, LTTS has set May 22, 2026, as the record date for the purpose of determining the eligible members. The company noted that it would pay the proposed dividend within 30 days after the shareholders give their nod at the ensuing 14th AGM, scheduled for Monday, June 1, 2026.L&T Finance Rounding out the list is the group’s financial services subsidiary, L&T Finance. The board has approved a dividend of Rs 2.75 per share (face value Rs 10 each per equity share). Friday, May 22, 2026, has been fixed as the record date for the same. The payout would be subject to approval at the company’s 18th AGM, which would take place on Friday, May 29, 2026. Once approved, the dividend would be credited on or before Saturday, June 27, 2026.

Services Ltd (LTTS), and L&T Finance Ltd have each verified their respective dividend amounts for FY26. Importantly, all three companies have designated Friday, May 22, 2026, as the essential record date to ascertain shareholder eligibility. Just like its parent company, LTTS has set May 22, 2026, as the record date for the purpose of determining the eligible members. The company noted that it would pay the proposed dividend within 30 days after the shareholders give their nod at the ensuing 14th AGM, scheduled for Monday, June 1, 2026.L&T Finance Rounding out the list is the group’s financial services subsidiary, L&T Finance. The board has approved a dividend of Rs 2.75 per share (face value Rs 10 each per equity share). Friday, May 22, 2026, has been fixed as the record date for the same. The payout would be subject to approval at the company’s 18th AGM, which would take place on Friday, May 29, 2026. Once approved, the dividend would be credited on or before Saturday, June 27, 2026.

Tata Motors PV shares jump 5% after Q4 results Buy, sell or hold What brokerages recommend Motilal Oswal Financial Services

New Delhi: Shares of Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles Ltd (TMPV) surged 5.22 per cent on Friday to settle at Rs 356.55 after the company reported its March quarter (Q4 FY26) earnings yesterday, post market hours. Despite the latest rally, the stock has remained largely flat over the past year, declining 2.11 per cent during the period. Mayuresh Joshi, Head of Equity Research at William O’Neil India, in an interaction with Business Today, said, “As newer models are introduced, the overall EV ecosystem is expected to become more efficient. Tata Motors continues to maintain a strong presence in the passenger vehicle (PV) segment, and any improvement in demand conditions or supportive industry measures could aid volumes going forward. This, in turn, may support the company’s overall business performance and balance sheet dynamics.”Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd (MOFSL) said TMPV’s Q4 profit after tax (PAT) at Rs 5,880 crore was significantly above its estimates, supported by stronger-than-expected performance from both the India business and Jaguar Land Rover (JLR).“While Indian margins expanded 90bp YoY to 8.7 per cent (vs our estimate of 7 per cent), JLR EBIT margins sharply expanded from -6.8

per cent in Q3 to 9.2 per cent in Q4 due to improved volumes, higher product capitalisation, reduced depreciation, and benefit from forex gains (not quantified), even as gross margins declined QoQ,” MOFSL stated. However, the brokerage remained cautious on the stock’s outlook. “While the Indian PV demand outlook remains positive, it is expected to see margin pressure in the near term, given the material surge in input costs. Further, JLR continues to face multiple headwinds, both on the demand and cost front. While JLR has embarked on a major cost reduction initiative, it is likely to only help partially offset the current headwinds. Given the significant challenges at JLR and the continued geopolitical uncertainty, we reiterate our Sell rating on the stock with a SoTP-based TP of Rs 303 per share (based on FY28E). We value both JLR and India PV business at 2x and 13x EV/EBITDA, respectively,” it added. Management is monitoring the situation and is refraining from aggressive price hikes for India PV, as it may impact demand in the near term. Given the muted global demand outlook at JLR and rising VME and commodity costs, we recommend Reduce, with SOTP-based TP pared to Rs 354 (earlier Rs 363),” Elara said.In con-



trast, Nuvama Institutional Equities reiterated its ‘Buy’ call and raised the target price, citing recovery in the JLR business.“We build in revenue/EBITDA CAGR for India PV at 19 per cent/36 per cent over FY26-28E driven by robust volumes, PLI benefits and better mix. Moreover, JLR revenue/EBITDA CAGR is at 16 per cent/55 per cent owing to low base, launches, better scale and cost savings. Retain ‘BUY’ with a SoTP TP of Rs 470/share (earlier Rs 400) on 11x/2x EV/EBITDA for India PV/JLR and value of investments at Rs 56/share (earlier Rs 30),” it stated JM Financial upgraded the stock to ‘Buy’ from ‘Reduce’ and assigned a target price of Rs 415, citing attrac-

tive valuations and improving demand trends. “We upgrade the stock from REDUCE to BUY, supported by: i) improving JLR demand outlook – stable trends in the EU/UK, growth potential in NA and resilient demand in the Middle East despite the conflict; ii) domestic demand momentum remains healthy with management guiding for ~10 per cent YoY industry growth in FY27; iii) a strong launch pipeline (JLR: Range Rover EV and two launches in H2FY27; domestic: Sierra EV in Jun’26, along with two new nameplates and four facelifts); and iv) lean dealer inventory across both JLR and domestic operations (~20 days),” JM Financial said.

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

New Delhi: The Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles (PV) shares rallied over 8% to the day’s high of Rs 366.95 on the NSE after reporting its quarterly numbers for the fourth quarter of FY26. The Q4 numbers were slightly ahead of most brokerage estimates. Analysts believe that the JLR volume trajectory is likely to be a key factor to watch out for in FY27. While Nuvama and JM Financial expect double-digit growth, Motilal Oswal flags margin risk in the near-term. Nuvama Institutional Equities raised the price target to Rs 470 from Rs 400, looking at a lift of 38.6% over the next 12 months. The brokerage has maintained its ‘Buy’ rating on the stock. The domestic PV EBITDA rose 79% to Rs 1,770 crore, above the estimate of Rs 1,510 crore, due to scale benefits and higher PLI. JLR EBITDA fell 19%, but above estimates, aided by a better mix, reversal of emission provision and forex gains. “We build in revenue at 19% and EBITDA at 36% CAGR for India PV over FY26-28, driven by robust volumes, PLI benefits and better mix. Moreover, JLR revenue at 16% and EBITDA at 55% CAGR is owing to low base, launches, better scale and cost savings,” said Nuvama. The company’s Q4 performance has certainly been ahead of



estimates, both in India and JLR, said Motilal Oswal Financial Services. While the Indian PV demand outlook remains positive, the company is expected to see margin pressure in the near term, given the material surge in input costs. This led the brokerage to retain its ‘Sell’ rating on the stock, with a target price of Rs 303, implying a downside of 11% from the current market price. Further, JLR continues to face multiple headwinds, both on the demand and cost front. While the company has embarked on a major cost reduction initiative, it is likely to only help partially offset the current headwinds. On the other

hand, JM Financial not just raised the target price, it also upgraded the stock rating to ‘Buy’ from ‘Reduce’. The brokerage house increased the price target to Rs 415 from Rs 327, an upside of 27% from the current market price. The turnaround at JLR post the cyberattack drove Q4FY26 EBIT margin to 9.2% (1,600 basis points QoQ), 590 bps above the brokerage’s estimates, led by operating leverage. Improving JLR demand outlook – stable trends in the EU/UK, growth potential in North America and resilient demand in the Middle East, despite the conflict, has been one of the reasons behind the upgrade.

An increase in fuel prices could lead to a rise in inflation

New Delhi: India is currently grappling with one of the most severe external energy shocks in recent memory. Brent crude has remained above \$100 per barrel since the Hormuz crisis erupted in late February. The government held retail petrol, diesel, and domestic LPG prices steady until Friday, May 15, absorbing the burden through a widening subsidy bill. For the Reserve Bank of India, this presents a dilemma. Tightening monetary policy in response to an exogenous energy shock risks suppressing growth without addressing the root cause. With GDP growth already softening to 6.2-6.5 per cent, the RBI may prefer to pause rather than hike rates. However, a fuel price increase would likely force a more hawkish forward guidance, signalling readiness to act if inflation expectations become unanchored.This fiscal stance, however, become increasingly strained, especially with the rupee down over 6 per cent year-to-date. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, meanwhile, has appealed to citizens to adopt “import discipline” and conserve energy through measures such as carpooling, working from home, and reducing gold purchases. Concrete steps have already been taken, including raising import duties on gold and silver from 6 per cent to 15 per cent -- a move reminiscent of similar hikes in 2013 and 2022 during past external shocks. Markets now anticipate further measures to conserve foreign exchange, ranging from disincentivizing non-essential imports like electronics to tightening rules under the Liberalized Remittance Scheme (LRS). Proposals such as diaspora bonds to mobilize FX deposits are also being discussed. Yet the most consequential decision has now been taken: India has raised petrol and diesel prices by ₹3 per litre and CNG by ₹2 per kilogram. After months of absorption, the government has blinked and the macroeconomic consequences are immediate. The infla-

tionary impact is unavoidable, though the magnitude is manageable if this remains a one-time adjustment. Retail fuel prices feed into CPI both directly through the transport and fuel components, whose weight in the revised index has risen to 4.8 per cent from 2.3 per cent previously and indirectly, through higher logistics costs flowing across food and manufactured goods supply chains. The combined ₹3 per litre hike in petrol and diesel is estimated to add approximately 10-15 basis points to CPI inflation on a direct basis, with a further 20-30 basis points of indirect pass-through over 6-8 weeks. In aggregate, CPI could rise by ~50 basis points, pushing FY27 inflation closer to 5 per cent. The 10-year government security, currently hovering around 7.0-7.1 per cent, could test higher levels as inflation expectations rise and fiscal deficit concerns deepen. While short-term yields may remain anchored by RBI liquidity support, the curve is likely to bear-steepen, a dynamic already evident globally. Investors appear to prefer a transparent, controlled fuel price adjustment today over the risk of uncontrolled fiscal deterioration tomorrow. India’s structural energy vulnerability amplifies these risks. With imports accounting for nearly 89 per cent of domestic consumption and approximately 25 per cent of the total import bill, sustained high crude prices are not merely an inflation problem, they are a balance of payments problem. If oil averages \$85-90 per barrel for the full year, the import bill could inflate by 35-40 per cent, widening the current account deficit beyond 2 per cent of GDP and placing further downward pressure on a rupee. The fuel price hike, while reducing the fiscal subsidy burden, does not change this external dynamic. It simply shifts the pain from the government’s balance sheet to consumers and the CPI basket.

