

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

Kohima, May 17: Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio met Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in New Delhi and discussed the state's financial position and key development priorities. According to officials, the Nagaland delegation included deputy chief ministers T. R. Zeliang and Yanthungo Patton along with MLA Achumbemo Kikon. In a post shared on X, Rio said the delegation apprised the Union finance minister about the continued support required for Nagaland's developmental needs and



ongoing projects.

The discussions reportedly focused on financial assistance and measures to strengthen infrastructure and growth initiatives in the state. The chief

minister also expressed gratitude to Sitharaman for her understanding of the state's concerns and for assuring support to Nagaland. The meeting assumes significance as

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

Despite fuel-saving measures, Tripura is not under lockdown: CM Manik Saha

Agartala, May 17: Despite implementing fuel-saving measures in government offices amid worries about supply chain disruptions, Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha stated on May 14 that the state government has no plans to impose a lockdown. The clarification was made the day after departments were instructed by the state government to permit 50% of Group C and Group D employees to work from home starting immediately. In response to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call for austerity measures, the action is intended to lower fuel consumption. Saha told reporters that the government had only implemented a hybrid work system as a precaution to prevent "unnecessary fuel consumption" and that there was no intention to impose lockdown in the state.

The chief minister claims that fuel

availability and consumption patterns have been impacted by disruptions in the global supply chain, which is the reason for the Center's concern. He said that, similar to how people cooperated during the COVID-19 pandemic, the public is expected to react favorably to the Prime Minister's appeal. The decision made by the state government primarily impacts lower-level employees in government departments; officials anticipate that fewer people will commute, which will reduce the demand for fuel. To ensure that administrative work is not impacted, senior officials will, however, continue to report to work as usual.

Saha also said he had personally reduced the number of vehicles in his security escort from seven to four as part of the effort to conserve fuel. The chief minister indicated that similar measures could be



adopted across departments to support the government's austerity drive. The Tripura government has not announced any further restrictions and maintained that essential services and regular public activities will continue without disruption.

In Brief

Two suspected NSCN militants killed

Itanagar: Two militants from the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) were killed during a counter-insurgency operation by the Assam Rifles in Changlang district, Arunachal Pradesh, on May 12. The operation, based on intelligence about NSCN militants extorting local villagers, led to an exchange of gunfire after troops were ambushed. Arms and ammunition were recovered. A subsequent operation is ongoing to locate any remaining insurgents. Additionally, a separate gunbattle occurred near Chop village in Longding district on May 11, though there were no reported casualties.

Elephant carcass found in Assam's Topatoli

Guwahati: The carcass of a wild elephant was found at Dikchak Hill in Topatoli, suggesting a suspected poaching case. Local residents alerted forest officials, who trekked several kilometers to locate the animal. Upon examination, officials found two bullet wounds on the forehead and discovered the trunk had been severed. Locals alleged involvement of poachers from Meghalaya, but no connections have been confirmed. Authorities suspect links to illegal wildlife trade, raising concerns over increased elephant poaching incidents along the Assam-Meghalaya border. An investigation is ongoing.

Arunachal Police orders zero tolerance against corruption

Itanagar: The Arunachal Pradesh Police has issued a directive enforcing zero tolerance towards corruption within the Itanagar Capital Range. All police personnel must maintain integrity, transparency, and accountability in public dealings. The order prohibits coercion for illegal payments related to police services and warns of strict disciplinary and legal actions against corrupt practices. Unit heads are required to conduct regular briefings and promote awareness among officers, while public locations must display notices to inform citizens of their rights and encourage reporting of corruption. Compliance with these directives is essential to uphold public trust in policing.

Arunachal CM promises a strong digital ILP system and exhorts young people to avoid bandh culture and violence

Itanagar, May 17: On Friday, May 15, Aunachal chief minister Pema Khandu stated that the government of Arunachal Pradesh is nearing completion of the implementation of a fully digital Inner Line Permit (ILP) system with the goals of enhancing border security, preventing forgery, and protecting the rights of indigenous communities. In an interview with the media, Khandu stated that the action is being carried out in accordance with the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873. He claimed that the current paper-based ILP system is still susceptible to forgery and duplication, which could enable anti-social elements and illegal immigrants to enter



the state with forged documents. "All entry check gates throughout the state will be connected to a central database created by the digital ILP system. It will help track the number

of outsiders entering Arunachal Pradesh, record their exit details, and monitor permits that have expired," the Chief Minister said. He added that the new system would improve

monitoring and ensure better protection of the state's demographic and security interests. Amid protests by youth groups in the state, Khandu also appealed to young people to re-

frain from violence, road blockades, and bandh culture, and instead cooperate with the government. "I urge our youths to avoid violence and bandh calls and work together with

the government. This is their own government, committed to addressing issues concerning the people," he said. Thousands of youths reportedly took to the streets on Friday de-

manding the immediate release of Sol Dodum, Tana Tamar, and Millo Ambu, who were allegedly detained earlier. Following public pressure, the detainees were later released, according to protest organisers. The protest also witnessed support from members of the ST Bachao Andolan, who said the movement reflects growing public concern over issues linked to the future, rights, and protection of indigenous communities in the state.

The development comes amid increasing public debate in Arunachal Pradesh over identity protection, governance, and the need for stronger regulatory mechanisms to monitor entry into the frontier state.

To improve railroad safety, NFR installs automated weather stations

Guwahati, May 17: To improve operational safety during the monsoon season, the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) is installing automatic weather stations (AWS) in vulnerable areas.

This initiative aims for real-time weather forecasting to support timely preventive measures against natural disasters like floods and landslides.

Three AWS have been installed, and six more are underway in critical regions such as Assam, Mizoram, and Manipur, expected to be completed by the end of May. The stations, developed in collaboration with the India Meteorological Department, feature advanced sensors to monitor various weather parameters, thus enhancing decision-making during emergencies

and maintaining rail connectivity in challenging geographical areas. NFR said the deployment of the advanced monitoring systems reflects its continued focus on adopting modern technology, enhancing operational safety, and ensuring uninterrupted rail connectivity in geographically challenging regions during the monsoon season.

Arunachal CM meets Dr. Joram Aniya



Itanagar, May 17: Pema Khandu, the chief minister of Arunachal Pradesh, met Dr. Joram Aniya after she was appointed as a full-time member of NITI Aayog. Khandu congratulated Dr. Joram Aniya during the meeting, calling her appointment a historic occasion for Arunachal Pradesh and the Northeast. In addition to being the first person from Arunachal Pradesh, the Chief Minister pointed out that Dr. Joram Aniya is also thought to be the first full-time member from Northeast India to be appointed to the esteemed national policy organization. Highlighting her achievements, Khandu said Dr. Joram Aniya's journey from becoming the first Nyishi woman to earn a PhD to serving as a dedicated academician at Dera Natung Government College is truly inspiring. He also expressed gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for what he termed a visionary appointment, stating that the inclusion of voices from Arunachal Pradesh and the Northeast in national policymaking reflects meaningful representation of the region in India's development process. Khandu further said the appointment would allow the indigenous wisdom, lived realities and unique perspectives of the Northeast to contribute towards shaping the country's future development vision. The Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister extended his heartfelt congratulations and best wishes to Dr. Joram Aniya for her new responsibility.

The Assam government now has more responsibilities after the NDA won 102 seats : Himanta Biswa Sarma

Guwahati, May 17: After the NDA won 102 seats in the most recent Assam Assembly elections, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma stated that his government now has more responsibility. He added that the administration will work harder to fulfill all of the promises made in the election manifesto. Speaking on May 15 in Batadrava, Nagaon district, Sarma declared that the government would step up its development initiatives, especially in Batadrava. "After obtaining 102 seats, responsibility will rise. We'll put in more effort this time to help Assam grow," the chief minister declared. He noted that earlier manifesto commitments were framed under pandemic constraints and claimed that the approach to governance has changed since the COVID-19 period.

"The COVID pandemic was in front of us when I presented our election manifesto in 2021, and our promises were constrained. We've made bigger promises this time, and I'm sure we'll follow through



on them," he stated. The implementation of a Uniform Civil Code (UCC), the exclusion of Sixth Schedule and Scheduled Tribe areas, the creation of two lakh jobs, significant investments in flood mitigation, the expansion of health institutions, and infrastructure de-

velopment throughout the state are just a few of the major promises that Sarma reiterated. He also said that since taking oath on May 12, he had not undertaken any official programme outside Guwahati until his visit to Batadrava Than, the birthplace of Mahapurush Sriman-

ta Sankardeva. "When I go outside Guwahati, I feel a sense of responsibility. I will try to take Assam forward by following the path shown by the Gurujona," he said.

The Chief Minister added that he offered prayers at the shrine and

reaffirmed his government's commitment to the ideals of Srimanta Sankardeva, stressing that harmony and spiritual values remain central to governance.

"Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardeva envisioned an Assam where different communities live in harmony. Our government will work following that path," he said. Sarma also stated that the development of Batadrava Than will remain a priority, with discussions already underway with the management committee for several projects. Meanwhile, the state government reviewed key initiatives under its "Vikas and Virasat" agenda, including 24x7 power supply, the Maa Kamakhya Corridor project, and investment proposals under Advantage Assam 2.0. The BJP-led NDA returned to power in Assam for a third consecutive term after winning 102 seats in the recently concluded Assembly elections, with the new government sworn in on May 12 in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and senior NDA leaders.

NE/EAST

Tripura District Council contractors barred from PWD tender process



Agartala, May 17: Ranjit Debbarma, an MLA from Tipra Motha, met with PWD Chief Engineer Rajib Majumder, MLAs Philip Kumar Reang and Pathan Lal Jamatia, and

members of the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC), including Suraj, Jiten, and James Debbarma. The MLA expressed his displeasure with the Tri-

pura government today after it allegedly issued an order directing contractors belonging to the TTAADC not to participate in any tender process for PWD Roads and Bridges and

National Highway projects.

Along with MLAs Philip Kumar Reang and Pathan Lal Jamatia, the MLA met PWD Chief Engineer Rajib Majumder as well as district council members Suraj, Jiten, and James Debbarma. Later, MLA Ranjit said, “We have come here to meet the PWD Chief Engineer, Rajib Majumder. Some days ago, some contractors who had taken licences from the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) were directed not to participate in any tender processes floated by the Tripura government.

He said that not only Bengalis but also tribals live in the state, and the government has suddenly taken a decision that contractors from TTAADC cannot participate in any

tender process. “This has been implemented only under PWD Roads and Bridges and National Highway projects, while they are allowed in other departments. We have come here to know why such an order has been issued and submitted a memorandum with evidence to the Chief Engineer. He said this was done by higher authorities and assured us that he would forward the memorandum to them. Tomorrow, we will meet the PWD Secretary and also inform Chief Minister Manik Saha about the matter. Earlier, there was no such issue. In Dima Hasao, Assam, people having licences can participate in tender processes everywhere. We do not know why such restrictions have been imposed here in Tripura,” he added.

Meghalaya’s first eri silk yarn unit opens in Ri Bhoi

Shillong, May 17: A significant step toward bolstering the regional textile and handloom industry was taken on May 11 when Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma opened the state’s first eri silk yarn manufacturing facility in Lumdaithkhla in Ri Bhoi district. The PRIME Meghalaya initiative’s “Sai Lum Eri Silk Manufacturing Unit” is anticipated to improve local weavers’ access to reasonably priced yarn and establish a regulated market for eri cocoon farmers. According to officials, the factory presently employs 15 local workers, generates about 20 kg of yarn per day, and indirectly supports over 2,000 weavers in the area. “We need our entrepreneurs to thrive,” Sangma stated during the inauguration, adding that the state had previously lacked an organized market for eri cocoon farmers and that the new unit had “filled up the vacuum in the eri silk industry” by allowing farmers to sell cocoons within Meghalaya itself and secure better prices. Wallambok Pyngrope, an entrepreneur, founded the unit, which received ₹50 lakh in zero-interest financial support through PRIME Meghalaya Executive Director, Saloni Verma, described the project as “a source of dignified and sustainable livelihood” for local communities. He added that the state had previously lacked an organized market for eri cocoon farmers and stated, “We need our entrepreneurs to thrive.” He said that by allowing farmers to sell cocoons within Meghalaya and get better prices, the new unit had “filled up the vacuum in the eri silk industry.” Wallambok Pyngrope, an entre-



preneur, founded the unit, and PRIME Meghalaya provided ₹50 lakh in zero-interest funding. The chief minister also presented an extra ₹35 lakh check to help the project at the event. The project is “a source of dignified and sustainable livelihood” for the local inhabitants, according to Saloni Verma, Executive Director of the Meghalaya Basin Management Authority. She said the initiative reflected collaboration between multiple departments aimed at strengthening rural enterprise and encouraging local manufacturing. Pyngrope said Meghalaya is the country’s second-largest producer of eri cocoons, with Ri Bhoi alone having nearly 7,200 eri farmers and around 1,000 active weavers. He recalled years of financial hardship before establishing the unit and thanked the state government for backing entrepreneurship and rural industries. The inauguration comes amid growing recognition for Meghalaya’s traditional Ryndia textile, known for its eco-friendly and cruelty-free production process that does not kill silkworms. The fabric received a Geographical Indication (GI) tag in 2025, further boosting its national profile.