Gulf is redrawing its logistics network to bypass Hormuz

New Delhi: New trucking routes across the Arabian desert have become an emergency trade lifeline for Gulf economies trying to bypass the Strait of Hormuz after the US and Israel attacked Iran, stated a report. Highways, rail links and ports in Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Oman are being used to move goods overland as governments and companies adjust to the disruption. As mentioned in a report in Wall Street Journal, the shift has redrawn parts of the region’s logistics network, moving trade away from the Persian Gulf and towards the Red Sea and the Gulf of Oman. The alternative routes cannot match shipping on cost or capacity, and they do not solve shortages of jet fuel and other energy products, but they are keeping some cargo flowing and providing contingency options as US-Iran talks remain deadlocked, it said. At Saudi Arabian state-controlled mining company Maaden, chief executive Bob Wilt sent executives to Red Sea ports after the attacks and, within two weeks, arranged rail and truck operations to move fertilisers across the kingdom, the report stated. The operation relied on large numbers of trucks running almost round the clock with two drivers each. As the effort expanded, Wilt told the American newspaper: “Six hundred became 1,600, became 2,000; now we’ve got 3,500 trucks running from the Gulf to the Red Sea.” Shipping groups including MSC and Maersk are

also using overland routes across the Arabian peninsula. In one example, UAE super-market chain Spinneys sent trucks carrying British foods, including potato chips, porridge oats and children’s snacks, on a 16-day journey from Kent through western Europe, then Egypt and Saudi Arabia, to Dubai. According to the report, Etihad Rail Freight also moved hundreds of Nissan vehicles from Fujairah on the UAE’s eastern coast to Abu Dhabi on the Persian Gulf in the country’s first vehicle movement by train. Moreover, Saudi Aramco has relied heavily on its East-West pipeline to the Red Sea port of Yanbu, while the UAE has pushed more crude through Fujairah. Both countries are looking at ways to expand these links, alongside proposals for new rail lines and bigger port infrastructure. In the UAE, the smaller port of Khor Fakkan has become a key outlet. Truck traffic at the Gulf of Oman port has risen to 7,000 vehicles a day from 100 before the conflict. Weekly container traffic has jumped from 2,000 to 50,000 as the port shifted from acting mainly as a transshipment hub to functioning as a gateway port, with containers leaving by truck for warehouses, factories and shops. Its operator, Gultainer, hired 900 people in two weeks, reassigned customer service staff as gate officers and yard managers, and opened a new truck marshalling yard to sort and dispatch cargo.

After 30,000 layoffs globally, Oracle reportedly pulls offers made to IIT, NIT students

New Delhi: Oracle has reportedly revoked job offers made across IITs and National Institutes of Technology (NITs), just a month after laying off more than 30,000 employees globally. A NIT student shared his experience on LinkedIn, saying that the decision has personally impacted him and several other students who had already planned their careers around the offer. Aditya Kumar Barawal, on the professional networking platform, stated that his pre-placement offer from Oracle was revoked because of internal company restructuring and changes in hiring capacity or employee headcount. In the post, he said, “While this setback has been difficult, I’m staying optimistic and focused on learning, building, and moving forward.”The student also shared a screenshot of the official letter shared by the institute, highlighting the difficult decision by the company. The letter said, “The recruiting (Oracle) organisation has recently withdrawn the offers extended to these candidates at no fault of their part.” “Given that this development has occurred at a stage when the institutional placement cycle is nearing closure,” it added. A total of three students, including Barawal, were affected by the decision. Since the Campus placement drive has already commenced, affected candidates are now left under pressure and uncertainty to secure new jobs in the challenging job market. Oracle move impacts IIT students tooAlongside NIT, Oracle has also revoked placement offers of students from the Indian Institute of Technology (IITs). According to a Reddit post by r/Btechtards, 50



students from all IITs have been impacted by the decision, leaving many scrambling for alternative opportunities at a time when most campus placement drives are already nearing completion. The post highlighted that 4 placement offers from IIT Hyderabad were cancelled, and a similar happened to students in Kanpur, Kharagpur, and other cities. The post further highlighted that many IITs follow a “one student, one offer” placement policy. This means that once a student accepts an offer from one company, they are usually not allowed to apply to other companies. Now, since Oracle reportedly revoked the offer, these stu-

dents are left without jobs. The post highlights the hard work put in by the students and the emotional distress they are now facing following the sudden withdrawal of the offers. It said, “Just imagine the kind of pressure these students would have gone through during the months preceding placement season, and the amount of satisfaction after their offer. Now, after their BTech/MTech is done, they suddenly get this news. They’ve missed all major companies and need to settle for much lower offers than they deserve, or worse yet, no offers.”

Tensions arise in the Netanyahu-Trump alliance

“They have screwed each other pretty badly”



Iran: In a video statement this week, Benjamin Netanyahu broke an unusually extended quiet over the Iran dispute by stating that he had “full co-ordination” with Donald Trump, with whom he spoke “almost daily.”The assertion that all was well in the US-Israeli relationship came after weeks of domestic press reports that Israel was no longer consulted over the Iran dispute, and much less regarding peace negotiations mediated by Pakistan. The public and independent press are so skeptical of Netanyahu’s reliability that when he made a video message, observers immediately speculated that the situation may be worse than they had anticipated. Dahlia Scheindlin, an American-Israeli political strategist and pollster, stated, “He is doing so much talking about how great the relationship is that it makes me rather concerned about how much tension there is.” “I wouldn’t be shocked, since the war is obviously failing miserably from every angle in relation to the initial objectives.”The prime minister of Israel and the president of the United States have long been seen as mirror reflections of one another. With little respect for previous conventions or limitations, they have both invented populist strategies to control domestic politics by undermining the constitutional foundations of the very systems that brought them to power. It will be extremely difficult for either of them to separate themselves from the memory of the disastrous US-Israeli attack on Iran on February 28, which brought the Gulf to a stop.For decades, Netanyahu tried to convince a series of US presidents to fight alongside Israel against the Islamic Republic. When it came to weakening the multilateral nuclear agreement with Iran in 2015, which had been Barack Obama’s most notable foreign policy accomplishment, he went to previously unheard-of lengths for a foreign leader meddling in US internal affairs. In 2018, Iran increased its nuclear program and amassed a stockpile of highly enriched uranium enough for a dozen nuclear weapons after Netanyahu persuaded Trump to back out of the agreement. Additionally, in February of this year, Netanyahu played a crucial role in persuading Trump that war was the only way to defeat the danger and that it could be won with ease, according to significant reporting in the US press.The Israeli leader was already pushing at an open door by that point. Nicolás Maduro, the president of Venezuela, was abducted by US soldiers during a surprise attack on Caracas the previous month. This was an incredible coup. “Netanyahu, being the conman that he is, used Venezuela as an example,” Alon Pinkas, a

former Israeli diplomat, said. “He said to him: ‘Look what you did in Venezuela. It was painless. It was effortless. It was beautiful. You changed the regime.’“Then he begins bombarding Trump with intelligence data showing that Iran had expanded its missile production and its missile-launching capabilities, and still has 450kg of highly enriched uranium,” Pinkas said.With the help of the Mossad director, David Barnea, Netanyahu portrayed the Tehran regime as an overripe fruit ready to drop from the branch.“He told Trump: ‘The Iranian economy is in shambles. The people are on the precipice of revolt. The Revolutionary Guards are losing control. Life in Iran is intolerable. This is our time,’” Pinkas said. ““What we could do together is bring down the regime ... think that together, jointly, we can win the war in three, four days.”According to multiple reports, US intelligence and military officials stressed the risk that Iran could attack US allies in the Gulf and close the strait of Hormuz. But Netanyahu – and US administration hawks including the defence secretary, Pete Hegseth – prevailed, arguing that Iran’s Revolutionary Guards were overrated and would not have the strength to hit back.They were proved wrong on every count. The Iranian people did not rise up, the regime did not fall, the Kurds did not attack from the north-west and the Revolutionary Guards were able to inflict withering damage on US bases and Gulf monarchies, close the Hormuz strait and trigger a global economic crisis.“Some 30 days into the war, by the end of March there were signs that Trump was very disappointed with Netanyahu,” Pinkas said.

The president stopped mentioning Israel and Netanyahu in his relentlessly upbeat public statements about the war. When US negotiators started talking to their Iranian counterparts and Pakistani mediators in the run up to a ceasefire announcement on 8 April, Israel was left out of the loop. Israeli officials complained to the press that they had to use their intelligence assets to try to find out what was going on.There are varying accounts of what is on the table in the peace talks, but there has been no mention of Iran’s missile arsenal or its use of regional proxies, both of which are Israeli priorities.When Trump did mention Netanyahu, it was mostly to tell him off. After Israel bombed Iran’s South Pars gasfield, for example, Trump said he had told Netanyahu “not to do that.”“On occasion, he’ll do something, and if I don’t like it ... we’re not doing that any more,” the president said.When the ceasefire was agreed, Trump initially sided with Netanya-

hu’s interpretation that Lebanon was excluded and then, with the truce in jeopardy, swiftly reversed himself and made Israel follow suit. “Israel will not be bombing Lebanon any longer. They are PROHIBITED from doing so by the U.S.A. Enough is enough!!!” he said in a social media post on 17 April, in an unprecedented public rebuke to Netanyahu.Since this nadir, Israeli government officials have been briefing reporters that the ceasefire cannot last and that a return to hostilities was inevitable. Last weekend, there was a flurry of reporting in Israeli newspapers that intensive US-Israeli military coordination had resumed at their earlier tempo, in anticipation of further joint strikes.Those strikes have yet to materialise, however, and the Trump administration has sought to downplay the significance of recent exchanges of fire around the strait of Hormuz.Daniel Shapiro, a former US ambassador to Israel, said Trump is already looking beyond Iran to his next major challenge: a 14 May trip to China and a critical meeting with President Xi Jinping.“President Trump is going to want to have this war more or less behind him by the time he goes to Beijing,” Shapiro said. “Otherwise, he will be in the position of a supplicant seeking Xi Jinping’s help to get them to convince Iran to accept his terms or to make concessions they haven’t made. And that’s a very weak position to be in when he would rather focus on getting some of the Chinese-US economic relations on a more stable ground.”From prior experience in the Gaza and Lebanon conflicts, Netanyahu can draw some confidence that even if he is forced to accept a temporary peace deal that runs counter to his own interests, Trump’s attention will inevitably be diverted elsewhere, and Israel’s hands will be freed again.“If Trump reaches a deal, the Israelis will have to accept it for the time being, and then perhaps they will revisit it to ‘mow the grass’, as they say, on the missile programme or on the nuclear programme at some later time,” Shapiro said.Netanyahu also knows there are limits to the extent Trump can free himself from their geopolitical embrace. As Trump’s former national security adviser, John Bolton, points out, Netanyahu can always make waves in US politics.