Himanta Biswa Sarma claims that with the BJP in control of West Bengal, Assam feels more safe

Guwahati, May 17: Himanta Biswa Sarma, the chief minister of Assam, stated on May 13 that the political alignment between the two neighboring states would enhance coordination on common concerns and that Assam feels more comfortable with the BJP in control in West Bengal. A day after taking the oath of office for a second term in a row, Sarma told reporters in Guwahati that Assam and West Bengal have traditionally had a number of similar problems, especially in the areas of law and order and inter-state cooperation. Assam feels more safe now that West Bengal has a government because we deal with a lot of similar problems.

Criminals used to be able to enter Bengal, and collaboration was not always simple. Now, things are different,” he stated. According to Sarma, the new political structure would allow



the two state governments to collaborate more on development, security, and governance. “The governments of Assam and West Bengal can collaborate in a number of areas to advance both states’ development. For many decades, this was not the case. “The future appears bright,” he remarked. Sarma remarked that the leadership of West Bengal’s attendance at his swearing-in

ceremony on Tuesday signified the start of more robust regional collaboration. “The presence of the West Bengal Chief Minister at the oath-taking ceremony, and the warmth shown by the people of West Bengal, project a bright future for the Northeast,” he added. Sarma was sworn in as Chief Minister for a second consecutive term after the BJP-led alliance retained power in Assam.

Four church leaders killed in ambush in Manipur’s Kangpokpi district

Imphal, May 17: At least four church leaders were killed and several others injured in an ambush by suspected militants on two vehicles in Kangpokpi district, Manipur. The attack occurred between Kotzim and Kotlen villages while the victims were traveling.

The identities of the deceased have not been confirmed. Injured individuals were taken to hospitals for treatment. Security forces launched a search operation and increased security in the area, but no formal statement or identification of the assailants has been made, and the motive remains unclear.

Two men in Assam conduct a fraudulent biometric drive, give young people Rs. 200, and are arrested

Guwahati, May 17: Two Mizoram residents are in police custody as a result of a suspicious biometric data collection operation in the Cachar district of Assam. Authorities claim that hundreds of local youths were tricked into biometric registration and facial scanning in exchange for financial rewards. Following a crackdown on a biometric registration camp run out of a marriage

hall in Silchar, the accused, Vanlalrinchhina (33) and Raymond Vatha Chozah (34), were taken into custody by Cachar Police. The two allegedly claimed to be affiliated with an American multinational corporation and persuaded jobless youths to participate in biometric enrollment and facial recognition scans by providing immediate payments of about Rs 200, according to police. Cachar

Additional Superintendent of Police (Crime) Rajat Pal said investigators found the exercise highly suspicious as the organisers failed to provide proper authorisation, official documentation, or a clear explanation regarding the purpose of the data collection. Police suspect that biometric details of more than 200 individuals, mostly youths, were collected during the operation.



Manipur court sentences father to life imprisonment for raping minor daughter

Imphal, May 17: A Special POC SO Court in Manipur’s Senapati district has sentenced a 48-year-old man to imprisonment for the remainder of his natural life after convicting him of sexually assaulting his seven-year-old daughter. The judgment was delivered on May 12 by Special Judge (POCSO) Lamkholal Kipgen, nearly four years after the case first came to light in 2022. The convict, identified as K. Besii of Kalinamai village under Mao police station, was found guilty under Section 6 of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012, which deals with aggravated penetrative sexual assault. According to the court order, the accused was arrested on March 16, 2022, following a complaint lodged by Child Line Senapati. After completion of the investigation, police filed the charge sheet and the trial formally began on

February 25 this year. The court pronounced the conviction on May 7 and announced the sentence five days later. While delivering the order, the court described the crime as “heinous and barbaric” and observed that the survivor was only around seven years old at the time of the offence.

The prosecution argued that the accused had grossly violated the trust and responsibility expected of a parent and caused deep physical and emotional trauma to the child. The court referred to several Supreme Court judgments dealing with incestuous sexual violence and stated that such offences destroy the basic foundation of trust within a family.

However, the court also noted that the case did not fall under the “rarest of rare” category required for awarding the death penalty. Apart from the life sentence, the court imposed a fine

of Rs 20,000 on the convict. In case of non-payment, he will have to undergo an additional six months of imprisonment. The court also directed the Manipur government to provide compensation of Rs 7 lakh to the survivor under provisions of the POC SO Act and Section 357A of the Code of Criminal Procedure. The order noted that the child would require long-term care and support because of the psychological and emotional impact of the assault. According to the court, the child is currently staying at a shelter home in Senapati district. It directed that 80 per cent of the compensation amount be kept in a fixed deposit until she reaches adulthood, while the remaining amount may be used for urgent educational or medical expenses with permission from the District Legal Services Authority.

MoS Arjun Ram Meghwal promises Mizoram complete central support

Aizawl, May 17: Arjun Ram Meghwal, the Minister of State (MoS) for Law and Justice, stated on Tuesday that the Central government is still dedicated to helping the people of Mizoram and promised to provide all required support. The MoS emphasized that resolving public complaints and guaranteeing improved governance are among the Union government’s top goals during a crucial interaction meeting with NGO representatives and community leaders at the Tourist Lodge in Mamit district of Mizoram.

Leaders of important civil society organizations, such as the Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl (MHIP), Young Mizo Association (YMA), Mizoram Upa Pawl (MUP), Village Council (VC), and Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP), were present during the meeting, and MoS Meghwal expressed gratitude for the important role that NGOs and community-based organizations play in preserving social harmony, supporting development initiatives,



and working for the welfare of the people throughout the state.

Leaders of significant civil society organizations, such as the Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl (MHIP), Young Mizo Association (YMA), Mizoram Upa Pawl (MUP), Village Council (VC), and Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP), engaged with the MoS during the conference. He listened to the representatives’ complaints, difficulties, and worries about the general development, infrastructure, governance, and welfare of the people in Ma-

mit district and other surrounding places. Superintendent of Police Manny Bhushan Singh and Mamit District Deputy Commissioner Suvigya S. Chandra also attended the program. Both representatives gave the audience assurances that the police department and district administration are dedicated to immediately, effectively, and amicably resolving public complaints.

The MoS arrived in Mizoram on Monday and visited the Mamit District Court and District Jail, where he reviewed the functioning of judicial and prison administration systems in the Northeastern state. A district administration official said that during the visit, MoS Meghwal reviewed the implementation of key initiatives such as e-Courts, e-Prison, and Tele-Law under the new criminal justice framework. He held detailed discussions with concerned officials on making these systems more effective, transparent, accessible, and people-oriented.

Meghalaya allows commercial traffic to use the Umiam bridge bypass

Shillong, May 17: Commercial vehicles traveling from Umiam to Shillong will begin using the new Umiam bridge bypass on May 14, following its inauguration on May 13. This initiative, announced by the East Khasi Hills district administration, aims to facilitate the movement of heavy vehicles and night super buses from the Ri-Bhoi side into Shillong. However, there are strict regulations concerning the timing and types of vehicles allowed on this route. Commercial and night buses are only permitted to use the bypass between 9 PM and 7 AM daily. Additionally, articulated vehicles are banned; only rigid vehicles with up to three axles and a maximum gross weight of 28.5 tonnes will be allowed. Furthermore, all night super buses must park at the Inter-State Bus Terminal (ISBT) in Mawiong, with restrictions against parking in various city locations, including the Shillong Recreation Ground Trust area and other municipal parking spaces. These measures aim to regulate traffic, minimize congestion in Shillong city, and enhance the entry of goods carriers and long-distance buses via the bypass. The Deputy Commissioner has instructed police and transport authorities to ensure strict adherence to these rules, deploying traffic personnel at key junctions around the clock for effective enforcement.

Congress accuses Pawan Khera of having a vendetta while he appears before Assam police

Guwahati, May 17: After Congress national spokesperson Pawan Khera appeared before the Crime Branch at the Pan Bazar Police Station in Guwahati for questioning, senior Congress politician Ripun Bora accused Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma of pursuing a “personal vendetta” against Khera. Bora told reporters that Khera showed up before the investigating officer as a “law-abiding citizen” in accordance with instructions related to the Supreme Court’s bail.

According to Bora, “Pawan Khera has come and appeared before the Crime Branch because when bail is granted, there is a provision that the person must cooperate with the investigation and appear before the concerned police station for interrogation.” “It is definitely personal vendetta



because the Chief Minister has taken it as his personal issue. CM ordered the arrest of Pawan Khera for a very petty reason,” Bora claimed, adding that although accusations can be made by

anyone in a democracy, the court ultimately determines their validity. Bora called the questioning a “routine process” under legal procedure and maintained that Khera was complying fully

with the court’s directives and would be released after interrogation. But the Congress leader claimed that the Assam Chief Minister’s personal prestige was at stake in this case. The Chief Minister has viewed it as a personal matter, thus it is undoubtedly a personal grudge. For a very little cause, CM ordered Pawan Khera’s arrest, according to Bora. He went on to say that although everyone can make accusations in a democracy, the court has the final say over whether or not they are true. The Congress leader also referred to the legal battle over Khera’s arrest, stating that although relief was denied earlier, the Supreme Court eventually granted him bail. “Ultimately, we got justice in the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court saw the entire matter and granted bail,” Bora said.

Four people are detained after rhino horn valued at Rs 1.2 crore was found in Arunachal

Itanagar, May 17: In an effort to combat wildlife trafficking, police and forest officials in the Papum Pare district of Arunachal Pradesh seized a suspected rhinoceros horn worth approximately Rs 1.2 crore on May 12 in Hollongi and surrounding areas of Assam.

According to Papum Pare Superintendent of Police (Rural) Taru Gusar, one rhino horn was recovered during the joint operation, and during questioning, the accused allegedly disclosed that the wildlife contraband was being smuggled for an estimated Rs 1.2 crore.

Officials claim that the operation was conducted on May 12 in Hollongi and surrounding Assamese villages in response to specific intelligence reports



regarding illicit wildlife trade activities. One rhino horn was found during the combined operation, according to Papum Pare Superintendent of Police (Rural), Taru Gusar. The defendants allegedly disclosed during questioning that the wildlife contraband was being smuggled for an estimated Rs 1.2 crore.

Two new spider species discovered in Nagaland forests

Kohima, May 17: Researchers from the Zoological Survey of India have discovered two new species of lace-sheet-weaver spiders in the forested hills of Nagaland during a scientific expedition conducted in the state’s interior regions. The findings were published in the international journal Zootaxa following a pre-monsoon faunal survey carried out in Peren and Tseminyu districts.According to the researchers, the newly discovered spider 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 found.The spiders are commonly known as lace-sheet-weaver spiders because of the large horizontal sheet-like webs they build in humid forest environments.Scientists said the species are characterised by elongated and slightly flattened bodies along with long, slender legs. The front pair of legs is especially adapted to help the



spiders move rapidly across their webs.The newly identified species were found living in shaded forest patches, rocky crevices and areas beneath rocks and tree roots in the hill regions of Nagaland. Apart from the new discoveries, the researchers also recorded Psecchus himalayanus in Nagaland for the first time. Earlier, the species had only been known from Himalayan regions. The new record extends its known distribution into the Indo-Burma biodiversity hotspot of Northeast

India.The study also documented an unusual behavioural observation involving a male Psecchus himalayanus sharing the web of a female Psecchus phenshunyu. Researchers described it as a rare case of heterospecific cohabitation among psechrid spiders.The research team was led by arachnologists Puthoor Pattammal Sudhin, Shouvik Mali and Souvik Sen.The team also acknowledged the assistance of local spider enthusiasts and villagers from Ntu and Phenshunyu during the field survey.

Delhi CM and UP DyCM visit Tripura and support Manik Saha’s expansion efforts



New Delhi, May 17: Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta and Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak arrived in Tripura to offer prayers at the sacred Tripura Sundari Temple in Gomati district. Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha and BJP state president Rajib Bhattacharya welcomed the two leaders at Maharaja Bir Bikram Airport in Agartala. Rekha Gupta told reporters that she felt “pride and relief” upon arriving Tripura. Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha and BJP state president Rajib Bhattacharya welcomed the two leaders at Maharaja Bir Bikram Airport in Agartala.Rekha Gupta told reporters that she felt “pride and relief” upon arriving in Tripura and thanked Chief Minister Manik Saha and party employees for the cordial welcome. “I will visit the temple of Mata Tripura Sundari for her darshan. I pray that under the leadership of

Prime Minister Modi, both Viksit Bharat and Viksit Tripura continue to progress.

I also pray that we can provide every possible benefit to the people of this state,” she said.Brajesh Pathak said the visit was aimed at seeking blessings from Maa Tripura Sundari and reaffirmed the BJP’s development narrative in the Northeast.“After attending the swearing-in ceremony of the Assam government, we came here to pray that under the leadership of Chief Minister Manik Saha, Tripura continues to progress and joins the ranks of the leading states of the country,” he said. The visit comes just hours after BJP leaders from across the country attended the oath-taking ceremony of the new Assam government led by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, highlighting the party’s continued political focus on the Northeast region.

Bandh turns violent in Arunachal capital

Itanagar, May 17: On Friday, May 15, a bandh organized by the Scheduled Tribe Bachao Andolan Committee (STBAC) in the Itanagar Capital Region of Arunachal Pradesh descended into violence after demonstrators allegedly threw stones at police officers and blocked National Highway-415, forcing security forces to use tear gas shells to scatter the crowd, according to officials.The organization called for strict enforcement and full digitization of the Inner Line Permit (ILP) system in order to prevent illegal entry into the frontier state. The 36-hour shutdown started at 5 a.m. on Thursday.

According to officials, protesters who were marching from Naharlagun to Itanagar became hostile and allegedly threw stones at the Itanagar police station and police cars. The incident did not result in any reported serious injuries. Later in the evening, after the scheduled bandh period had ended, protesters blocked National Highway-415, leading police to use tear gas shells to clear the road and restore normal traffic movement.

Panic is caused in Nagaon village by wild elephants and buffaloes

Nagaon, May 17: Panic has ensued in Bharaguri village, Assam, as wild elephants and buffaloes have invaded agricultural fields, damaging crops and instilling fear

among residents. A herd of four elephants has caused significant losses during the Boro paddy harvesting season. The presence of wild buffaloes further exacerbates villagers’ anx-

ieties. Many farming families face financial distress due to crop destruction, and locals express frustration with the Forest Department’s ineffective response to these recurring incursions. This ongoing human-animal conflict highlights the broader issues of shrinking forest habitats and increased wildlife encroachment into settlements in Assam.

The Austerity Push of PM Modi

Cut Convoy By 50%, Add More EVs

New Delhi, May 17: In an effort to promote austerity and reduce fuel consumption in light of the current global situation, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has ordered the Special Protection Group (SPG), which is in charge of his security, to increase the number of electric vehicles (EVs) in his carcade, but insisted that new vehicles should not be purchased for this purpose. According to the most recent reports, the SPG has started carrying out these directives while making sure that the mandatory safety guidelines outlined in the “Blue Book” are not compromised. Additionally, the Prime Minister has requested that the Special Protection Group (SPG), which is in charge of his security, increase the number of electric vehicles (EVs) in his carcade. However, he has emphasized that new cars should not be bought for this purpose. According to the most recent sources, the SPG has started carrying out these directives while making sure that the required safety standards outlined in the “Blue Book” are not violated. Other ministers, such as Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma, and Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, have chosen to cut back on the



number of vehicles in their official convoys as part of a larger initiative to promote responsible fuel consumption and administrative austerity in light of the Prime Minister’s recent call to reduce unnecessary travel and conserve national resources. The austerity drive is now being mirrored across the Bharatiya Janata Party-led states. Other ministers have made the decision to cut back on the number of vehicles in their official convoys, including Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma, and Delhi Chief Minister

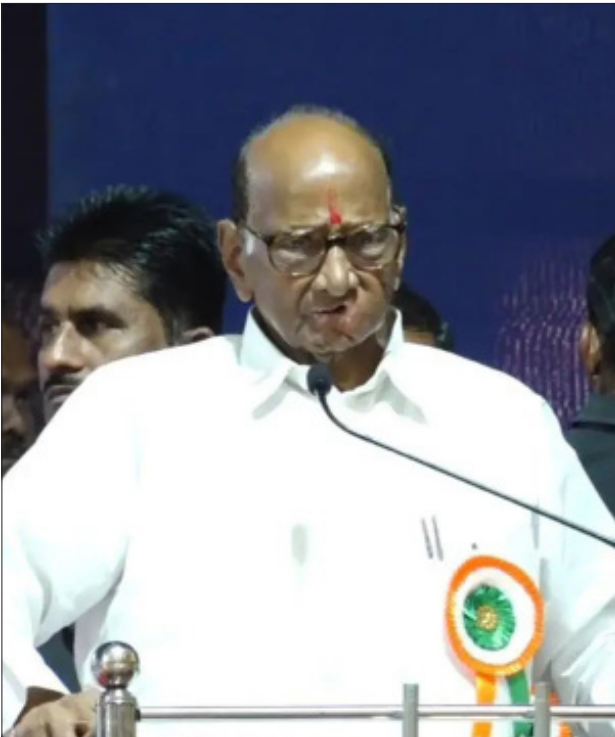
Rekha Gupta. In light of the Prime Minister’s recent request to reduce unnecessary travel and conserve national resources, the action is being viewed as part of larger initiatives to promote responsible fuel use and administrative austerity. Amid elevated global crude oil prices and an energy crisis triggered by the US-Iran war, Prime Minister Modi on Sunday called for collective participation to help the country withstand global economic uncertainties, supply-chain disruptions, and inflationary pressures. PM Modi urged citizens to adopt what he described as

“nationally responsible” lifestyle choices and promote the use of local products, asking, “How can the nation progress if we depend on imports for everything?” The Prime Minister appealed to the people to avoid non-essential gold purchases for one year to reduce pressure on foreign exchange outflows and advised against foreign travel. He said that conserving foreign exchange reserves is an act of patriotism and urged people to avoid overseas vacations and destination weddings abroad.He also pitched for domestic tourism and celebrations within the country.

Sharad Pawar requests that Narendra Modi convene an all-party meeting to discuss India’s economic issues

Mumbai, May 17: Prime Minister Narendra Modi should chair an all-party meeting on the economy, according to Maharashtra Rajya Sabha member Sharad Pawar, who leads a faction of the NCP. Defense Minister Rajnath Singh has recently presided over nearly all of these gatherings. J.P. Nadda, the leader of the BJP’s Rajya Sabha, presided over one such meeting last year. Pawar’s demand followed the Prime Minister’s repeated calls for austerity, which sent markets into a downward spiral and led to accusations of economic ruin and demands for an explanation from opposition parties.

“The abrupt nature of these announcements has created an atmosphere of unease among ordinary citizens, the industry-business sector, as well as investors,” stated Pawar, a former Union minister and former chief minister of Maharashtra, on X. This situation is certainly a cause for concern. “Considering the seriousness of this issue, the Prime Minister should convene an all-party meeting under his own chairmanship. Involving leaders from all parties in the decision-making process on matters of national interest is extremely essential for the welfare of the country.” He added: “Giv-



en the current international situation, the central government must prioritise greater sensitivity and broad consultations. Along with this, the Prime Minister should immediately call a meeting with renowned economic experts in the country, representatives from the industry sector, and relevant specialists to conduct a thorough review of the situation.”Modi is set to go on a five-nation tour for six days starting on Friday. This week he has repeated his seven appeals for austerity, in-

cluding working from home, abstaining from buying gold and going on foreign travels, using public transport, reducing the use of cooking oil and chemical fertilisers and buying Indian products. AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal said on Tuesday: “My first request to Prime Minister Narendra Modi is that he should share with the country the complete reality of our economic condition and what kind of situation we may face in the coming months or within a year...”

Delhi announces two days of WFH per week

New Delhi, May 17: In response to Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s call for fuel conservation amid growing global uncertainties, Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Thursday announced two days of work from home for government offices and a minimum use of vehicles. The decisions will take effect tomorrow.Additionally, the Chief Minister has cut her official carcade down to just four vehicles, a nearly 60% reduction.Only four vehicles remain in the revised convoy structure, two of which are electric vehicles (EVs). This represents a significant change in the direction of more sustainable and clean mobility for official travel.In order to encourage fuel conservation and effective governance, the BJP-led government is starting a campaign in the nation’s capital called “Mera Bharat Mera Yogdan” (My India, My Contribution). Every Monday will be observed as “Monday Metro”, the government said, adding all ministers, officers, and employees will commute by metro.The government has also appealed to the general public to observe one “No Vehicle Day” every week.There will not be any new purchase of a petrol, diesel, or electric vehicle for the next six months, it said.The transport allowance for employees, the government said, will be increased by 10%. There’s also ban on foreign Travel. No Minister or officer of the Delhi government will undertake any official foreign trip for the next one year, it said.Additionally, a 90-day campaign will be run to spread awareness.

The Supreme Court has stayed the order prohibiting TVK MLA from taking the floor test

The Supreme Court also stayed the proceeding pending before the Madras High Court in the matter.

New Delhi, May 17: “This is atrocious to say the least,” a bench of Justices Vikram Nath, Sandeep Mehta, and Vijay Bishnoi said in passing the interim order while hearing a Special Leave Petition (SLP) filed by TVK MLA R Seenivasa Sethupathi contesting the Madras High Court’s order prohibiting a TVK leader from taking part in the floor test in the Tamil Nadu Assembly. Senior attorney Abhishek Singhvi brought the case for urgent listing and hearing on Wednesday. Senior attorney Abhishek Singhvi brought up TVK MLA R Seenivasa Sethupathi’s appeal against the high court order for an urgent listing and hearing on Monday before a bench led by Chief Justice Surya Kant.

The case will be heard on Wednesday, the bench decided.A bench of Justices Vikram Nath, Sandeep Mehta, and Vijay Bishnoi issued the interim order while considering a Special Leave Petition (SLP) that Sethupathi had filed



contesting the Madras High Court’s ruling. “This is atrocious to say the least,” the bench said.

The Supreme Court stated, “We have heard the senior counsels for the parties. Counsel for the respondent is granted two weeks to file a reply. In the meantime, the impugned order shall remain stayed. Further proceedings before the High Court also stayed.” The Supreme Court also asked senior attorney Mukul Rohatgi, who was representing DMK

leader KR Periakaruppan, how a writ petition contesting an election result could be maintained before the Madras High Court.Senior attorney Mukul Rohatgi, representing DMK leader KR Periakaruppan, was questioned by the top court about how a writ petition contesting an election outcome could be maintained before the Madras High Court.

“The High Court says remedy is an election petition and still entertains the

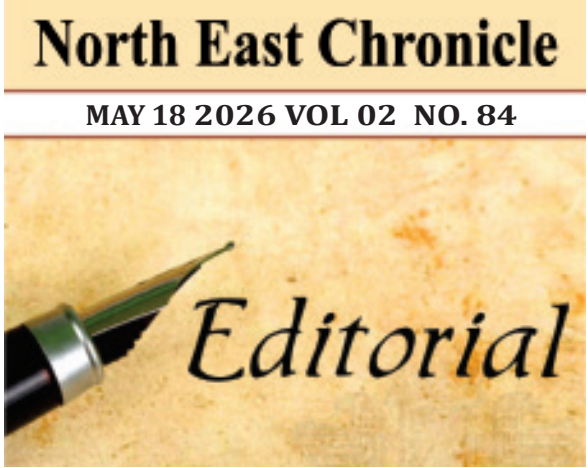
writ petition,” the Supreme Court stated.“We have heard the senior counsels for the parties,” the top court ruled after hearing the parties’ submissions.

The respondent’s attorney has two weeks to submit a response. The contested order will be stayed in the interim. Additionally, the High Court’s proceedings were halted. Sethupathi had won the No. 185 Tiruppattur assembly constituency in Sivagangai district by a margin of a single vote against Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) leader and former minister KR Periakaruppan. Periakaruppan subsequently approached the Madras High Court alleging irregularities in the counting process, including the alleged rejection of a postal ballot that was mistakenly sent to another constituency.In an interim order, the high court restrained Sethupathi from voting or otherwise participating in any floor test, confidence motion, no-confidence motion, trust vote or any proceeding where the numerical strength of the House is tested, pending further orders.Vijay-led Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam government on Wednesday won the vote of confidence.

Mizoram government pushes organic Ginger farming

Aizawl, May 17: 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 Eastern 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 Lalmalsawmzauva, 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.