“I think Trump’s jealous of Netanyahu because Netanyahu is one of the few people who can generate more press than he does,” Bolton said, pointing out that despite Trump’s imposition of a ceasefire, “he’s still giving Netanyahu a pretty free hand in Lebanon.”Pinkas, who served as adviser to prime ministers Ehud Barak and Shimon Peres, argues that strategic failure in the Iran war will also prove to be too powerful a glue for Trump to dissolve quickly.“The problem Trump has is that if he lashes out at Netanyahu, if he expresses his disillusionment or desperation, he basically admits he was led into this war,” Pinkas said, adding that the conflict looks certain to hurt both men at the ballot box.Netanyahu must hold an election by October, which by current polling would finally end his premiership. The elections in the US are congressional, but they could still render Trump a lame duck, at least in domestic politics.“This affects Netanyahu politically and this affects Trump politically,” Pinkas said. “In other words, they have screwed each other pretty badly.”

“We are discussing energy security for Europe”

Norway increases its output of gas and oil

Europe: “We will develop, not dismantle, activity on our continental shelf,” says Terje Aasland, Norway’s energy minister, in answer to any question regarding the country’s will to continue and grow its offshore gas and oil production.To the dismay of environmental activists, he declared this week that three gasfields off the southern coast of the nation would reopen by the end of 2028, almost thirty years after they were shut down, in order to fill a gap brought on by the effects of the conflict in Ukraine and the disruption of supplies from the Middle East. For the remainder of this decade, the decision will assist maintain gas and oil output at about the 2025 level, which has remained steady for almost 20 years. Three of Norway’s 97 offshore oilfields came online last year, and the country’s Norwegian Offshore Directorate anticipates “100 and beyond” over the next two years while continuing to produce at least the current level of two million barrels of oil per day.The Norwegian Offshore Directorate, an agency of Aasland’s department, conducted preliminary studies that revealed possibilities for mining seabed minerals between northern Norway and Greenland, making the Barents Sea in the high north the new frontier for gas and oil. According to Aasland, “Norwegian offshore production plays an important role in ensuring energy security in Europe.” “Oil and gas will be needed by the world and Europe for

decades to come, and Norway must continue to develop its continental shelf to remain a dependable and long-term supplier... and (with) a high level of exploration activity.”The sector generates vast wealth for Norway, but the decision this week to reopen the Albuskjell, Vest Ekofisk and Tommeliten Gamma gasfields in the North Sea, which were closed in 1998, has received heavy criticism in some quarters.It goes against the advice of the country’s environment agency, and the Socialist Left party accused the government of “greenwashing”.Lars Haltbrekken, the deputy leader and environment spokesperson for the party, says: “It shows that the government is once again blatantly ignoring environmental advice from its own experts. All the talk about responsible oil extraction is nothing but nonsense. It’s greenwashing through and through, with vulnerable and important natural areas being put at risk with full awareness.”The Norwegian energy company Equinor (formerly Statoil), in which the state owns 67%, says it is making a “big effort” to maintain its own 2020 production levels of 1.2m barrels daily up to 2035. The Norwegian’s state holding should yield about £2bn in dividends this year.“It’s very important for the market value of the company to keep production higher now than in 2001 – yes, we had a lower production then than now,” says Equinor’s Ola Morten Anastad.

Delays in the evacuation of a cruise ship infected with the hantavirus

Europe: Authorities in the Canary Islands said on Friday that the evacuation of the hantavirus-affected MV Hondius cruise ship must be finished within 24 hours of the ship arriving in Tenerife on Sunday or risk days or even weeks of delays due to inclement weather.The Dutch-flagged ship, which was traveling from Argentina to Cape Verde, is scheduled to arrive in the Spanish archipelago this weekend. The 149 passengers and crew members on board will be received, evaluated, and repatriated as part of what Spain’s health minister has described as a “unprecedented operation.”However, the effort now has to deal with the further challenge of shifting weather conditions. “Until conditions change on Monday, the only window of opportunity we have to carry out this operation is around 12 o’clock on Sunday morning.” Reporters were informed on Friday by regional government spokesperson Alfonso Cabello.Citing wind and swell, he stated, “If not, the ship must depart and no operation could be carried out again in theory... until the end of May.”It is anticipated that the MV Hondius would reach the port of Granadilla, Tenerife, early on Sunday morning. Following discussions between the regional authorities of the archipelago and the Spanish government, it will stay at anchor in the southeast port of Granadilla rather than dock. When passengers are removed off the ship to be repatriated or, in the case of the 14 Spanish citizens on board, brought to a military hospital in Madrid for mandatory quarantine, they will be assessed on board and will not interact with the local populace.The Spanish health minister, Mañ García, told Spain’s official radio station, RNE, on Friday morning, “This is an unprecedented operation in response to an international health alert involving 23 countries.”“The World Health Organization has entrusted Spain with this operation, which is unprecedented, and we are coordinating it from Spain.” We will work and provide the required logistical and health management. García confirmed that non-Spanish citizens who did not need urgent medical attention would be evacuated to their home countries even if they showed symptoms of hantavirus.“The international protocols will be followed – as will all the strict measures when it comes to health prevention,” she said.

“The protocol is based on no one needing urgent medical attention. And we think that won’t be the case because everyone was asymptomatic when they left Cape Verde and they’ve been on the boat for many days now, which makes us think that the risk that they’ve been infected is diminishing each day.”Three people – a Dutch couple and a German national – have died in the outbreak on the ship. Four others confirmed to be infected – two Britons, a Dutch and a Swiss national – are being treated in hospitals in the Netherlands, South Africa and Switzerland.On Friday, the British and Spanish authorities said they were investigating two possible new cases. One involves a British national on the South Atlantic island of Tristan da Cunha, where the cruise ship made a stop on 15 April. The other involves a woman who was on the same flight as a Dutch patient who died in Johannesburg after travelling on the MV Hondius and contracting the virus. She is being treated in a hospital in the eastern Spanish region of Alicante. On Friday, authorities in Singapore announced that two

men who had been on board the Hondius tested negative for hantavirus but would remain in quarantine for 30 days as a precaution. They would be tested again before release, said Singapore’s Communicable Diseases Agency (CDA).The men, aged 65 and 67, had been on the same flight as a confirmed hantavirus case from St Helena to Johannesburg on 25 April, the CDA said a day earlier. The confirmed case died in South Africa. The CDA’s laboratory conducted testing with “multiple samples collected from the individuals” and confirmed that hantavirus, including the Andes virus, was “not detected”.The WHO said on Friday that the risk the hantavirus strain in question posed to the public was minimal, as it spread only through “very close contact” and was “not spreading anything close” to how Covid had spread.“This is a dangerous virus, but only to the person who’s really infected, and the risk to the general population remains absolutely low,” the WHO spokesperson Christian Lindmeier told a press briefing in Geneva.He said that even the people who had stayed in the same cabin as an infected person on the MV Hondius “don’t seem to be both infected in some cases”.Based on previous outbreaks in Argentina, it is thought the Andes strain of the virus can be spread between people through very close contact.Exactly how easily it is transmitted is unclear, with experts studying the virus and its transmission carefully given the relatively limited scientific data currently available. Despite these uncertainties, the WHO has stressed the hantavirus

at least 12 different countries left the ship without contact tracing, the ship’s operator and Dutch officials said on Thursday. According to the WHO, health authorities did not confirm hantavirus in a passenger on the MV Hondius until 2 May. The looming arrival of the ship has prompted considerable unease in the Canaries. Fernando Clavijo, the regional president, had objected to the ship coming into port at Granadilla and convinced the central government that it should instead remain at anchor. In an interview with the Spanish newspaper ABC on Friday, he said Spain had been under “no legal obligation” to take in the ship and that it should have put into port in Cape Verde, which refused it permission to dock.Speaking later the same day, Clavijo said a plan had been devised to minimise the time and contacts that the passengers being evacuated would have while on Tenerife, adding: “We know with certainty that no one will get off the ship if their plane is not already waiting on the runway.”The authorities’ insistence that everything possible was being done to protect people on Tenerife and across the wider archipelago appeared to have reassured locals. Visitors, too, appeared unfazed as they lay on sunloungers, soaking up the sunshine and the 23C heat.“It’s no problem,” said one local woman, who was selling tourist trinkets by the beach near Los Cristianos, in the south of the island. “The Canarian government has confirmed that the ship will not dock in the port but on the high seas.” The woman, who did not want to give her name, said her



outbreak is not the start of a pandemic, and that the public health threat is low.The Guardian understands experts think transmission primarily occurs when patients have symptoms. However, out of an abundance of caution, public health teams involved in contact tracing are also considering the two days before symptoms develop.

The UK and the US are among the countries that have agreed to send planes to Tenerife to repatriate their citizens. Health authorities across four continents are scrambling to track down and monitor passengers who left the ship before the outbreak was detected. They are also trying to trace others who may have come into contact with them since then. On 24 April, nearly two weeks after the first passenger had died onboard, more than two dozen people from

only concern was of the possible effects on Tenerife’s lucrative tourism industry. “People get scared quickly,” she added.Ima, who runs a shop selling traditional handmade goods, was similarly relaxed: “The news says it’s no problem.”But the view was not shared by everyone.

Joao Decastro, who runs La Siesta Excursions, said he felt Spain was always the country that came to the rescue in international emergencies. He was worried about the possible cost to local people.“To be honest, I’m not very happy about what they’re doing because I think [the cruise ship passengers] have many places to go, right?” he said. “This is a very touristy area and right now that would make the tourists more afraid.”He added: “If there are three dead on a boat, imagine a population that reaches a million people here.”

According to Rubio, the US is expecting Iran’s reaction about ceasefire efforts

Washington: Iran has accused the US of violating the increasingly precarious truce that was proclaimed last month, and US Secretary of State Marco Rubio has stated that Washington is anticipating a response from Iran on Friday on its ideas for an interim agreement to halt the crisis in the Middle East.The violence in and around the disputed strait of Hormuz has escalated to its highest level since the start of the unofficial truce in recent days. Following Donald Trump’s declaration of a new navy operation to open the crit-

ical canal, which was quickly halted, there was an increase in violence. According to the US military, two tankers flying the Iranian flag attempted to breach the US blockade of Iran’s ports on Friday, but US Marines shot on them and damaged them. Despite the conflicts, diplomatic attempts are still ongoing. Pakistan’s mediators have given Iran a short memorandum that the US claims might serve as the foundation for a stronger truce that would permit fresh negotiations.Trump told reporters at the White House on

Friday night that he anticipated hearing back from Iran shortly. He added, “I’m supposed to get a letter tonight.” “We’ll find out soon enough,” he said in response to a question about whether Iran was purposefully delaying the negotiations.Rubio stated, “We’re expecting a response from them today at some point,” while in Rome. I sincerely hope that this is a serious offer. It is hoped that it would initiate a genuine bargaining process. There have been wild swings from hope to despair in recent days, as the US and Iran

test each other’s resilience and will, seeking leverage in any talks through belligerent rhetoric, defiance and sporadic violence.Abbas Araghchi, Iran’s foreign minister, accused the US of breaking the ceasefire, posting on X on Friday: “Every time a diplomatic solution is on the table, the U.S. opts for a reckless military adventure.” Araghchi also boasted that Iran’s ballistic missile stocks and launcher capacity had not only been repaired and restocked during the pause in hostilities, but expanded.