Highest electoral participation

Voting for Phase II of the General Elections to the Legislative Assemblies of West Bengal commenced at 7:00 am and proceeded smoothly, marked by unprecedented electoral participation, achieving a record turnout of 91.66% by 7:45 pm on polling day. This figure follows an even higher turnout of 93.19% in Phase I, resulting in a combined total voter turnout of 92.47%, significantly surpassing the previous record of 84.72% set during the 2011 General Elections. The Election Commission of India, under the supervision of Chief Election Commissioner Shri Gyanesh Kumar and his colleagues, monitored the process closely using live webcasting across all polling stations to ensure transparency. Voter participation was notably gender-disaggregated: male turnout stood at 91.07%, while female turnout reached 92.28%, and third gender participation was recorded at 91.28%. These statistics reveal a consistent trend of robust female participation in recent electoral cycles. However, the data for 5,343 polling stations remain provisional, and final figures will be updated post-verification, excluding service voters and postal ballots. The administrative scope of the elections reflected significant logistical undertakings: Phase I encompassed 16 districts with a total electorate of 3.60 crore, including 465 candidates and substantial polling staff. Phase II involved 8 districts and a voter base of 3.21 crore, supported by 792 candidates. When combined, both phases engaged 1,257 candidates across 24 districts and 294 Assembly Constituencies, reaching a total of 6.81 crore voters. Polling initiatives included managing an adequate number of personnel, with a total of over 4,26,885 involved in the electoral process. The Election Commission improved procedural efficiency by ensuring timely updates on voter turnout, with Presiding Officers required to report results post-poll. Voter-friendly initiatives such as clear candidate photographs on EVM ballots, the Mobile Deposit Facility (MDF), and new Voter Information Slips were implemented, indicating not only a record-breaking participation level but also a consistent upward trajectory in electoral engagement over the decades; the annexure further demonstrates that female voter participation. Accessibility enhancements for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) included transportation support and assistance at polling stations, fostering inclusive participation. Historically, the long-term trend of voter turnout in West Bengal from 1951 to 2026 indicates a steady increase, with current data showing male Voter Turnout Rates (VTR) at 91.74%, female VTR at 93.24%, and total VTR at 92.47%, reflecting an encouraging trajectory of electoral engagement over the decades. Overall, the current elections not only achieved record-breaking participation but also demonstrated enhancements in voter experience and accessibility.

The arts and public health: the all-singing, all-dancing science of aging

Is the fact that the arts are beneficial to you really news? On one level, the results of a recent study regarding the health advantages of participating in dance, music, and other artistic pursuits support what many of us intuitively believe to be true. Life is improved by creativity. Because of this, people value and admire it in other people as well as, if they have the confidence, in themselves. However, the findings of one of the earliest attempts by researchers to measure this benefit are still intriguing. People who regularly engaged in the arts aged more slowly than those who did not, according to a study conducted by a team of scientists at University College London using blood samples and survey data from the UK Household Longitudinal Study. Those who participated in concerts or exhibitions, as well as those who sang in choirs or created their own artwork, were found

to benefit. On average, people who participated in artistic endeavors at least once a week were biologically a year younger than people who did not. The effects were more noticeable in middle-aged and older adults, as well as those who participated in multiple activities. The instruments, referred to as “epigenetic clocks,” are relatively new and have generated some debate. The aging-related changes to DNA and other molecules they measure, as well as the connection between these biological markers and behavior, raise questions about correlation versus causation. It may not be that visiting galleries causes you to age more slowly, but rather that those who are aging more slowly for other reasons visit galleries more frequently. It is bold of the researchers to advocate for the inclusion of the arts in public health strategies. Libraries and

museums are examples of recreational facilities that are generally thought to contribute to the general well-being of communities. However, the term “lifestyle” in health policy typically refers to more overtly physical behaviors, such as diet, exercise, alcohol consumption, and smoking. Does this study support a more comprehensive understanding of health and well-being that views relationships and creativity as fundamental human needs on par with food and housing? The number of activities that are formally recognized as providing therapeutic benefits has already increased somewhat due to the growth of social prescribing. As the negative consequences of loneliness have become more apparent, policymakers have focused on this issue in particular. Unsurprisingly, social interaction is one of the ingredients of a

busy cultural life that could slow down ageing, according to this study. Others are cognitive and sensory stimulation, and stress reduction. To arts enthusiasts, this may seem like stating the obvious. Of course going out with friends to see a show puts a song in their heart. Do they need to know that doing such things regularly could affect them at a molecular level too, conferring similar benefits to exercise? Unsurprisingly, social interaction is one of the ingredients of a busy cultural life that could slow down ageing, according to this study. Others are cognitive and sensory stimulation, and stress reduction. To arts enthusiasts, this may seem like stating the obvious. Of course going out with friends to see a show puts a song in their heart. Do they need to know that doing such things regularly could affect them at a molecular level too, conferring similar benefits to exercise?

intact yet strangely empty captures the mystery and urgency of the crisis. In recent times, one question has frequently surfaced in public discussions: are mobile towers responsible for the decline of honeybees? With the rapid expansion of communication networks, concerns have grown about the environmental impact of modern technology. Mobile towers emit electromagnetic radiation that transmits signals, and some researchers have explored whether this radiation affects bee behaviour. Honeybees rely on highly sophisticated navigation systems. They use the position of the sun, visual landmarks and even the Earth’s magnetic field to travel long distances and return accurately to their hive. Some experimental studies suggest that electromagnetic radiation may interfere with these navigation abilities. Bees exposed to certain frequencies have shown signs of disorientation, making it difficult for

them to find their way back to the hive. If such disruption occurs repeatedly, it could lead to a gradual weakening of the colony. However, the scientific evidence on this issue remains inconclusive. While some studies indicate potential effects, others find little or no significant impact under natural conditions. Many experts believe that the radiation emitted by mobile towers is too weak to be the primary cause of large-scale bee decline. Although it cannot be entirely ruled out as a contributing factor, it is unlikely to be the main reason behind the disappearance of bees. A closer look at the issue reveals that several other factors play a far more significant role. Among them, the use of chemical pesticides stands out as one of the most serious threats. Modern agricultural practices often depend heavily on pesticides to protect crops, but these chemicals can have harmful effects on beneficial insects like bees.

Unravelling the causes behind the decline of honeybees

The First Press Co. In the past, honeybees were widespread throughout Assam, contributing significantly to the region’s rich agricultural and ecological landscape and filling the air with their soft hum. Their presence was both familiar and essential, from home gardens to mustard fields, from riverine plains to the edges of forests. However, that presence has significantly decreased today. A deeper imbalance in nature is reflected in the silence that their slow disappearance has left behind, which is more than just a loss of sound. Beyond Assam, the honeybee decline is a worldwide crisis that is strongly associated with colony collapse disorder. Because bees are essential to life, scientists, farmers, and environmentalists are deeply concerned about this phenomenon. In the natural world, honeybees are among the best pollinators. They help plants reproduce by facilitating the transfer of pollen as they travel from flower to

What Does Muslim Political Participation Mean in Today’s Societies?

In the context of rapid political change and social polarization, the significance of political participation, particularly within democratic societies, has become increasingly relevant, especially concerning Islamic views on this issue. The question arises: is participation in democracy merely optional, or does it hold religious significance? It is asserted that politics is no longer a taboo for religious communities in democracies; indeed, it has transformed into a moral obligation. Even in traditionally authoritarian contexts, there have been strides toward public engagement through consultative mechanisms. Notably, those who once deemed democracy un-Islamic have become in-

involved in political processes, recognizing that rejecting civic engagement contradicts Islamic ethos. Although contemporary democratic systems do not perfectly align with traditional Islamic governance, they share core principles such as consultation, accountability, public welfare, and adherence to the rule of law, all of which are emphasized in Islamic teachings. The concept of Maqasid al-Shariah underlines the protection of essential values such as life, faith, intellect, property, and dignity. Islamic governance, since the time of the Prophet Muhammad, has incorporated principles like consultation and treaty-making, positioning political engagement as a moral duty. In diverse contexts, political participa-

tion is particularly crucial. It does not denote a blind chase for power but rather an active stance for justice, preservation of human dignity, and contribution to communal welfare—all central tenets of Islam. The principle of moderation, echoed by the Prophet, is vital in social interactions, encompassing love, hatred, and decision-making. The Qur’an emphasizes the importance of Shura, or mutual consultation, advocating for collective decision-making through participatory means over domineering ones. A refusal to participate in governance can risk undermining social objectives and eroding justice and representation, especially for minority groups. Islam does not sanction political endorsement of injustice,

and disengagement from available means of influence can inadvertently perpetuate oppression. Therefore, while critical engagement is essential, total disengagement is neither logical nor consonant with Islamic ethical principles. Furthermore, in societies where democratic institutions shape policies, withdrawal leads to the erosion of justice and representation, particularly harming minority interests. Islam does not endorse political validation of injustice. Rejecting available means of influence may unintentionally allow oppression to prevail. Therefore, critical engagement is appropriate, but total disengagement is neither rational nor consistent with Islamic ethical principle.

India needs to reconsider maritime security following the Hormuz crisis

India’s current exposure in the Hormuz crisis highlights the critical importance of maritime energy and trade routes for its long-term growth and strategic autonomy. The Strait of Hormuz plays a vital role, facilitating about 20% of global oil supplies and a significant portion of LNG and fertilizer trade. Recent military escalations have disrupted tanker traffic, heavily stranding India’s crude oil and LNG imports, which generally comprise 46-50% and over 60% respectively from this chokepoint. This disruption has caused a spike in oil prices and increased eco-

nom ic risks for India, affecting its currency and inflation rates, particularly due to its reliance on energy imports. Moreover, India’s trade profile indicates that around 16% of its total trade is linked to economies around the Hormuz corridor, making disruptions a broader industrial risk. Past instances of rerouting due to Houthi attacks highlight India’s vulnerability to multiple chokepoint disruptions. In response, India has diversified its oil sourcing from 27 to approximately 40 suppliers, contrasting its previously thin redundancy in supply routes.

However, this crisis emphasizes that maritime energy routes are fundamental to national strategy, not merely logistical issues. Since liberalization, India’s maritime security framework has not kept pace with growing trade volumes, despite around 95% of trade by volume being seaborne. While initiatives like Sagarmala seek to enhance capacity within India’s maritime domain, they fall short of addressing external route risks. Moreover, the Indian Navy’s current anti-piracy efforts do not equip it for the state-on-state conflicts impacting the Hormuz region.

The Initial Press Commission

The establishment of the ‘Newspaper Commission’ was announced by President Dr. Rajendra Prasad during his inaugural address to Parliament on May 16, 1952, responding to the demands from the Indian Federation of Working Journalists. The Commission, led by Justice G.S. Rajadhyaksha, included notable members such as Dr. C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar and Dr. Zakir Hussain. Its terms of reference encompassed the management, ownership, and financial structures of newspapers and periodicals, the impact of monopolies on journalism, recruitment and training methods for journalists, newsprint distribution, and the safeguarding of press freedom. In 1954, the Commission submitted a comprehensive 1,294-page report divided into three parts: an inquiry into the newspaper industry, a history of journalism, and appendices. This report unveiled the concentration of media ownership, revealing that a mere five owners controlled 31.2% of daily newspaper circulation and 15 owners held 50.1%. Key recommendations of the Commission included: establishing the Press Council to protect press freedom; appointing a Registrar of Newspapers for India (RNI); regulation of newspaper pricing and advertising space; guaranteeing job security and standardized working conditions for journalists; and a demand for shared ownership to prevent misuse of press rights. The implementation of the recommendations saw the formation of the Press Council of India in 1966, which was later re-established in 1979; the appointment of an RNI in 1956; and the enactment of the ‘Working Journalists Act’ in 1955 to improve journalists’ employment conditions. Although some recommendations, including those regarding ownership regulation, remain unfulfilled, the First Press Commission’s report continues to serve as a foundational reference for the Indian press industry, highlighting the ongoing challenges of ownership, regulation, and the aspiration for better standards in journalism.

PAI 2.0 scheme

In a significant development reflecting the growing strength of grassroots governance in India, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj has released the Panchayat Advancement Index (PAI) 2.0 report for the financial year 2023–24 on the occasion of National Panchayati Raj Day, and from the perspective of Assam, the findings highlight a mixed but steadily improving performance landscape across its rural local governance institutions, where out of a total of 2,192 Gram Panchayats/ Traditional Local Bodies (GPs/TLBs) in the State that submitted valid data under the index framework, 25 Gram Panchayats have been placed in the A category, 1,209 in the B category, 884 in the C category, and 74 in the D category, indicating that while a substantial portion of Assam’s Panchayats are operating in the middle performance tiers, a smaller but important set is achieving high standards of governance, service delivery, and development outcomes; nationally, the PAI 2.0 exercise recorded an exceptional participation rate of 97.3 percent, with 259,867 Gram Panchayats across 33 States and Union Territories submitting valid data, a notable jump from 80.79 percent in the earlier version, and this high participation level itself demonstrates the increasing institutionalisation of data-driven governance at the Panchayat level, something that Assam has also actively contributed to by ensuring broad coverage of its local bodies in the assessment framework; the index, developed by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj as a comprehensive report card for Gram Panchayats, evaluates performance based on 150 indicators and 230 data points aligned with nine thematic areas linked to the localisation of Sustainable Development Goals (LSDGs), including poverty-free and improved livelihoods, health and nutrition, child welfare, water sufficiency, environmental sustainability, infrastructure development, social justice, good governance, and women’s empowerment, thereby offering a multi-dimensional assessment of rural governance rather than a narrow financial or administrative evaluation; for Assam, the distribution of Panchayats across performance categories reveals that while only a limited number have reached the A grade bracket, a significant concentration lies in the B category, with 1,209 Panchayats demonstrating moderate to strong performance, suggesting that the majority of Assam’s rural governance institutions are functioning with reasonable effectiveness but still have considerable scope for advancement to reach higher efficiency and outcome levels, particularly in transitioning from service delivery compliance to outcome-oriented governance; the 25 Assam Gram Panchayats in the A category represent the leading edge of rural governance excellence in the State, reflecting strong implementation in areas such as poverty alleviation initiatives, livelihood generation programmes, improved sanitation practices, community health outreach, and effective utilisation of development funds, while the 884 Panchayats in the

C category indicate developmental lag in certain regions where targeted administrative and capacity-building interventions may be required, and the 74 in the D category point to the need for urgent corrective measures in governance systems, planning efficiency, and service delivery mechanisms; the PAI 2.0 framework itself is a refined version of the earlier index, with the number of indicators reduced from 516 to 150 and data points streamlined from 794 to 230, making it more practical, efficient, and aligned with national digital governance frameworks, and it also incorporates improvements such as a unified data entry system, mandatory Gram Sabha verification for transparency, auto-porting of data from central government portals, cross-verification mechanisms for accuracy, real-time dashboards, and multilingual support, all of which have contributed to higher participation and improved reliability of rural governance data, including from States like Assam where administrative capacity and digital penetration have been steadily improving; the report also highlights that across the country, 3,635 Gram Panchayats have emerged in the leading category overall, while 118,824 fall in the outstanding category, and under Theme 1 focusing on poverty-free and improved livelihoods, 3,313 Gram Panchayats achieved A+ grading nationally, while under Theme 2 focusing on healthy Panchayats, 1,015 Gram Panchayats achieved A+ grading, indicating strong national progress in livelihood security, sanitation, preventive healthcare, and community awareness, areas that are particularly relevant for Assam given its rural-dominated population structure and dependence on agriculture, smallscale industries, and informal livelihood systems; in Assam’s context, the alignment of Panchayat development planning with such national benchmarks is expected to strengthen implementation of rural welfare schemes, improve convergence between departments, and enhance monitoring of schemes related to drinking water supply, rural housing, health services, and women-led self-help groups, all of which directly influence PAI scoring indicators; the broader significance of PAI 2.0 for Assam lies in its ability to provide a granular, data-backed understanding of where each Panchayat stands in terms of development performance, thereby enabling the State administration and Panchayati Raj institutions to identify high-performing Panchayats as models for replication and underperforming ones for targeted intervention, training, and resource allocation; officials and governance observers note that Assam’s participation in the PAI framework reflects a larger shift towards evidence-based planning in rural development, where Gram Panchayats are no longer assessed solely on expenditure or scheme implementation but on measurable outcomes related to quality of life improvements, including health indicators, sanitation coverage, education access.

Sunil Mittal pursues a 51% stake in the telecom company, Bharti Airtel shares rise 5%



New Delhi: Despite the telecom company reporting a 34% Yo-Y decline in consolidated net profit for the March 2026 quarter (Q4FY26), shares of Bharti Airtels surged nearly 5% in Thursday’s trading, reaching an intraday high of ₹1,876.90 on the National Stock Exchange (NSE).Airtel shares were up 4.6% at ₹1,871 as of 1:15 PM. Strong trading activity, with about 13 million shares exchanging hands on the NSE compared to 9.8 million shares in the previous session, supported the rally, according to data. In today’s trading, Airtel shares performed better than the overall market, with the benchmark Nifty 50 falling 1.3%. Airtel shares have underperformed the benchmark Nifty 50 index thus far in 2026, despite today’s gains. The stock has dropped

11% during that time, while the Nifty 50 has dropped 9.3%. Airtel shares have not changed in a year, while the benchmark index has decreased by almost 4%. During Bharti Airtel’s Q4 earnings call, Sunil Bharti Mittal, the founder and chairman of Bharti Enterprises, expressed his desire for Bharti Telecom to own a 51% share in the Gurgaon-based telecom. At the moment, Bharti Telecom owns 40.5% of Airtel. Additionally, Sunil Mittal stated that in ten years, he intends to transfer power to the following generation. This comes a day after telecom major approved the reappointment of Mittal as chairman of the board for a further term of five years until September 30, 2031.“If you really asked me, my own wish is that in the next decade, as I

kind of come to a point where I hand over the reins to the next generation, as shareholders, Bharti Telecom should get back to a controlling shareholding of 51 per cent, or just over 50 per cent. So that’s 10 per cent more to go, and for a company of this magnitude and size, that is not a small task,” Mittal said while addressing questions from analysts. The company’s management said that it is confident of growth in Africa markets and sees a long-term opportunity due to low telecom density in the region. Additionally, it is witnessing traction in the cloud segment, and is in talks with new clients. The management also highlighted that the West Asia war has impacted its business on multiple fronts. Meanwhile, Mittal added that he expects some buybacks in the next

few years. For the March 2026 quarter, Bharti Airtel posted a 33.5 per cent Y-o-Y decline in consolidated net profit to ₹7,325 crore due to one-time provisions related to statutory and tax liabilities. The firm had earned a profit of Airtel had posted a profit of ₹12,476 crore in the March 2025 quarter due to a one-time gain in the period. The company, however, posted a 38.7 per cent Y-o-Y growth in net income to ₹7,245 crore in the reporting quarter.The company said that it annual revenue for the first time crossed ₹2 trillion, driven by 3.2 per cent customer growth to 66.5 crore, coupled with an increase in average revenue per user (ARPU) in India. The board of Airtel considered and recommended a final dividend of ₹24 per fully paid-up equity share of face value ₹5 each; and ₹6 per partly-paid-up equity share of face value ₹5 each (paid-up value ₹1.25 per share), on which call money remains unpaid. The dividend is in proportion to the amount paid-up on each equity share of face value ₹5 each. The final dividend, if approved by the shareholders at the ensuing Annual General Meeting (AGM), shall be credited within 30 days from the date of AGM. The record date for determining the members entitled to receive the dividend shall be intimated in due course.

Dwarikesh, Balrampur Chini, and others are affected by the sugar export ban; stocks drop 4%

New Delhi: Following the government’s immediate ban on sugar exports until September 30 or until further orders, shares of companies in the sugar industry faced pressure today and fell as much as 4% in morning trade. As of 9:35 AM, Dwarikesh Sugar Industries was the biggest loser on its own, falling 3.6% to trade at ₹45.03 on the National Stock Exchange (NSE). Dhampur Sugar Mills (₹149.19), Balrampur Chini Mills (₹533.25), and Uttam Sugar Mills (₹244) were all down 3%. Bajaj Hindusthan Sugar (₹18.35), Dalmia Bharat Sugar (₹359.7), MVK Agro Food Product (₹498), Magadh Sugar & Energy (₹486), KM Sugar Mills (₹28.81), Sakthi Sugars (₹17.86), and other counters saw a decline in trade of one to three percent. The government’s latest notification on the sugar ban does not apply to sugar being exported to the European Union and the US under the tariff rate quota scheme. The order is also not applicable to the shipments under the advance authorisation scheme, government-to-government exports, and consignments already in the



physical export pipeline. The ban applies to raw, white, and refined sugar and marks a shift in policy from “restricted” to “prohibited”.Analysts said that this appears to be a proactive measure by the government to ensure adequate sugar availability within the country and to prevent any sharp escalation in domestic sugar prices. Investors also need to keep in mind the two key factors the government is currently evaluating. First is the El Niño condition, which could further impact sugarcane production and, consequently, sugar output going forward. Second, system inventories are already slightly lower, which has led to a spike in domestic sugar prices. Sunny Agrawal, head of fundamental research at SBI Securities, said that the decision to ban sugar exports is unlikely to have any long-term im-

pact on sugar companies, as most UP-based sugar mills would have already exhausted their export quotas for the current sugar season. However, this move clearly signals that for the upcoming sugar season, beginning around October-November, export quotas are likely to remain extremely limited. Also, he said that most sugar companies are now increasingly dependent on ethanol as the key profit driver. Any meaningful upward revision in ethanol prices could lead to an earnings uptick for most sugar companies. “Therefore, we would prefer to wait and watch how the government approaches ethanol production, especially against the backdrop of elevated crude oil prices and the broader objective of reducing the country’s import bill,” Sunny said, adding that he prefers a frontline market leader like Balrampur

Chini Mills for investors looking to take exposure to the sugar space.Ponmudi R, CEO, Enrich Money, said that sugar stocks are likely to remain under pressure in the near term as the government’s order is a negative for the sector. The export opportunities, he said, were one of the key earnings drivers for sugar mills over the last few quarters. “The immediate concern for investors is margin pressure. When exports stop, excess supply stays within the domestic market. That creates pressure on domestic sugar prices while inventory levels rise. Mills that were expecting better realisations through exports may now see lower profitability and slower inventory liquidation,” he said.He added that this is, however, not entirely negative for the sector from a long-term structural perspective. The government’s move clearly indicates concern over domestic supply tightness, lower cane yields, and possible El Niño-related production risks. His top picks from the sector include Balrampur Chini Mills, Triveni Engineering & Industries, and Dalmia Bharat Sugar and Industries.

TCS wants to be the biggest AI-driven tech services provider in the world: CEO

New Delhi: According to CEO and Managing Director K Krithivasan, 130 of its top 139 clients have already selected TCS as their AI services partner, and the nation’s largest IT company hopes to become the largest AI-led technology services company globally. FY26 was a “inflection point” for enterprise AI, according to Krithivasan’s letter to shareholders in the company’s Annual Report for 2025–2026, as clients firmly transitioned from experimental pilots to scaled deployments. We set out with the audacious goal of becoming the biggest AI-led technology services company in the world in order to realize the opportunities presented by AI. Being a full-stack AI services provider from infrastructure to intelligence is our approach to achieving this goal, Krithivasan wrote. He emphasized that 130 of TCS’s top 139 clients—those with yearly sales of more than \$50 million—have chosen the firm as their partner for AI services. TCS has aggressively upskilled its employees to support this significant technological shift. According to Krithivasan, the number of workers with advanced AI skills has tripled from the previous year to over 2,70,000. The CEO emphasized TCS’s execution of nation-scale projects in India during the fiscal year, in addition to its global enterprise clients. With procurement exceeding Rs 5 lakh crore, we expanded the Government e-Marketplace (GeM) into the biggest government e-commerce marketplace in the world. To serve 20 crore users in ten languages, we upgraded State Bank of India’s YONO 2.0. We also modernised citizen services such as ePassports (over 1 crore issued) and built the RBI’s new data management system, designed to handle 250 TB for sharper economic analysis,” he noted. Outlining the company’s “Build-Partner-Acquire” strategy for the AI ecosystem, Krithivasan pointed to the recent acquisitions of US-based ListEngage and Coastal Cloud, which position TCS among the top five global Salesforce Consultants. He also highlighted the launch of ‘HyperVault’, TCS’ AI infrastructure business in partnership with TPG, which has an initial plan to build 1 Gigawatt (GW) of data centre capacity in India to meet the surging demand for AI compute. Looking



ahead, Krithivasan said that as enterprises scale AI, they will need a unified control plane—an “AI Operating System”—to make AI repeatable and governable. “This is where TCS is positioning itself as an Enterprise Intelligence Integrator, modernising software stacks, embedding AI agents into operations, and governing data and security at scale to deliver measurable outcomes. “...we will focus on four distinct progressions: Build industry-specific AI systems, construct India’s first high-density AI data centre, strengthen our Infrastructure to Intelligence offering with 3,600 partnerships and establish secure, resilient, sovereign AI infrastructure,” Krithivasan said. Meanwhile, TCS Chairman N Chandrasekaran said artificial intelligence is no longer just a technological layer but is rapidly becoming the operating foundation and “infrastructure of intelligence” for enterprises globally. In his letter to shareholders in the company’s Annual Report for 2025-26, Chandrasekaran noted that TCS has scaled up the execution of its ‘Human+AI’ operating model, generating an annualised revenue of \$2.3 billion in AI services and \$11.5 billion in new-age services, including cloud, data, and cybersecurity.He noted that AI will fundamentally influence how enterprises invest, organise supply chains, manage risk, and serve stakeholders, with generative and agentic AI now entering a new phase of growth as customers decisively move from experimental pilots to scaled deployments and embed AI into core functions.