The top mattresses of 2026: enhance your sleep with our 12 meticulously evaluated selections



A quality mattress enhances your sleep, according to mattress manufacturers – and they certainly have a point, don’t they? Indeed, they are correct. As I age, this truth becomes increasingly evident. In my twenties, I could rest anywhere: on a friend’s floor, a dirty sofa – even in a phone booth one night. Nowadays, I cannot manage even a brief nap if I am not resting on a good mattress. It needs to be comfortable yet firm, cozy yet breathable, and equipped with plenty of cool areas for my feet.

Today’s best mattresses promise all this and more. Gone are the days when your biggest decision was between a sprung double and a sprung king-size. Pocket springs are still around, but they face stiff – well, medium-firm – competition from hybrid mattresses that combine springs and memory foam to provide that all-important balance of comfort and support.

The in-vogue bed brands tend not to have showrooms, so you can’t normally try out their mattresses before you buy. Instead, they vacuum-shrink them in the factory for delivery

to your door. These bed-in-a-box mattresses come with long trials, but you’re still buying blind. I’ve tried to shed some light on which are the best by trying them out for you.

I, along with a panel of my family members, tested 12 bestselling bed-in-a-box mattresses – including three in this latest update. Among them were three pocket-sprung models, one all-foam model and several bed-in-a-box hybrids (which combine springs with layers of memory foam), covering various degrees of firmness, features and price. Here’s how we got on with our top picks, including the one my dad gave up on and the one my niece didn’t want to give back. First, I needed some sleepers. I wanted a broad range of feedback from people of varying sizes who sleep in various positions. I asked my dad (85), my niece (22), my sister and our husbands to join my mattress panel. We each spent at least a fortnight (and sometimes months) sleeping on an allocated mattress.

Before we divvied them up, my panel assembled to offer their impressions of every mattress on test. I turned my house into a mattress

showroom, invited everyone over and asked them to sit, bounce and lie down on every test sample, alone and together. This enabled us to compare the mattresses side by side and get an overview of their pros and cons. I collected scores out of 10 for everyone’s assessment of firmness and other factors such as breathability, motion isolation and overall comfort, then worked out our average score for each mattress. We then divided the mattresses and began the sleeping tests. To quantify sleep quality, I used the Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index, which uses a questionnaire to assess factors such as how long it takes to nod off. I used this as the basis and added questions such as whether they experienced back pain or woke up in the night. Some of us also used our smartwatches to gather sleep-tracking stats. Other factors were easier to test on my own. I used dumbbell weights to measure how far each mattress sank under various weights, while an infrared thermometer and heat pad revealed how fast they could cool under a warm body. A glass of water on the surface gave an idea of how well the mat-

tress would absorb the movement of a restless partner (motion isolation). Environmental credentials were another important consideration. Mattress makers are secretive about the life cycles of their products, but I discovered what I could about the materials used, their manufacture and their potential for recycling. I also checked verified reviews from paying customers and excluded any mattresses for which delivery and customer service received significant negative feedback.

Otty Original Hybrid: Otty’s flagship offering is a firm but cosy and supremely comfortable mattress that helped me sleep fantastically from the first night of testing. The only other one that managed this was the Simba Hybrid Pro, which is hundreds of pounds more expensive.

The Otty has an outstanding balance of support, cushioning and breathability. My husband and I slept on it for two months and were sad to see it go. It feels ergonomically supportive from edge to edge, with no dip in the middle, even after several weeks.

Simba Hybrid Pro: This sumptuous mattress also had me sleeping soundly from the off. It’s expensive, and won’t be firm enough for some, but its wonderfully comfy surface makes you feel like you’re sleeping on a cloud – and it may even bring peace if you share your bed with a fidgety partner (or the dog, or the kids). The medium-firm Simba Hybrid Pro is supportive enough for most people, but it has a cosy, yielding feel that may be down to its upper layer of natural wool. The overall effect is luxurious and decidedly soporific.

The Hybrid Pro had the best motion isolation in my test. The mattress doesn’t completely lack bounce, especially on a slatted base, but its foam layers absorb movement so well that it genuinely helped my husband and me sleep through each other’s tossing and turning.

Ikea Valevåg: Ikea’s popular mattress is a bed-in-a-box bargain. You’d be forgiven for thinking it’s a hybrid, but it avoids that label principally because its pocket springs are wrapped in only slim layers of polyfoam for cushioning. It feels much less robust than its pricier rivals, but it’d be a great choice for the kids or the spare room. Simplicity has its benefits. The Valevåg expanded to full size faster than the hybrids and was much lighter. Finally, a mattress I could lift and manoeuvre by myself, including up and down stairs.

For similar reasons, Ikea’s mattress is wonderfully breathable and may feel cooler in summer than a hybrid. With no memory foam to trap heat, it cooled down faster than any

other mattress in my temperature-control test. Hi-tech open-cell foam is all very well for letting the air circulate, but plain old springs do the same for a lot less cash. Woolroom Standen Wool: Woolroom’s mattress is a masterpiece. The “regular” (medium) edition I tested supported my body confidently without ever feeling too firm, and cushioned me without sinking like foam can. It even smelled delicious. This mattress improved my sleep, proving instantly comfortable and never disappointing me over three months of golden slumbers. Firmness preference is subjective, but everyone in my family was wowed by the Woolroom’s perfectly balanced, supportive cosiness when I invited them to try it. (You’ll note that I did not invite them to sleep-test this one for me.)

The springs are supportive but with a lovely degree of flexibility, so the mattress never feels hard. As a small side-sleeper, I need some “give” to cradle my hips, knees and shoulders so that my spine can align – essential for good sleep and long-term spinal comfort, as explained in our guide to choosing a mattress for back pain. The Woolroom achieved this every night for three months of testing, and there was never any fear that I’d have to “wear it in”, as is often the case with the more supportive foam mattresses.

Millbrook Wool Luxury 4000: A layer of UK-sourced wool just below the sleeping surface of this pocket-sprung mattress adds a slightly spongy feel, but there’s no foam in here, and the mattress is double-sided. Once it starts to soften, which happens fairly quickly, you can flip it to get the fresh, cool firmness of the other side. I tested this mattress for six weeks from early May 2025, when the nights were still chilly, until mid-June, when conditions approached 24/7 mugginess. Initially, I loved its robust, traditional feel and liked the way its tufted surface allowed the air to circulate in the way modern hybrids often don’t. I often struggle with night sweats, and the breathable surface and wool layer genuinely helped me dial down the soggianness. The Millbrook doesn’t offer much in the way of motion isolation, however. Its bounciness amplified my husband’s and my tossing and turning – we’re both hit-and-miss sleepers. Another issue to emerge over the weeks was a surprising level of softening, even on my side of the bed (strange considering I’m smaller than your nan). Flipping the mattress made it feel lovely and supportive again, but we were disappointed to have to do this so soon and so frequently.

‘unconventional’ exercise unveils an entirely new realm of fitness

We all appreciate a display of strength, such as running, jumping, throwing balls, swinging kettlebells, or climbing walls. In contrast, intentional and controlled movements may appear somewhat dull. However, this more measured approach to exercise is often safer and less physically taxing than its more flamboyant counterpart. Furthermore, recent studies indicate that one particular type of this exercise is more effective than it has historically been acknowledged.

“Eccentric exercise training provides numerous benefits for physical fitness and overall health, making it suitable for a wide range of individuals,” Prof Kazunori Nosaka writes in a new paper published in the Journal of Sport and Health Science. It “offers unique advantages over concentric or isometric exercise, particularly in promoting neuromuscular adaptations”. Eccentric? Concentric? To explain this in slightly friendlier terms, any movement you make with your body involves one or more sort of muscle contraction: concentric (shortening), isometric (generating force to stay in one place, as you’d do in a plank), or eccentric (lengthening). Practically speaking, it’s usually safe to think of what sports scientists call the eccentric phase of a movement as “the lowering bit”. In a press-up or squat, it’s the part where your body’s descending towards the floor; in an overhead press, it’s the part where you’re lowering the weights from the top of the move. Typically, this means that eccentrics feel a bit less sexy than concentrics, but increasingly, it seems they’re an excellent option for almost everyone.

“One recent meta-analysis found that eccentric training is consistently effective

for improving strength, power, muscle growth and flexibility across all populations, from athletes to older and clinical groups,” says Callum Roberts, head coach at Results Inc gym. “We usually use eccentric movements to reinforce technique and develop better range of motion – slowing down and taking the time to really focus on the movement. If you want to perform better, look better and stay functional over the long term, they really should be part of your training.”

Exactly how easy it is to emphasise the eccentric bit of an exercise depends a lot on what you’re doing. Some exercises don’t really have an eccentric phase – explosive movements such as a kettlebell swing don’t have a part where you control the weight as it comes back down, and sled pushes or pulls don’t involve a part where the sled pushes you back. In everything else, the simplest way to focus on the eccentric is to make the lowering bit slower. “Three to five seconds is a good rule of thumb,” says Kurt Johnson, co-founder of physiotherapy and performance clinic One Body LDN. “For example, if you’re doing a biceps curl, you’d curl up normally, but in the lowering phase take your time and count the seconds. The same goes for squats or push-ups.”

For tougher movements, you can also experiment with eccentric-only reps – in a pull-up, for instance, you can just do a small jump (or stand on a step) to get your chin over the bar, then lower yourself down as slowly as you can. In a press-up, things can be a bit more ungainly, but the principle is the same – just wrangle yourself into the top position of the

movement (a plank, essentially), then try to descend with a bit of decorum. In other exercises, you can make the “up” bit easier than the “down”: in the biceps curl, for instance, you’d do this by “cheat” curling the dumbbells up (using a bit of momentum from your body to help), or by switching standard palms-up curls for palms-facing-each-other hammer curls, which recruit more muscles to the effort. “A more advanced option is to add eccentric overload by using two limbs to lift but one to lower, like using both legs to push up in a leg press but one in the down bit” says Anwen Davies, a former gymnast and trainer at The Lady Lab. “This isn’t necessarily something to try as a beginner, but it’s worth bearing in mind.”

Traditionally, the biggest problem associated with eccentric exercise (apart from how to pronounce the word, which turns out to be eccentric) is delayed onset muscle soreness, or Doms – the dreadful feeling when you’ve done too many squats and can’t walk down the stairs properly. This partly happens because it’s easy to accidentally overdo eccentrics. “Despite the workout feeling far less demanding, the body and muscles can end up feeling much more fatigued,” says Johnson. “It’s important to start with fewer repetitions of each exercise and lower weights before building up – that way, the soreness will largely become a non-issue.”

In summary, then: it’s not loud, it’s (probably) not as much fun as leaping on to a box, and you’ll have to use less weight than you normally would, but prioritising eccentrics might actually help you to build some strength. Time to take it slow.

Six unique workout routines to try out



If you are unfamiliar with eccentric exercise (or exercise overall), begin with a gentle approach – consider performing two or three exercises that emphasize eccentric movements twice weekly, ensuring there are at least three days of rest between sessions. Aim for three sets of approximately five to eight repetitions, concentrating on the slow eccentric phase.

“After three to four weeks, your body will adapt to the soreness and

you can increase the frequency or add exercises,” says Anwen Davies. “The beauty of this approach is that you can get significant strength gains in 20 to 30 minutes without needing equipment or getting out of breath.” Take your pick from the below: 1.Eccentric-focused squats

Squat down slowly for three to five seconds, then stand up at a normal pace. “You can hold on to a door frame for balance initially, or lower to a chair,” says

Davies. “This helps to build leg strength without the cardiovascular demand of regular squats.” 2. Wall press-ups

Put your hands on a wall shoulder-width apart, and slowly lower your chest towards the surface – again, three to five seconds is a good count before you pause and press back up. Lower the incline (so that you’re using a table or couch) as you get stronger.

3. Push presses Using dumbbells, a bar-

bell, or a couple of bottles of water, bend your knees slightly and then stand up straight, using the momentum to help push the weight overhead – then lower it slowly. Warm up your shoulders first, though.

4. Heel drops “Stand on the edge of a step and rise up on to your toes, then, lower your heels slowly below the level of the step before returning to the start,” says Johnson. “This is a brilliant option for anyone with calf or Achilles issues.” You can also do it while you’re waiting for the bus.

5. Eccentric calf raises Similar to heel drops, but a bit more intense, as you’re working on one leg. “Rise up on to your toes with both feet, then take one foot off the floor and slowly lower down over three to five seconds,” says Davies. “Use both feet to rise again. This is good for calf strength and ankle stability.” If balance is a problem, putting a hand on the wall or a table is fine. 6. Slow descent step-downs

Stand on a step or sturdy box, and slowly lower one foot toward the ground over three to five seconds without fully stepping down, then bring it back up. “This helps to build single leg strength and control, which translates to better balance and injury prevention,”

Tara Sutaria Praises Yash, calls toxic experience ‘satisfactory’

Agency: Tara Sutaria is currently at the Cannes Film Festival, where the actress has opened up about the experience of working on Yash’s upcoming action thriller Toxic: A Fairy Tale For Grown-Ups. The actress revealed that working on the film was very “satisfactory and pleasing” to her. At the ongoing Cannes Film Festival, Tara Sutaria opened up about her experience during a conversation with The Hollywood Reporter India, calling the film one of the most creatively fulfilling experiences of her career so far. “Doing Toxic to me is so satisfactory, it’s so pleasing,” she said, before adding, “I also just want to be on sets that make me feel good, that are led well with integrity and with purpose and intention, and we have

all of these things with Geetu Mohandas and with Yash.” The actor went on to speak emotionally about collaborating with Geetu Mohandas, describing the filmmaker’s leadership and creative environment as something truly special. “It has been like the joy of my life,” Tara shared. “To work with Geetu and to be led by a woman, it’s a world of difference on set.” When asked about her character, Rebecca, Tara remained careful not to reveal too much and added, “She’s fascinating,” before immediately saying, “All of the women in this film are fascinating.” “It has also been really interesting to see so many women come together alongside Yash. He has been incredible both as a human being and as a co-star,” she shared.

Kalki makers confirm Santhosh Narayanan for sequel project

Hyderabad : When Kalki 2898 AD was released, the music composed by Santhosh Narayanan initially received mixed reactions from a section of audiences. However, as the film progressed through its theatrical run, perceptions gradually changed, with the background score eventually emerging as one of the strongest elements of the film and earning widespread appreciation. On the occasion of the composer’s birthday, the makers officially extended their wishes and also confirmed that Santhosh Narayanan will be returning to compose music for the sequel. The



announcement puts an end to speculation surrounding the film’s music department and reinforces the impact his

work had on the first installment. His soundtrack and background score were widely credited for enhancing the

film’s emotional and cinematic experience. Meanwhile, work on the sequel recently commenced in Hyderabad,

with Amitabh Bachchan and other members of the cast joining the shoot. Discussions have also intensified around the role of Sumati following reports about Deepika Padukone potentially exiting the project. Rumours suggest that Sai Pallavi is being considered for the role, although the makers are yet to make any official announcement. At present, Prabhas is busy shooting for Spirit, but he is expected to join the sets of the Kalki sequel soon. Director Nag Ashwin is said to be highly confident about the next chapter, with the team reportedly targeting a 2027 release.

Ram Pothineni debuts as director, joins actor filmmaker elite club

Hyderabad: Ram Pothineni is taking a major creative leap by stepping behind the camera for his upcoming film, joining the select club of Telugu actors who have ventured into direction, including legends like N. T. Rama Rao, Krishna, Pawan Kalyan, and young actor Vishwak Sen. “He has taken a big decision by stepping into direction, which is always a daunting task,” a source close to the development said. After showcasing his creative abilities as a lyricist and singer in Andhra King Taluka, Ram is now set to wield the megaphone for the first time with his 23rd film, #RAPO23. Announced on the actor’s birthday, the project explores the relatively untouched space of a stylish psychological action thriller. Backed by Krishna Pothineni under the newly launched Rapo Cinematics banner, the film is expected to present Ram in a stylish and intense



avatar unlike anything audiences have seen before. Adding more weight to the project, Ram is not only directing but has also written the story, making #RAPO23 one of the most ambitious ventures of his career. “The history of Telugu actors turning directors has seen mixed results. Senior

NTR delivered memorable blockbusters like Seetharama Kalyanam and Dana Veera Soora Kama among the films he directed, while Krishna found success with Simhasanam. On the other hand, Pawan Kalyan’s directorial venture Johnny failed to make an impact at the box office,

showing that success behind the camera has often been unpredictable for stars,” adds the source. With Ram now taking complete creative control, industry circles are keenly watching whether he can add another successful chapter to the actor-turned-director journey in Telugu cinema.

John Travolta honoured with surprise Cannes lifetime achievement award

Agency: The Cannes Film Festival delivered a big emotional moment for Hollywood this week, and it had nothing to do with a standing ovation. Actor-director John Travolta found himself fighting back tears after an unexpected tribute during the premiere of his latest project at the prestigious French film festival. The 72-year-old star was attending the screening of his directorial debut, Propeller One-Way Night Coach, at the Debussy Theater when Cannes chief Thierry Frémaux surprised him with an honorary Palme d’Or, one of the festival’s highest recognitions, often regarded as a lifetime achievement honour. Calling Travolta “one of the greatest actors”, Frémaux presented the award onstage on Friday, leaving the actor visibly stunned. Travolta, clearly overwhelmed by the moment, described the recognition as some-

thing even bigger than winning an Oscar. The actor then reflected on his earlier meeting with Frémaux and admitted he had never imagined his film would even make it to Cannes. “This is a humbling moment, so thank you Thierry from the bottom of my heart. When I met with you in November, I had no expectation that my film would be accepted. And when Thierry said it was not only accepted but it was making history because it would be the first film ever accepted that early, I cried like a baby because I just couldn’t believe it. Because in my opinion, you are the most discerning person in the movie industry. I was just happy to be here! I never expected this. Thank you so much.” The surprise honour added Travolta’s name to a growing list of celebrated artists recognised at Cannes this year. Earlier, the festival had already

announced honorary Palme d’Or awards for Peter Jackson and Barbra Streisand during the opening and closing ceremonies. Last year, Denzel Washington received a surprise honorary Palme d’Or ahead of the premiere of Highest 2 Lowest. Travolta was at Cannes to unveil Propeller One-Way Night Coach, an Apple-backed adaptation of the children’s book he released in 1997. The autobiographical drama is set during the golden age of aviation and follows a young airplane enthusiast named Jeff, played by Clark Shotwell, as he travels across the country to Hollywood with his mother, portrayed by Kelly Eviston-Quinnett. The project is especially close to Travolta’s heart, with the actor previously calling it “the most personal film he’s ever done”. The movie also features his daughter, Ella Bleu Travolta.

Sonakshi Sinha reveals near burnout after nonstop work in her 20s



Mumbai: There was a time when every other Bollywood release seemed to feature Sonakshi Sinha in some form leading a film, making a special appearance or lighting up a dance number. Fresh off the massive success of Dabangg,

the actor quickly became one of the busiest faces in the industry. But behind the packed schedules and constant shoots, Sonakshi now says she was quietly running herself into exhaustion. Looking back at the ear-

ly years of her career, the actor admitted that work completely took over her life through most of her 20s. In an exclusive chat with Hindustan Times, Sonakshi reflected on how nonstop filming and hectic schedules eventually pushed her close to burnout. “I started working very young. I was 22 when I started and 23 when my first film released. My entire 20s went into work. I felt like I was burning out, doing more than I should be. I was constantly on the go. I would not take time off for myself or breaks in between two films. I

would go from one set to another. I did double shifts at one point in time,” she said. Between her debut and the Covid-19 pandemic, Sonakshi appeared in 23 films over a span of 10 years. Alongside that, she also featured in several special appearances and dance tracks, making her one of the industry’s most visible stars during that phase. The actor shared that things only began to shift when she entered her 30s. Around 2017 and 2018, she realised she needed to slow down and create space for herself outside work.