Fixed deposit rates for senior citizens increase to 8.3%

New Delhi: In mid-May, small finance banks provide senior citizens with some of the highest fixed deposit (FD) returns, with some offering interest rates as high as 8.3%. In contrast, the majority of big banks in the public and private sectors offer senior citizens FD rates between 6.6% and 7.75%. Smaller lenders clearly outperform larger banks in senior citizen deposit rates, especially for short- and medium-term tenures, according to data provided by Stable Money. Shivalik Small Finance Bank’s 8.3% senior citizen FD rate for one year and ten months, Suryoday Small Finance Bank’s 8.25% for two years and six months, and Utkarsh Small Finance Bank’s 8.3% for one year and three hundred days are among the highest rates currently offered. For a three-year period, Jana Small Finance Bank is offering up to 8%. The fact that banks continue to provide their best senior citizen returns primarily in the one-year to three-year maturity bucket rather than very long-term deposits is one of the major trends evident in the most recent FD rate data. Meanwhile, among larger public sector banks, State Bank of India is offering up to 7.05 per cent, while Punjab National Bank and Bank of India are offering up to 7.1 per cent. “Small finance banks continue to offer relatively higher interest rates than larger peers, with rates in the 8.25 per cent-8.3 per cent range for the senior citizen category and around 8.1 per cent for general investors,” said Saurabh Jain, cofounder and chief executive officer of Stable Money. The current interest rate cycle has made many depositors cautious about locking money away for very long periods. As a result, many banks are rewarding depositors more for shorter and



medium-duration deposits.Jain said the 1.5-year to 3-year bucket is increasingly becoming attractive for savers because it balances returns and flexibility.“Another notable trend is the emergence of the 1.5-3 years tenure bracket as a sweet spot. It allows investors to lock in relatively higher rates for a reasonable duration without overcommitting in a potentially evolving rate cycle,” he said. This can especially matter for conservative investors who want stable returns while retaining the option to reinvest later if interest rates move higher again. Higher FD rates can improve returns but financial planners generally advise depositors not to look only at the headline number.Small finance banks are covered under Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation protection of up to Rs 5 lakh per depositor, including principal and interest. However, investors with large deposits may still prefer diversification across banks instead of concentrating money in one institution.

Zydus to acquire Assertio in Rs. 1,570 crore deal

New Delhi: In an all-cash transaction worth approximately \$166.4 million (roughly Rs 1,570 crore), Zydus Lifesciences will purchase US-based pharmaceutical company Assertio Holdings through its subsidiary Zydus Worldwide DMCC and acquisition vehicle Zara Merger Sub Inc., according to a statement issued on Wednesday. Zydus’ cash offer of \$23.50 per share is 30.6 percent more than Garda Therapeutics’ previous offer of \$18 per share, which was made on April 8, 2026, and 7.8 percent more than Garda’s updated bid of \$21.80 per share, which was made on May 4. Additionally, the offer is 75.8% more than Assertio’s unaffected closing share price on March 20, 2026, prior to the start of unusual trading activity and significant stock movement. The agreement increases Zydus’s specialty pharmaceutical presence, especially in pain management and oncology-support therapies, and provides it with a ready-made commercial platform in the US. In the US, Assertio sells a range of branded pharmaceuticals, such as Rolvedon, a long-acting medication that lowers the risk of infection in cancer patients receiving chemotherapy. The US Food and Drug Administration has approved Rolvedon as a long-acting G-CSF biologic to prevent febrile neutropenia in adult cancer patients undergoing myelosuppressive chemotherapy. Additionally, Zydus now has direct access to Assertio’s marketing and distribution network in the biggest pharmaceutical market in the world thanks to the acquisition. Zydus stated that it intends to increase its specialty oncology presence in the US by utilizing Assertio’s commercial infrastructure and oncology connections.

Vedanta and Hindustan Zinc rise to 6% on enormous quantities

Mumbai: After the government raised the import tax on gold and silver from 6% to 15%, share prices of Hindustan Zinc and Vedanta surged up to 6% on the BSE during Wednesday’s intraday trading in an otherwise quiet market. Individual stocks saw a 6% increase in Hindustan Zinc to ₹677.10 and a 3% increase in Vedanta to ₹312.90 on the BSE during intraday trading. By contrast, at 09:25 AM, the BSE Sensex was up 0.08 percent at 74,615. According to sources, the government raised the import tax on silver and gold from 6% to 15%. Today, May 13, 2026, is when the updated duty rates will take effect. In its March 2026 quarter earnings conference call, Hindustan Zinc, a Vedanta Group company, stated that silver continues to stand out, maintaining strong momentum supported by robust industrial demand, particularly from solar and



electronics, along with continued investor interest. Although prices have normalized from peak levels, the medium-term outlook remains constructive, driven by structural demand from energy transition and limited supply growth. The company has a market share of over 74% in India’s primary zinc sector and supplies more than 40 nations. Silver continues to stand out, according to Hindustan Zinc’s March 2026 quarter earnings conference call. This is due to strong industrial demand, especially from solar and electronics, as well as on-

going investor interest. Although prices have returned to their peak levels, the medium-term prognosis is still positive due to restricted supply growth and structural demand from the energy transition. Looking into the year ahead, with a well-structured capex roadmap in place, the management of Hindustan Zinc is confident in sustaining this strong performance in the year ahead with an expected mined metal production of 1,150 KTPA, plus or minus 10 KT, and a refined metal production of 1,100 KTPA, plus or minus 10 KT, with an expected refined silver production of 680 tons, plus or minus 10 tons. This development is positive for Hindustan Zinc, as the increase in import duty is expected to raise the land-cost of silver imports, thereby supporting higher silver prices and increasing the company’s revenue and profitability.

Vodafone Idea continues its surge, rising 5% on massive volume

Mumbai: Vodafone Idea’s stock price, quoted near its 52-week high of ₹12.80 touched on December 31, 2025, has outperformed the market by soaring 35% in the last month, compared to a 2.8% decline in the BSE Sensex. Thus far in the financial year 2026-27 (FY27), the stock has surged 46% from a level of ₹8.12 in August. On December 31, 2025, the telecom services provider’s stock price was reported near its 52-week high of ₹12.80. Vodafone Idea has outperformed the market in the last month, rising 35% while the BSE Sensex has declined 2.8%. The stock has increased 46% so far in the fiscal year 2026-27 (FY27) from a level of ₹8.53 on March 30, 2026. On August 14, 2025, it reached a 52-week low of ₹6.12. On Tuesday, May 12, 2026, after market

hours, Vodafone Idea announced that its board of directors would meet on Saturday, May 16, 2026, to discuss the company’s audited financial results for the quarter and the fiscal year that ended on March 31, 2026, as well as to consider and evaluate a proposal for raising funds by way of the issuance of equity shares and/or warrants on a preferential basis. At 10:32 AM on Wednesday. On Tuesday, May 12, 2026, after market hours, Vodafone Idea announced that its board of directors would meet on Saturday, May 16, 2026, to discuss the company’s audited financial results for the quarter and the fiscal year that ended on March 31, 2026. A total of 473.48 million shares were traded on the NSE and BSE. According to the company, the board will also take



into account and assess proposals for raising money through the preferential issuance of equity shares and/or warrants. The fund raising is subject to such approvals as may be required, including approval of the shareholders of the company. According to reports, Vodafone Group Plc is working on a proposal to shore up the capital of its listed Indian affiliate, as the venture seeks to turn over a new leaf after the Indian government

cut a bill for outstanding spectrum fees.The UK telecom company, which owns 19 per cent of Mumbai-listed Vodafone Idea, is considering transferring part of its shareholding to the Indian company to hold in treasury, a Bloomberg report said quoting people with knowledge of the matter. The share transfer would take place in lieu of Vodafone injecting more cash into the Indian business, according to the people.

According to a poll, 66% of respondents believe Trump has not adequately explained the objectives of the Iran War

Washington: According to a Reuters/Ipsos poll conducted on Monday, two out of three Americans believe that President Donald Trump has not provided a clear explanation for the nation’s decision to go to war with Iran. The poll also revealed that Trump’s support rating is gradually rising from the lowest point of his term.

Deep worries about rising gas prices were revealed by the four-day survey, which also found that many voters are blaming Trump’s Republican friends, who will be defending their congressional majorities in the November midterm elections, for their problems. Approximately 66% of poll participants, including one in three Republicans and nearly all Democrats, stated that Trump had not “clearly explained the goals of US military involvement in Iran” more than two months into a confrontation that started on February 28 with a US-Israeli bombing campaign. The war, which cooled in recent weeks as both sides floated peace proposals, has driven a roughly 50% increase in gasoline prices across the country. Iran shut down a fifth of the global oil trade by effectively closing the Strait of Hormuz - despite efforts by US warships to re-open the waterway for oil tankers. Some 63% of the country say their household’s personal financial situation has taken a hit from recent gas price increases, up from 55% in a Reuters/Ipsos poll conducted March 17-19.

Some 36% of Americans approve of Trump’s performance, up two percentage points since a late April Reuters/Ipsos poll showed his approval rating at 34%, which was the lowest level of Trump’s current term in office. The Reuters/Ipsos poll had a 3-percentage-point margin of error in either direction based on the number of people surveyed. Trump’s popularity remains below the 40% approval rate he had just before the war started. He started his term in January 2025 with 47% approval after winning the



2024 presidential election on promises to lower costs for Americans.

Three-quarters of the public - including half of Republicans - think his administration bears at least a fair amount of responsibility for the gas price surge, the latest Reuters/Ipsos poll showed. Asked which political party is more responsible, 65% of poll respondents said Republicans were to blame compared to 27% who said Democrats. Four out of five Americans said they expect gas prices to rise further. Republicans are defending narrow majorities in the US House of Representatives and the Senate in the midterms. Their hopes of keeping control of the House have been bolstered by recent court rulings that could lead to voting district boundaries that are more favorable to Republicans. Republican strategists say

the party’s chances would further improve if gasoline prices came down. But with no agreement in sight between Washington and Tehran, about three in 10 Americans already expect to cut back on summer vacation plans if gas prices hold firm, the poll found. Many expect to cancel their trips or travel shorter distances. Trump has repeatedly promised gas prices will fall when the war ends, though analysts warn that is unlikely to happen quickly. The public isn’t sure who has the upper hand in the conflict. Only one in three say America has the advantage, while about one in seven say Iran has it, the Reuters/Ipsos poll showed. The rest said they weren’t sure or that neither side had an advantage. The latest Reuters/Ipsos poll was conducted online and gathered responses from 1,254 US adults nationwide.

UK Prime Minister Starmer denies resignation requests

London: Keir Starmer, the prime minister of the United Kingdom, told ministers on Tuesday that he would “get on with governing” in spite of a “destabilising” 48 hours of mounting requests to lay out a timeline for his resignation following a crushing election defeat. Starmer, who has held the position for less than two years, reiterated at a meeting of his cabinet team of ministers that although he accepted responsibility for one of his Labour Party’s worst election losses, no formal action had been taken to start a leadership battle. Starmer told ministers,

“The past 48 hours have been destabilising for the government and that has a real economic cost for our country and for families,” according to his Downing Street office. “The nation anticipates that we will continue to govern. That’s what I’m doing and what the Cabinet needs to do.” Despite a slight increase in response to Starmer’s remarks, British government bonds continued to lose money for the day. His disobedience stood in stark contrast to the senti-



ments of many members of his Labour Party. A junior minister resigned on Tuesday, after the departure of many ministerial assistants. In order for the party to elect a new leader in an orderly fashion, over 80 Labour lawmakers have openly demanded that he announce a date for his resignation.