Vijay–Rashmika wedding, honeymoon posts surpass Messi–Ronaldo campaign

Hyderabad : Vijay Deverakonda and Rashmika Mandanna’s wedding continues to remain one of the most talked-about celebrity moments of 2026. The couple, who tied the knot on February 26, became the centre of massive fan attention, with their wedding visuals, celebrations and post-wedding moments taking over social media. Now, the couple has reportedly achieved a major global digital milestone through their brand collaborations. Their wedding and honeymoon-related campaign posts have crossed massive engagement numbers on Instagram, placing them ahead of several international benchmarks in branded content. The Manyavar couple post featuring Vijay Deverakonda and Rashmika Mandanna has reportedly reached 11.5 million likes on Instagram. According to the note shared by the team, this makes it the most liked branded content post globally on the platform. The achievement marks a major moment for Indian celebrity-led campaigns, especially because the post is tied to the couple’s wedding, which had already generated extraordinary buzz among fans. Adding to the milestone, Vijay and Rashmika’s Airbnb campaign has reportedly crossed 9.1 million likes, making it the second most liked branded content post globally on



Instagram. With this, the top two most liked branded posts in the world are said to belong to Vijay Deverakonda and Rashmika Mandanna. The achievement also reportedly surpasses previous global benchmarks, including Louis Vuitton’s widely discussed campaign featuring Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo. Their journey from a widely celebrated wedding to record-breaking brand engagement reflects the growing power of Indian celebrity culture on global platforms. It also shows how emotional storytelling, fandom and brand visibility can come together to create campaigns that travel far beyond regional or national boundaries.

Kamal Haasan urges cost control in film industry



Chennai: Veteran actor and filmmaker Kamal Haasan has issued a strongly worded statement addressing the mounting financial pressures facing the Indian film industry amid global economic uncertainties and rising production expenses. In his detailed note, Kamal pointed out that increasing fuel, logistics, and energy costs are placing additional strain on cinema at a time when the industry is still witnessing an uneven recovery. He warned that inflationary pressures could also influence consumer spending patterns and impact theatrical business in the coming months. Ka-

mal stressed that any efforts to correct cinema economics should not come at the expense of workers, technicians, and daily wage earners. Instead, he advocated reducing avoidable expenditures, inflated entourage culture, unnecessary foreign shoots, and poor production planning. One of the most discussed observations from his statement was his remark questioning why “every love story needs Paris and every honeymoon sequence must end in Switzerland,” urging filmmakers to place greater confidence in India’s own locations and resources. The actor also called for broader industry discussions involving producers, actors, exhibitors, OTT platforms, and unions to collectively address the challenges facing the sector.

Prateek Kuhad drops blush, announces album full moon chamber

Mumbai: Singer-songwriter Prateek Kuhad has released his new single Blush, the first track from his upcoming third studio album Full Moon Chamber. The album is scheduled to release worldwide on July 10 via Atlantic Records and is currently available for pre-order. The single has also been released with an official music video. Blush opens with a softly driven guitar riff and carries Kuhad’s signature intimate, wistful sound. Speaking about the song, Prateek said, “It’s that heady feeling of infatuation that comes with meeting somebody and falling for them hard.” The track offers the first glimpse into the emotional world of Full Moon Chamber, which marks Kuhad’s first studio album since The Way That Lovers Do in 2022. Created



between New York and Los Angeles, Full Moon Chamber explores themes of love, identity and emotional trans-

formation. The album captures a period of personal and artistic evolution for Kuhad, who has built a global fol-

lowing through his delicate songwriting and emotionally resonant sound. Speaking about the journey behind the

album, Kuhad said, “I went through a lot of uncertainty for a couple of years. The music industry changed. A lot changed for me personally as well. But through it all, I ended up finding a part of myself that I had lost. The album follows that arc.” L.A.-based producer Nick Ruth, known for his work with Kelly Clarkson, Bakar and Lauren Spencer Smith, helped shape the project into a cohesive body of work. He refined Kuhad’s recordings with various collaborators and brought them together into a unified sonic vision. Prateek Kuhad has long been regarded as one of India’s leading singer-songwriters. His early EPs helped him build a dedicated listener base, while his 2017 full-length debut In Tokens and Charms earned him Indie Album of the Year honours

Sarabhai team reunites, miss Satish



Mumbai: Television’s beloved ‘Sarabhai vs Sarabhai’ cast recently came together for an emotional reunion. Actors Rupali Ganguly, Sumeet Raghavan, Rajesh Kumar, along with the makers JD Majethia, Aatish Kapadia other members of the cult comedy’s cast and crew, reunited for Sumeet Raghavan’s theatre play. Sharing glimpses from the get-together, Rupali Ganguly posted a group picture with everybody smiling ear to ear. In the photo, Rupali looked pretty in a pink saree as she stood alongside Rajesh Kumar, Sumeet Raghavan, and the rest of the Sarabhai gang. Rupali captioned the post in Marathi as, “Hee Dosti Tutaychi Naay” (This friendship will never end) She also shared another candid video with Rajesh Kumar from inside a car and wrote, “This was supposed to be posted at 8pm #sarabhaivssarabhai” In the video, Rajesh and Rupali were seen talking in the quintessential style of their Sarabhai iconic characters, Rosesh and Monisha. Meanwhile, Sumeet Raghavan reshared the reunion picture and penned an emotional note remembering Satish Shah who essayed the role of Indradan Sarabhai in the cult classic show. His caption read, “Missed our Indu... Sarabhais aren’t complete without our Naradmun. We are sure dad must be watching over us. Miss you Satish kaka” For those uninitiated, ‘Sarabhai vs Sarabhai’ originally premiered in 2004 and went on to become one of Indian television’s most iconic family sitcoms.

1991 law doesn't apply to Bhojshala, rules Madhya Pradesh HC

Bhopal: The Madhya Pradesh High Court on Friday declared the disputed Bhojshala Temple-Kamal Maula Mosque complex in Dhar as a temple of Goddess Saraswati, ruling that the statutory freeze imposed by the Places of Worship Act, 1991 would not apply to it since it is a protected ancient monument governed by a different law. While deciding the character of the structure, the high court held that the 1991 law applies only to suits and bars alteration in the religious character of any place of worship. In the present case, since the HC was deciding writ petitions seeking enforcement of fundamental rights of citizens under Article 226 of the Constitution, the ruling held that the constitutional power of the high court cannot be overridden by the legislation.

A writ petition is filed to enforce fundamental rights and challenge unconstitutional actions of the State; a suit is filed to enforce private rights arising from contracts.

The ruling is significant as the mosque committee had challenged the maintainability of the petitions by members of the Hindu community that in turn challenged an order of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) of April 7, 2003 permitting namaz to be offered at the mosque. The lawyers for the mosque committee held that under the 1991 Act, as on August 15, 1947 the place was a mosque and section 4 of the 1991 law freezes the religious character of this place of worship as on that day.

The high court bench of justices Vijay Kumar Shukla and Alok Awasthi disagreed: "Under Section 4(3) of the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991, monuments governed by the 1958 Act are



excluded from its operation. Hence, the 1991 Act does not apply to this monument, and cannot be used to claim fixed religious status." The 1958 law refers to the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958 (AMASR Act).

The court noted that the structure qualifies as an ancient monument due to its historical and archaeological significance under this law. The Hindu petitioners cited the same rationale in their arguments.

The court examined the 1958 Act and the 1991 Act before arriving at the conclusion. Section 4(2) of the 1991 Act states, "If, on the commencement of this Act, any suit, appeal or other proceeding with respect to the conversion of the religious character of any place of worship, existing on the 15th day of August, 1947, is pending before any court, tribunal or other authority, the same shall abate, and no suit, appeal or other proceeding with re-

spect to any such matter shall lie on or after such commencement in any court, tribunal or other authority."

The high court culled out the two essential aspects of the Act, i.e., 'change of the character' of the religious place of worship and 'suits' or other proceedings pending on the day when the 1991 Act was passed.

Justifying the exclusion of the present set of petitions from the 1991 Act, the court said: "In the present cases, the issue is not relating to the title of the property but for the claim of fundamental right of worship or prayer. No claim to title on the disputed area is claimed in these petitions." Since the petitions were filed under Article 226 (which allows courts to issue writs to enforce fundamental rights), the court said: "It is axiomatic the same does not apply to the extraordinary jurisdiction of the high court under Article 226 of the Constitution of India. The power of the high court under Article 226 of the Consti-

tution of India for enforcement of fundamental rights or any other purpose even otherwise cannot be overridden by any legislation. Power of judicial review is basic structure of the Constitution of India." It went on to conclude, "Considering the nature of the petitions, reliefs and various notifications, ASI reports and subsequent orders by the Supreme Court, it is held that the petitions are maintainable".

The 1991 Act is under challenge in a set of petitions before the Supreme Court. In these proceedings, an interim order was passed by the top court on December 12, 2024 barring any court from registering fresh suits or passing any effective interim or final order, including direction for survey, till final orders are issued in the pending proceedings. Incidentally, the lawyers appearing for Kamal Maula mosque had cited this order in a bid to restrain further hearing of the petitions by the high court. But the court said that this applies to suits and not to writ petitions under Article 226. Further, in respect of the Bhojshala-Kamal Maula mosque complex, it was the Supreme Court which issued an order in January asking the high court to decide the matter by examining the ASI survey report. These reasons weighed with the court while concluding that the disputed area of Bhojshala-Kamal Maula Mosque is a protected monument under 1958 Act with effect from March 18, 1904 over which ASI shall have full supervisory control. Since the religious character of the area was held to be a temple of goddess Vagdevi (Saraswati), the court struck down the ASI order of 2003 to the extent that it permitted offering of prayer by the Muslim community.

Ruturaj Gaikwad Sends Big Message To CSK Teammates After Loss To LSG



Chennai: Chennai Super Kings skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad admitted that his bowlers failed to live up to expectations in the team's seven-wicket defeat to Lucknow Super Giants in an IPL match in Lucknow on Friday, and said the five-time winners will address the shortcomings ahead of their remaining two league games. CSK, with 12 points from 12 matches, now find themselves in a must-win situation in their remaining league games. They will also have to rely on other results going their way to keep their playoff hopes alive. LSG, despite being out of contention, dealt a massive blow to CSK's campaign, thanks to Mitchell Marsh's explosive innings.

"Bowling had an off-day today," said Gaikwad, adding, "the first challenge is getting to Chennai and make sure we improve on the areas we need to improve, and then adapt and assess the conditions (in the remaining to league games)."

The CSK skipper, however, appeared unfazed by the setback to their playoff hopes,

saying the task was still manageable. "It is simple (playoff hopes), nothing complicated. Nothing to worry about, just ensure we have a good day and hope that we turn things around."

Gaikwad added that a total of around 190 was competitive, especially with the pitch offering assistance to the pace bowlers, but credited the LSG batters for the aggressive manner in which they approached the chase.

"There was a bit of something for the fast bowlers. Found it difficult to hit it off a hard length. We were looking at 160-170, and got 180. Nothing much better we could have done from a batting point of view."

"They (LSG) batted well and played some extraordinary shots. We were looking (to bowl the short ball) but (Josh) Inglis played differently in the last game, and Marsh plays the short ball well, so we were trying to hit a hard length. "We missed on execution but they played extraordinary shots. Sometimes the opposition can play good cricket than you, and you have to ac-

cept it," he added.