On Monday, Starmer attempted to strengthen his position by pledging to take

more decisive action to address Britain’s numerous issues. He had said the country would never forgive the centre-left Labour Party if it embarked on a leadership challenge, just two years after its huge parliamentary majority was supposed to bring an end to the political chaos that had gripped the country since Britain voted to leave the European Union 10 years ago.

A remote island fighting the hantavirus receives medical assistance from the UK Army via air drops



London: On the South Atlantic island of Tristan da Cunha, the UK Army conducted an emergency parachute mission to provide vital assistance to a suspected Hantavirus patient. Currently on the island is one of the three British citizens who were found to have a possible hantavirus linked to the epidemic aboard the MV Hondius cruise ship. He got off the ship on April 14, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). On April 28, there was diarrhea, and on April 30, there was a fever. He is in stable condition and is currently isolating himself on the island.

From a Royal Air Force A400M cargo plane, six paratroopers and two military clinicians from the 16 Air Assault Brigade leaped onto the island. According to an official announcement from the UK Ministry of Defence (MoD), critical oxygen supplies and other medical help were airdropped almost simultaneously.

Locals were commended for “pulling out all the stops at short notice” to welcome the crew when they landed on the golf course. 3.3 tons

of medical supplies were also sent to the hospital, according to officials.

The first time UK military medics have parachuted in for emergency assistance, the MoD described it as an unparalleled humanitarian mission.

The “extraordinary operation,” according to UK Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper, demonstrates Britain’s dedication to its overseas territories and nationals. “I am incredibly appreciative to the @16AirAssltBCT for providing Tristan da Cunha with immediate medical assistance. Our unshakeable dedication to the people of our Overseas Territories and British nationals, wherever they may be, is reflected in this remarkable operation,” she added. The emergency response follows a hantavirus outbreak on the MV Hondius. A month after the first death, the ship docked in Tenerife to repatriate 100+ passengers. So far, three people have died in the outbreak, of which two were confirmed hantavirus cases. Six infections are confirmed and two suspected cases remain under investigation.

Tehran’s “Weapon-Grade Uranium Enrichment” Alert in the Event of Another US Attack on Iran

Lusaka: Iran has threatened to enrich its uranium stockpile to 90% purity, or weapons grade, in the event that Israeli or American forces strike it once more. The warning was made in response to news in the media that US President Trump was thinking about taking new military action against the Islamic Republic because talks with the nation are still at a standstill. In a post on X, Iranian Parliamentary Commission spokesperson Ebrahim Rezaei stated that 90% enrichment might be one among Iran’s choices in the event of another assault. The parliament will examine it. Trump’s war of choice against Tehran’s Islamic regime, which has now lasted for more than 70 days, has been attributed in large part to Iran’s “nuclear dust,” his phrase for the enriched uranium. He has maintained that Tehran will not be permitted to acquire nuclear weapons. He has stated, “We will not allow Iran to possess a nuclear weapon. He informed reporters earlier this week that the US was “closely monitoring” Iran’s stockpile and that Washington would “blow them up” anyone who approached the location. After rejecting Iran’s most recent counteroffer, which stated that its military was prepared to respond to any act of aggression, Trump warned on Monday that the ceasefire in the Middle East conflict was on “life support.”

Iran’s counterproposal includes the option of diluting some of its highly enriched uranium, with the remainder being temporarily transferred to a third country, according to The Wall Street Journal, which cited people familiar with the situation. According to a New York Times story, Iran has amassed 22,000 pounds, or 11,000 kilograms, of enriched uranium in the last eight years since Trump, during his first term as president, pulled Washington out of a nuclear agreement with Tehran. Iran started the uranium enrichment process in 2006 on an industrial scale, insisting its aim was peaceful. Reports from the United Nations’ nuclear watchdog, the International



Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), showed the stockpile kept growing over the years.

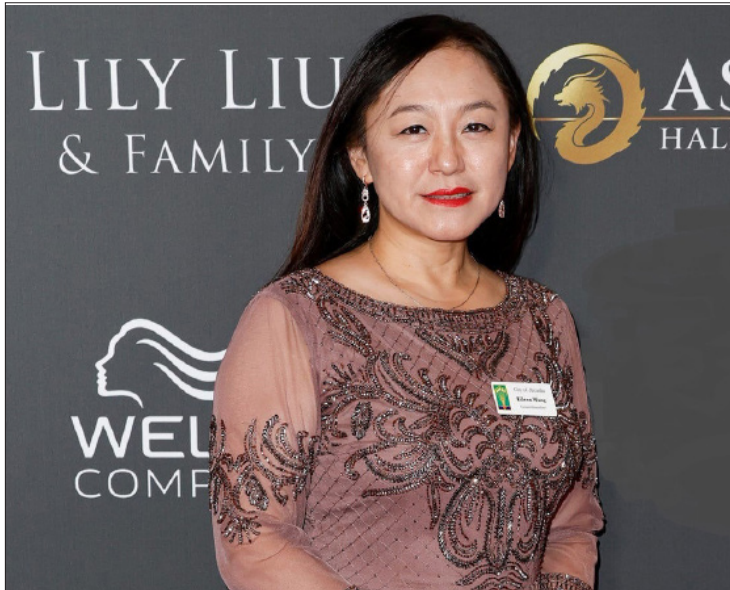
In 2010, Tehran announced it would begin enriching uranium up to 20 per cent-- ostensibly to make fuel for a research reactor.

This level is the official dividing line between civilian and military uses. The UN watchdog believes that 440.9 kilograms (972 pounds) of Iran’s stockpile is enriched up to 60 per cent purity, a short, technical step from weapons-grade levels of 90 per cent. Uranium’s enrichment becomes increasingly easy as concentrations rise. It’s much harder to get from zero per cent to 20 per cent than from 20 per cent to 60 per cent or even to 90 per cent -- the preferred level for making nuclear arms.

In June 2021, Iran’s then president, Hassan Rouhani, had accepted that Tehran could enrich uranium up to 90 per cent if its nuclear reactors needed it but added it still sought the revival of a 2015 deal that would limit its atomic activities

in return for a lifting of sanctions. “Iran’s Atomic Energy Organisation can enrich uranium by 20 per cent and 60 per cent and if one day our reactor needs it, it can enrich uranium to 90 per cent purity,” Rouhani told a cabinet meeting, the semi-official Mehr news agency reported. But the fate of the Iranian stockpile remains a mystery. The IAEA believes the majority of Iran’s uranium is likely still at its Isfahan nuclear complex, which was bombarded by airstrikes in June last year and faced less intense attacks in this year’s US-Israeli attacks. Citing satellite images, IAEA chief Rafael Grossi earlier this week said the nuclear watchdog believes a large percentage of Iran’s highly enriched uranium “was stored there in June 2025 when the 12-day war broke out, and it has been there ever since”. “We haven’t been able to inspect or to reject that the material is there and that the seals --the IAEA seals -- remain there,” he said. “I hope we’ll be able to do that, so what I tell you is our best estimate.”

The mayor of California steps down after admitting to being a Chinese agent



Norwegian: The Mayor of Arcadia, Eileen Wang, has resigned and will plead guilty to acting as an illegal agent of China, as reported by Reuters and confirmed by the US Department of Justice. The 58-year-old is set to enter her

plea in federal court in Los Angeles soon. Along with her then fiancé, Yaoning ‘Mike’ Sun, Wang has been charged with promoting pro-China propaganda for the Chinese government in the United States.

According to First Assistant US Attorney Bill Essayli, this case highlights the undermining of democracy by individuals acting on behalf of foreign powers. Sun is currently serving a four-year sentence after pleading guilty last October. Wang’s guilty plea is tied to a felony charge that could result in a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison. The couple operated under the direction of Chinese officials to advance Beijing’s interests, including running a website, US News Centre, which allegedly misled the local Chinese American community by posting pro-PRC content. Wang admitted she failed to inform the Attorney General of her status as a Chinese agent and did not disclose on the website that its content was primarily driven by directives from Chinese authorities. Wang had been elected to the Arcadia City Council in November 2022, which appoints the mayor on a rotating basis among its five members.

Jensen Huang, CEO of Nvidia, was not invited to Trump’s visit to China



Ottawa: A person familiar with the situation stated on Monday that Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang will not be visiting Beijing for President Donald Trump’s visit to China

this week. According to the source, Huang was not invited since the White House’s current trip is primarily focused on issues related to agricultural and commercial aviation, including or-

ders for Boeing aircraft. A request for comment was not immediately answered by the White House. A number of CEOs were anticipated to accompany Trump on his

trip in order to support his administration’s top aim of attracting business for US companies. Jane Fraser, the CEO of Citigroup, was invited, according to a person with knowl-

edge of the situation last week. Qualcomm CEO Cristiano Amon will attend as long as the trip goes ahead as planned, another source with knowledge of the matter said last week.

Trump has developed a strong relationship with Huang since he has been in office and agreed to allow the company’s H200 AI chips to be exported to China. But they have not yet been sold, Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick said on April 22nd, citing difficulties with Chinese companies getting permission to buy them from the Chinese government.

6 weekend getaways are becoming popular for all the right reasons



Something fundamental has shifted in the way urban India travels. The idea of waiting for one long annual holiday is gradually being replaced by shorter, more frequent escapes that fit naturally into modern lifestyles. Weekend travel today is less about sightseeing and more about recovery, flexibility, and meaningful experiences. Travellers are increasingly prioritising destinations that are accessible, experience-led, and emotionally refreshing within a two-to-three-day window. In an interview with HT Lifestyle, Pranav Dangi, CEO and founder of The Hosteller, shared destinations that are gaining popularity for weekend travels. Pranav said, “Weekend travel has evolved into a lifestyle behaviour rather than a seasonal trend. People are travelling more frequently, but with sharper intent. They’re looking for destinations that offer a quick emotional reset without requiring extensive planning.”

Rishikesh
Rishikesh continues to attract travellers seeking a balance of adventure and mindfulness. Its blend of rafting, cafés, yoga culture, and riverside experiences makes it ideal for quick escapes from Delhi and nearby urban centres. This destination is also gaining popularity as a wellness retreat.

Mussoorie
Mussoorie is witnessing renewed popularity among travellers looking for slower mountain experiences. The demand here is shifting from rushed sightseeing to longer café stays, local walks, and immersive hill-town experiences. Travel-

lers can experience a slow mountain life and nature’s beauty at its best.

Kasol
Kasol remains a strong draw for younger travellers and remote workers because of its relaxed pace, scenic landscapes, and strong backpacking culture that encourages community-driven travel.

Lonavala
Lonavala has become a preferred weekend destination for Mumbai and Pune travellers due to its accessibility and growing demand for nature-led short breaks close to metropolitan cities. It offers more than just a weekend getaway, but a refreshing experience that we all need after a tough week at work.

Coorg and Vagamon
According to Pranav, Coorg and Vagamon are increasingly attracting southern travellers looking for quieter alternatives to mainstream hill stations. Their appeal lies in slower tourism, coffee estate experiences, greenery, and wellness-oriented stays that align with evolving traveller preferences. From scenic waterfalls to tea and coffee estates, these destinations are perfect for enjoying a weekend getaway with friends and family. Pranav also highlighted that what these destinations collectively reflect is a broader truth about how travel priorities are evolving. The weekend trip is no longer a plan B; for a growing number of urban Indians, it has quietly become the primary way they choose to travel.

Scientists observe Parkinson’s ‘trigger’ in human brain tissue

Scientists have, for the first time, directly visualised the way Parkinson’s disease gets ‘triggered’ in human brain tissue. Using a newly developed technique, called ASA-PD (Advanced Sensing of Aggregates for Parkinson’s Disease), researchers from the University of Cambridge and University College London, UK, could see, count, and compare the protein clusters called alpha-synuclein oligomers in human brain tissue. Oligomers have long been considered the likely culprits behind Parkinson’s, but until now, these tiny clusters — just a few nanometres long — have evaded direct detection in human brain tissue. Using ASA-PD with ultra-sensitive fluorescence microscopy, the team could, for the first time, detect and analyse millions of oligomers in post-mortem brain tissue. “This is the first time we’ve been able to look at oligomers directly in human



brain tissue at this scale: it’s like being able to see stars in broad daylight,” said Dr. Rebecca Andrews, who conducted the work when she was a postdoctoral researcher at Cambridge’s Yusuf Hamied Department of Chemistry. “It opens new doors in Parkinson’s re-

search,” she added. Since oligomers are so small, their signal is extremely weak. But ASA-PD maximises the signal while decreasing the background, dramatically boosting sensitivity to the point where individual alpha-synuclein oligomers can be observed and studied.

Matcha Tea: An Incredible Source of Health Advantages

Matcha tea, a powdered form of green tea, is increasingly becoming a favourite among health-conscious consumers due to its rich antioxidant content and possible health benefits. Commonly served as teas, lattes, desserts and smoothies, matcha is now widely available in cafés and health stores worldwide.