LSG skipper Rishabh Pant said despite their playoff hopes being dashed, his team had still been "amazing", adding that overthinking and having too many thought processes had hurt the side at crucial moments.

"It feels good (to win). Getting a win definitely feels good. The things we talk about, of having a lot to play for, regardless of how the season ends, we take a lot of pride (in playing like this)," said Pant. "Four fast bowlers, it has been working for us. The team we have, I am going to say it again, is so amazing. The only thing that can harm us is having too many thought-process."

Pant, who did not bat at his usual No. 4 position, said the decision was taken to give opportunities to players who had not featured much in the tournament. "I was ready to bat (tonight). But the idea came in on why not to try players who have not played much. Still wanted to be out there but sometimes, you have to respect some things," added Pant.

Delhi CM Gupta, cabinet, MLAs join PM Modi's austerity drive

New Delhi: Following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call for austerity measures, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Friday held a meeting of city's BJP legislators urging them to take the directives to every household across the capital.

The CM said that given the present global crisis in light of the West Asia war, rising fuel-related challenges and stretched economic conditions, the Delhi government is committed to turn the Prime Minister's message of a change in lifestyle into a mass movement.

Gupta asked MLAs to launch extensive public outreach campaigns in their respective constituencies and encourage people to save fuel, use public transport,



adopt carpooling and follow a responsible lifestyle. She said legislators should set an example for the public to follow. Under the

'Metro Monday' initiative, MLAs have been asked to travel by Metro once a week so that ordinary citizens are also encouraged to use public transport. She also appealed to MLAs to limit their convoys, reduce the use of vehicles and prioritise electric vehicles.

She directed MLAs to visit RWAs, social organisations, market associations, educational institutions in their constituencies to spread awareness about government's 'Mera Bharat, Mera Yogan' campaign. Calling it a 90-day public awareness drive, she said the campaign is a collective effort in national interest in which every citizen has an important role to play.

As part of these measures, a two-day work-from-home system

is being introduced in government departments, except essential services. Citizens have also been urged to observe one 'No Vehicle Day' every week.

The government has also decided not to purchase any new petrol, diesel, CNG or hybrid vehicles for the next six months. In addition, the temperature of ACs in government offices has been fixed between 24 and 26 degrees Celsius to ensure electricity savings. The government has also decided to set up special 'Made in India' corners in malls and supermarkets across the capital to promote indigenous products.

She said, if Delhi emerged as a successful model for the campaign, it would send a positive message to the entire country.

Secret classes, handwritten notes: How 'kingpin' PV Kulkarni allegedly leaked NEET-UG exam papers in Pune

New Delhi: The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has arrested the "kingpin" behind the NEET-UG 2026 paper leak. PV Kulkarni, a retired chemistry teacher, allegedly leaked the exam papers in Pune through secretly organised coaching sessions days before the nationwide test on May 3, investigators have found.

The National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET-UG), India's largest medical entrance exam, saw participation from over 22 lakh students. The examination was cancelled following allegations of a leak and will now be held again on June 21. The operation began in the final week of April, as per the CBI. Kulkarni partnered with another accused, Manisha Waghmare (who was arrested on May 14), to gather a group of students. Instead of distributing electronic copies or printed sheets, Kulkarni conducted highly exclusive, "special coaching classes" right out of his home in Pune.



During these sessions, Kulkarni allegedly dictated questions, multiple-choice options and the correct answers to students. The gathered students were asked to write these details down by hand into their notebooks.

Following recent recoveries, CBI investigators

confirmed that these handwritten student notes "exactly tallied" with the actual Chemistry section of the official NEET-UG 2026 exam paper.

PV Kulkarni is from Maharashtra's Latur district and had worked as a chemistry faculty member at a

reputed college. Officials said he retired around four years ago.

The CBI also claimed he was associated with the NEET examination process through the National Testing Agency (NTA), giving him access to confidential question papers. The agency

has not publicly disclosed further details about his exact role. The CBI took over the investigation on May 12 after the Union education ministry filed a formal complaint. The case had first surfaced in Rajasthan on May 7.

Since then, the agency

has conducted raids and searches across multiple states. Officials said electronic gadgets, mobile phones and important documents have been seized and are currently undergoing forensic and technical analysis.

By May 14, seven accused had been arrested from cities including Jaipur, Gurugram, Nashik, Pune and Ahilyanagar.

The agency said its investigation has uncovered a network of middlemen who allegedly contacted students and collected several lakh rupees from them for access to the leaked material through the special classes.

The CBI also questioned Shivraj Moteaganekar, director of Renukai Chemistry Classes (RCC) in Latur.

A 28-member CBI team visited his residence and continued questioning individuals linked to the investigation. Officials have not yet clarified the extent of any connection between the coaching institute and the alleged leak network.

Vinesh Phogat vs wrestling system, and sadly the champion is on the mat

On that traumatic night before her gold-medal bout at the 2024 Olympics, a desperate Vinesh Phogat pleaded with the doctor to draw some blood out of her body. She had spent half an hour inside a 98 degree Celsius sauna, but sweat beads hadn't surfaced on her severely dehydrated body. The coaches had cut her hair, even shortened her singlet, but still she weighed 50.1 kg — the stubborn extra 100 grams that eventually led to her disqualification weren't being shed.

Blood, sweat, a potential medical complication and even the possibility of permanent internal organ damage — Vinesh had risked everything to have a shot at a gold medal and history. She wasn't going to let her country down. She would get sympathy and praise. The all-time great American wrestler Jordan Burroughs said Vinesh deserved a silver medal and that the weight rule needed to change.

India's top table tennis star Manika Batra would get emotional. "You've shown us what it means to chase dreams with passion and grace. India is proud to

call you its own, and we're blessed to witness your journey," she posted on social media.

Vinesh would get overwhelming public support, but not from those designated to give her the shoulder and be her shield in times of crisis.

Those governing the sport that has historically celebrated quick moves and sharp reflexes, the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI), almost two years after their star wrestler's unfortunate disqualification from the Paris Olympics, would pull her up for an alleged embarrassing act that only they saw. "Your failure to manage your weight in the highest international competition... resulted in the loss of an assured Olympic medal for India and caused lasting reputational damage to Indian wrestling," WFI told Vinesh in a 15-page show-cause notice days before she was to take her first step on the mat after the Olympic slip-up.

Firm believers in "revenge is best served cold" in Mario Puzo's works would have blown smoke rings in appreciation and stood up and bowed.



IPL Play-Off Scenarios: Has The Stinging Defeat To LSG Knocked Out Chennai Super Kings?

New Delhi: Chennai Super Kings' late push for a play-off spot in the Indian Premier League 2026 received a massive jolt after the side lost to Lucknow Super Giants on Friday, May 15. Playing at the Ekana Stadium, an already-eliminated LSG handed CSK a heavy seven-wicket defeat. Mitchell Marsh starred with a sensational 90 off just 38 balls, helping the hosts chase down a target of 188 in only 16.4 overs. The defeat left CSK stranded in sixth place on the table with 12 points from 12 games. CSK now have only two matches remaining in the group stage, against SunRisers Hyderabad and Gujarat Titans, both teams firmly in the playoff race. The big question now is whether CSK can still qualify for the playoffs after the loss to LSG.

To put things simply, CSK have made the equation fairly straightforward for themselves. They must win both remaining matches to give

themselves the best possible chance of reaching the top four. But can they still qualify even if they lose one of the last two games? Here is how the situation stands. CSK face SunRisers Hyderabad and Gujarat Titans in their final two league games. Both opponents are still in contention for the playoffs and are well placed in the race. GT can still finish with 20 points from 14 games, while SRH can reach a maximum of 18. If CSK win both matches, they will move to 16 points, which should keep them alive in the qualification race. However, their fate is no longer entirely in their own hands and they will require favourable results elsewhere. Their closest competition at the moment is Rajasthan Royals, who also have 12 points but from 11 matches. Rajasthan Royals still have three matches remaining, against Delhi Capitals, Lucknow Super Giants and Mumbai Indians. If RR win all three



matches, CSK's playoff hopes are effectively over. Chennai will hope Rajasthan lose at least one of those matches. If RR finish on 16 points as well, the race could come down to Net Run Rate. At present, CSK's NRR stands at +0.027, the weakest among the teams fighting for the remaining playoff spots. Punjab face Royal Challengers Bengaluru and Lucknow Super Giants in their final two matches. RCB and GT, who current-

ly sit at the top of the table with 16 points, are virtually assured of qualification. If Punjab lose even one of their remaining games, their maximum possible tally would drop, opening the door slightly for CSK in the playoff race. This is where things become extremely complicated. RCB, GT and SRH already have 14 points and are in stronger positions because of their superior Net Run Rates. Unless those teams collapse badly

in the final stretch, they are expected to occupy three of the four playoff spots. For CSK to qualify with only 14 points, they would need Punjab Kings to lose both remaining matches, while Rajasthan Royals would also need to lose at least two of their final three fixtures. Even then, CSK would likely need a massive win in their remaining victory to significantly improve their Net Run Rate and stay ahead in the qualification battle.

Rare South-North Korea Women's Football Clash Tickets Sell Out

Kolkata: Tickets in South Korea for a rare match against a visiting North Korean team sold out within half a day, Seoul's football association told AFP on Friday. All 7,087 general admission tickets for the game on May 20 between home side Suwon FC Women and Naegohyang Women's FC were snapped up within about 12 hours of going on sale on Tuesday, an official from the Korea Football Association said. The two sides meet in the semifinals of the Women's Asian Champions League in the city of Suwon, about 35 kilometres (20 miles) south of Seoul. It will be the first time that a sports team from isolated and nuclear-armed North Korea has played in the neighbouring South since 2018. The two Koreas remain technically at war because the 1950-53 conflict ended in an armistice, not a peace treaty.



As the Champions League is a club competition, national flags and anthems will not be used during the match, local reports said. There will be no away supporters because North Koreans are generally not allowed into the South. Seoul's unification ministry said it will provide 300 million won (\$200,000) to support South Korean civic groups planning to cheer both teams at the match. The Naegohyang squad is set to arrive in South Korea on Sunday by air from Beijing. The winner of the semifinal will advance to the final of Asia's top women's club competition in Suwon on May 23, against either Australia's Melbourne City or Japan's Tokyo Verdy Beleza. North Korea is traditionally

strong in women's football, especially at the youth level, where it has won multiple World Cups in recent years. With this, the clinical Portuguese striker's tally rose to 35 goals in the season as he dethroned Abderrazak Hamdallah who netted 34 in the 2019 season while playing for Al Nassr. The talisman exemplified precision with his impeccable goal scoring instincts and has showed that he is still a force to be reckoned with. The 5 time Ballon D'or winner looked sharp on the pitch on Monday right from the beginning of the match as two of his chances in front of first half.

Sjoerd Marijne Eyes Big Changes In Indian Women's Hockey For Next Chak De Moment

Marijne Returns To Rebuild Indian Women's Hockey

New Delhi: Has Indian women's hockey team coach Sjoerd Marijne watched the Chak De! India movie? It may sound like an unusual question at a press conference, but for Indian women's hockey, the film and reality have often mirrored each other. After all, the Dutchman was behind one of Indian women's hockey's greatest modern-day moments when the team stunned the world to secure a fourth-place finish at the Tokyo Olympics. Marijne was more than happy to hear the question and revealed that watching the movie was among the first things he did after taking charge of the Indian team for the first time in 2017. Of course I am aware of the Chak De India movie.



That's the first thing I did in 2017, to watch that movie. Then we created our own Chak De India story," said Marijne to India Today during an interaction arranged by the Sports Authority of India. The reason behind the question was simple. Much like the hero of the blockbuster film, Marijne once again finds himself tasked with rebuilding belief in Indian women's hockey during his second stint. During his first stint, apart from the memorable Tokyo Olympics campaign, Marijne also guided India to their best World Cup result in decades when the team reached the quarterfinals in 2018. But since Marijne walked away after the Olympics, Indian women's hockey has struggled to rediscover that same spark.

In 2022, the side finished ninth at the World Cup and also failed to qualify for the Paris Olympics. Since then, both Janneke Schopman and

Harendra Singh have tried their hand at the job before moving on. Now, Marijne returns to a side without former captain Rani Rampal, struggling with penalty corner conversion and battling injuries at key moments. The signs, however, suggest there could still be another Chak De moment waiting around the corner. After securing qualification for the World Cup, the Indian women travelled to face world No. 2 Argentina in a four-match series. Against one of the strongest teams in the world, India managed to pull off impressive results, including a win and a draw. Now

Sakshi Chaudhary Feels Fearless After Securing Her Commonwealth And Asian Games Berth

New Delhi: After years of trials and tribulations, Sakshi Chaudhary is finally showing signs of fulfilling her promise. Despite her talent, she had never quite been able to find a firm ground at the elite level of boxing. After acing junior and youth level, she had been punching below her weight at the elite level. She would get some odd wins here and there but that would be followed up by some demoralising defeats, stalling her progress in the process. Ask her to sum up her career so far, and she'll admit it has been 'a roller-coaster ride'. But on Friday, the boxer from Dhanana in Bhiwani district (Haryana) took a sizeable step, securing herself a prized spot in the upcoming Commonwealth Games and Asian Games in the process. It's a cathartic experience for her and her family (her father is a farmer while her mother is a homemaker), who never stopped believing despite many testing moments over the years. It's also a big shot in the arm for noted coach Jagdish Singh, who has been instrumental in her career.

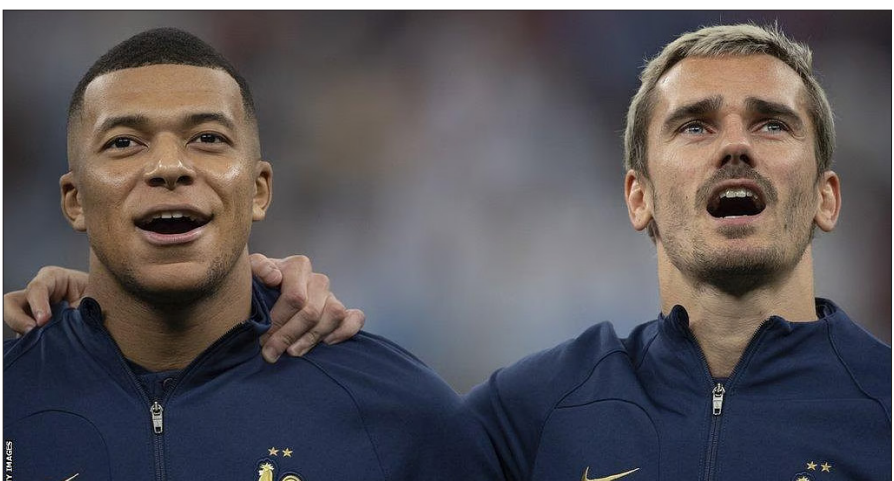


The 25-year-old, who caused a massive upset by beating Nikhat Zareen on Thursday, got the better of Minakshi Hooda, reigning 48kg world champion, barely 24 hours later to finish as topper (women's 51kg category) in the three-day national trials at NS NIS Patiala. There's a genuine sense of happiness in her voice as she recounted her fights during the trials. "This (trial) was quite challenging. I was part of 54kg and Preeti had already qualified. So 51kg was

the only option, it was suitable for me. I knew I would either make a big leap or just miss out. I had nothing to lose," Sakshi told this daily. Beating two-time World Championships gold medallist Nikhat, who had made 50-52kg category her own over the years, was undoubtedly the high point. The 25-year-old, who's a product of the famed Bhiwani Boxing Club (BBC), said she made her reach advantage count to keep Nikhat at bay and get her hand raised. "My gut feeling was I could beat her. Everyone had the feeling that Nikhat would eventually go on to win the 51kg berth. For a long time she had been dominating and there's this set mindset that she'll continue to do well. She is a really good boxer. She is especially good at close range while my strength is long range. I maintained my distance, using my

footwork and my jab and I didn't let her come close to me. I won 4-1 and everyone was quite astounded, like they were 'how did this happen'. Everyone came and congratulated me," the Army boxer said. Following that massive coup, she was understandably over the moon. The adrenalin rush was running at its peak and she even had a hard time getting proper sleep but she had to remind herself that her task was not over yet. She applied a similar playbook to get the better of Minakshi on Friday. "I had met her in the past during assessment and I had done well then so I had that confidence in me. Moreover, she was coming up from 48kg while I had moved down to 51 so I had a bit of an advantage in terms of reach and strength." What has transpired over the last few days or so is certainly a big morale-booster for her.

Mbappe Leads France World Cup Squad As Deschamps Leaves Out Absent Griezmann



Paris: Two-time champion France named its 26-man squad for the FIFA World Cup 2026, starting on June 11 in the USA, Mexico and Canada. Didier Deschamps, who will step down from his role as the French head coach after this World Cup, has made no surprises with his picks. Real Madrid forward Kylian Mbappe will likely skipper the team which boasts the current Ballon d'Or holder Ousmane Dembele. The squad boasts plenty of experience while also having past World Cup winners in Mbappe, Dembele,

N'Golo Kante and Lucas Hernandez. Antoine Griezmann, who retired from the national team after the Euro 2024, will not be reversing his decision to be part of the squad, while Real Madrid midfielder Eduardo Camavinga has been dropped. France is in Group I with Senegal, Iraq and Norway and will begin its campaign against Senegal on June 16. He injected fresh energy into the team and rejuvenated the squad. The results were reflected on the pitch as England made it to the semi-finals of the FIFA World Cup 2018 and

also reached the finals of the Euros in both 2021 and 2024. The resurgent English side under Southgate's guidance continued their impressive form, advancing to the quarter-finals of the 2022 World Cup. After failing to claim glory against Spain in the recent Euro finals on Sunday, Southgate indicated that he would take time to decide about his future as the national team's manager. "As a proud Englishman, it has been the honour of my life to play for England and to manage England. It has meant everything to me, and I added.

Terrified CSK Star Lost Plot Against LSG: Ex-India Captain Highlights Exact Moment Championship Slipped

New Delhi: Anshul Kamboj had a day to forget at the Ekana Stadium against the Lucknow Super Giants. The CSK pacer came in as a bowler who was competing with Bhuvneshwar Kumar for the purple cap, but looked very ordinary in his efforts against LSG, conceding 63 runs off just 16 balls. LSG vs CSK, IPL 2026: Highlights | Scorecard This included two separate instances where the pacer was hit for four consecutive sixes, first by Mitchell Marsh and then by Nicholas Pooran. Speaking on his YouTube channel, former India captain and selector, Kris Srikkanth pointed out the exact moment where Kamboj lost the plot. Srikkanth slammed the planning of Kamboj for trying to bowl a short delivery against Marsh. He then said by the third ball of the over, the CSK pacer looked spooked and fear had crept into his mind and kept making the same mistake again and again. "What did he bowl first ball? A short-of-a-length delivery. Against Australians, if you bowl short, they'll punish you badly. Marsh smashed that first ball over covers for six. Remember that shot? After that, Kamboj kept bowling short, trying to get bounce, and Marsh pulled him over square leg for another six." "From the third ball onwards, if you watch the slow-motion



replay carefully, you can notice it in Kamboj's run-up itself. He got scared after those first two sixes. The fear crept in immediately, and from there he kept bowling shorter and shorter," said Srikkanth. Srikkanth agreed with the fact that Kamboj shouldn't have bowled at that time and CSK should have persisted with Mukul Choudhary and Spencer Johnson, who looked impressive early on in the match.

The former India selector said that CSK should continued bowling good and Test match lengths with Spencer Johnson and Mukesh, said Srikkanth. Despite the loss, CSK remains in the playoff hunt but will need luck to go their way in the next two games. Anshul Kamboj lost con-

hit in the final over. But Kamboj's figures? 2.4 overs, 63 runs. That's 63 runs in just 16 balls. On average, he was conceding almost four runs per ball. Compare that with Mukesh Choudhary, who bowled well despite the assault happening at the other end. He finished with 3 overs, 24 runs and a wicket." "So what CSK should have done was simple: continue bowling good lengths and Test-match lengths with Spencer Johnson and Mukesh," said Srikkanth. The loss, CSK remains in the playoff hunt but will need luck to go their way in the next two games. Anshul Kamboj lost con-

trol during the IPL 2026 match against the Lucknow Super Giants after being attacked by Mitchell Marsh in his opening over. The Chennai Super Kings (CSK) pacer conceded 63 runs in just 16 balls during the encounter at the Ekana Stadium. Former India captain Kris Srikkanth noted that Kamboj appeared "terrified" and "spooked" after the first two balls of the over. According to Srikkanth, the pacer's run-up showed visible signs of fear from the third ball onwards, leading him to repeatedly bowl short deliveries that were heavily punished. Chennai Super Kings misread the bowling strategy against Lucknow Super Giants by failing to persist with their effective left-arm quicks, Spencer Johnson and Mukesh Choudhary, during a critical phase of the match. Former India captain Kris Srikkanth noted that the team should have continued with the left-arm duo and maintained "Test match lengths" instead of switching to Anshul Kamboj.