What is Matcha?

Matcha, a particular variety of green tea, types. It is grown and prepared differently. The whole tea leaf is consumed. Matcha the same source as green tea. However, are grown under shade for most of their chlorophyll and amino acid levels, giving colour and concentrated nutrient profile. removed and the leaves are finely ground. Matcha contains higher levels of an-green tea. Health experts say matcha may offer Its high antioxidant content may help reduce oxidative stress in the body. Some studies also suggest it could support liver function, improve brain performance and concentration, and contribute to heart health. Researchers have also explored matcha’s possible role in cancer prevention due to compounds known as catechins, which are believed to help protect cells from damage. Additionally, matcha is often included in weight-loss diets as it may help boost metabolism. Preparing matcha is relatively simple. Traditional matcha tea is made by mixing one to two teaspoons of matcha powder with hot water using a bamboo whisk. The consistency can be adjusted according to personal preference.



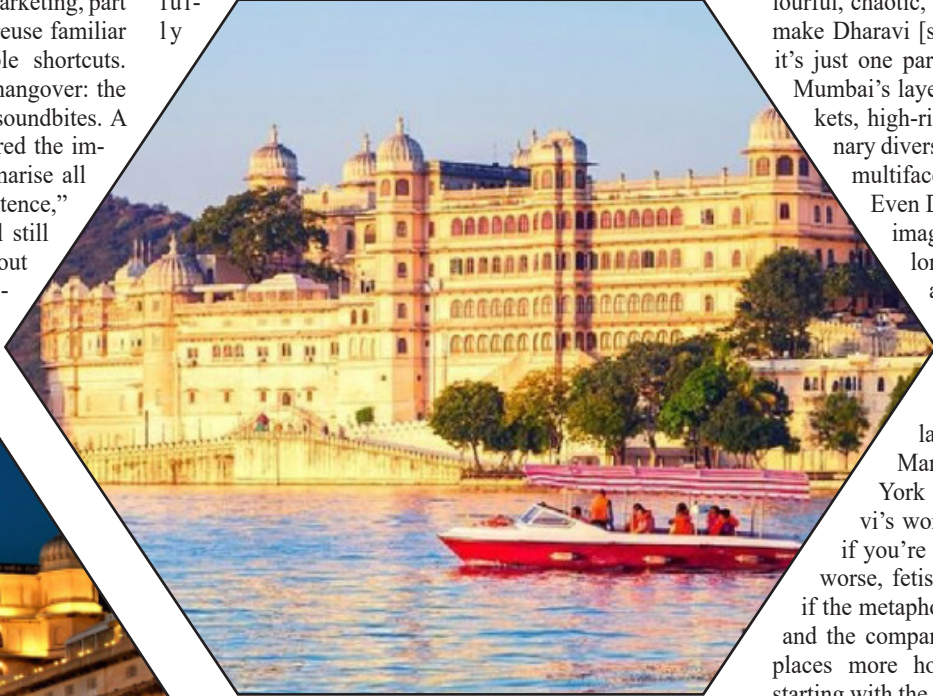
is marketed as even healthier than other green teas. What’s more, comes from the Camellia sinensis plant, unlike regular green tea, matcha plants cultivation period. This process increases the leaves their distinctive dark green. After harvesting, the stems and veins are removed and the leaves are finely ground into powder. Since the whole leaf is consumed, matcha contains higher levels of antioxidants and caffeine compared to standard green tea. Matcha is often used in several benefits when consumed in moderation. Matcha can help reduce oxidative stress in the body. Some studies also suggest it could support liver function, improve brain performance and concentration, and contribute to heart health. Researchers have also explored matcha’s possible role in cancer prevention due to compounds known as catechins, which are believed to help protect cells from damage. Additionally, matcha is often included in weight-loss diets as it may help boost metabolism. Preparing matcha is relatively simple. Traditional matcha tea is made by mixing one to two teaspoons of matcha powder with hot water using a bamboo whisk. The consistency can be adjusted according to personal preference.

Is it time to retire ‘Venice of the East’?

From “Venice of the East” to “lost civilisations”, colonial-era travel metaphors still shape how some see non-Western places. But that language deserves a rethink. “This doesn’t look like India at all!” The number of times I’ve heard that in response to photos from my travels around the country is frankly dispiriting. The comment usually appears when a place looks greener, cleaner or more orderly than people expect. Intended as praise, it rests on an assumption that beauty or “modernity” must somehow be un-Indian – or more broadly, un-South Asian, un-“Global South”, a term that itself squashes wildly different locations into one blurry, monolithic label. This reflex isn’t new. Colonial-era nicknames such as “Venice of the East” have been applied to numerous cities across Asia, from Hanoi in Vietnam to Alleppey in India. Many of these labels emerged during European colonial expansion and 19th-Century travel writing when explorers, merchants and missionaries tried to describe “exotic” places for Western audiences who lacked any independent frame of reference. In European imagination, Venice was a symbol of beauty, civilisation and commerce. And so calling somewhere “a Venice” was essentially shorthand for saying: this place is beautiful – and more importantly, comprehensible to us. But more than a century later, these metaphors persist. Blog posts still dissect how destinations “earned” the title of Venice, usually for their canals or waterways, while Instagram has more than 25,000 posts tagged #VeniceOfTheEast. At best, such comparisons are outdated; at worst, they remain quietly reductive. “Language doesn’t just name places; it shapes how we relate to them and treat them,” says Paul Meighan, a sociolinguist and researcher. “These metaphors, albeit used unintentionally at times, centre Europe as the benchmark for ‘civilisation’, framing everywhere else as derivative. They flatten specificity... a place isn’t allowed to be itself; it must be an echo or copy of somewhere else, many times decided by and reflective of a colonial power.” Such framing, he adds, arbitrates what counts as “worth seeing”, sidelining local histories and understandings. None of this is, of course, unique to Asia. Across continents, similar language shapes how entire regions are imagined long before travellers arrive. Hedder Quispe Puente de la Vega, founder of Machu Travel Peru, sees this play out regularly in his home country. “Phrases like ‘lost civilisation’ or ‘untouched land’ make Peru and the Andes seem frozen in time, more connected to mystery than to everyday life,” he says. “These words spark curiosity, but they also simplify reality. Many [travellers] arrive expecting only ancient ruins, llamas or rituals, without realising that Andean culture is alive, modern and constantly evolving.” Although the manifestations differ – canals in Asia, ancient

ruins in the Andes – the underlying pattern is the same. Western frames still shape what is noticed, valued and celebrated. But why do these narratives endure? In travel marketing, part of the answer lies in convenience. Marketers reuse familiar metaphors because they’re easy, recognisable shortcuts. Beneath that, however, sits a deeper colonial hangover: the impulse to flatten entire continents into neat soundbites. A British traveller I met in the Himalayas captured the imbalance succinctly. “Ask a Westerner to summarise all of Europe from Scotland to Bulgaria in one sentence,” he said. “They’d never manage it. But they’ll still try it with Asia, Africa or South America without blinking.” Urban designer Geeta Mehta, a pro-

nancing and a lack of everyday infrastructure meant the “city” never fully



el journalist and walking-tour guide, sees this often. “Many Westerners come expecting a version of India that’s loud, colourful, chaotic,” she says. “Films like Slumdog Millionaire make Dharavi [slum] seem like the face of Mumbai, when it’s just one part of the city. When they finally encounter Mumbai’s layers – its colonial architecture, bustling markets, high-rises, fine dining, street stalls and extraordinary diversity – they’re genuinely surprised to see how multifaceted the city really is.” Even Dharavi itself is more layered than outsiders imagine. Frequently reduced to clichés of squalor, corruption and shanty homes, it is, Mehta argues, something else entirely. A co-founder of urban research and design collective urbz, she has worked in Dharavi for more than 15 years. “These aren’t ‘slums’,” she says. “They are working villages, craft villages, with so much talent and innovation.” Many leather goods sold in high-end New York showrooms, she notes, are made in Dharavi’s workshops. But you can’t understand Dharavi if you’re busy looking for the India you expect – or worse, fetishise. All of this raises a broader question: if the metaphors are outdated, the expectations unhelpful and the comparisons inaccurate, how should we describe places more honestly and accurately? Meighan suggests starting with the basics: the names themselves. “The original names for places hold deep meaning,” he says. “They tell us so much more.” Take Udaipur, a city in India’s western state of Rajasthan that’s similarly often dubbed “the Venice of the East”. Its name anchors it in the story of the Mewar kings and a sophisticated, centuries-old system of lake-building designed for survival in a semi-arid landscape. The colonial nickname casts it as an Indian imitation of Italy when in reality its water infrastructure predates – and in many ways outperforms – the canals it’s compared to. Quispe Puente de la Vega argues that shifting to more accurate language helps travellers understand places as living cultures rather than relics. In the context of Peru, he suggests replacing the common marketing language “Discover the Lost City of the Incas” with “Reconnect with the Living Andes”. “Machu Picchu was never lost,” he says. “I want tourism language to reflect that vitality, inviting travellers not to ‘find’ something forgotten, but to reconnect with a living culture that never disappeared.” Mehta adds that in the rush to romanticise Western aesthetics, we’ve forgotten the strengths of traditional urbanism. “Traditional Indian cities were integrated, human-centric, clean and vibrant,” she says. “None of this ever had anything to do with looking like Europe.” The solution, ultimately, lies in broadening our imagination. As Naik puts it, “Travel, at its best, should dismantle stereotypes. So do your homework, take local tours, eat at neighbourhood restaurants and, most importantly, come with an open mind.” Places don’t need to resemble Venice, Paris or Rome to be beautiful. They only need the chance to be seen – and valued – on their own terms.



arrived for the people meant to inhabit it. Just as some cities are shaped by borrowed ideals, travellers often arrive with borrowed expectations. Pooja Naik, a Mumbai-based trav-

ENTERTAINMENT

Mira Nair’s Amri will feature Anjali Sivaraman as Amrita Sher-Gil

Mumbai: In Mira Nair’s ambitious new biopic, Amri, on Indian artist Amrita Sher-Gil, Anjali Sivaraman, star of Class and Bad Girl, will play the lead role. Priyanka Chopra and Jaideep Ahlawat will also play significant roles. On Tuesday, the director revealed the main cast in the first glimpse of the movie. In addition to Anjali, the movie will include Emily Watson as Marie-Antoinette Gottesman, Amrita’s mother; Jaideep Ahlawat as Umrao Singh Sher-Gil, her father; Krisztian Csakvari as Victor Egan; Anjana Vasan as Indira Sher-Gil; Jim Sarbh as Karl Khandalavala; and Priyanka Chopra as Madame Azurie. The film, which is set in Hungary, France, and India in the early 20th century and traces the European and Indian worlds that influenced the artist’s creative vision, is also executive produced by Priyanka. Anjali, a 31-year-old Kerala native, got her breakthrough in 2023 with Netflix’s Class before starring in Bad Girl last year. Amri tells the tale of Amrita Sher-Gil, a trailblazer in contemporary Indian art whose audacious life and imagery rocked the establishment. For Mira Nair, who has worked on critically acclaimed films like Salaam Bombay!, Monsoon Wedding, and The Namesake, the biography has been a bit of a dream project. “Amrita Sher-Gil’s artwork has influenced every movie I’ve made over the past few decades.”



I learned how to see from her. In order to capture the essence of India in a way that no one had before, she assimilated the finest European training; it is this distillation that has guided my own filmmaking from the start. In a statement to the media, Mira Nair said, “I will always be moved by the bravery of her palette, color, and framing of the ordinary people of India.” Amrita Sher-Gil, who passed away at the age of 28,

is now regarded as one of the best female artists of the 20th century. Amrita, the youngest student ever admitted to the Académie des Beaux-Arts of Paris, developed a personal aesthetic that emphasized the daily lives of common Indian women and men. She was educated and taught in the traditions of European tradition. Her paintings, which are now quite precious, provide insight into India and its women during that era.

Two Women, The Bride’s Toilet, Group of Three Girls, Girl in Blue, Sleeping Woman, and Hill Women are a few of her most well-known pieces. Amri is already finishing up production in Hungary and India. Clara Royer and Mira Nair co-wrote the movie, and Michael Nozik and Samudrika Arora produced it. In collaboration with KNMA and Miramax, Amri is a Mirabai, Samscape, Papertown production.

Amitabh Bachchan’s job keeps him up at night

New Delhi: Bollywood icon Amitabh Bachchan frequently uses his blog to share late-night ideas, life lessons, and personal comments with his followers. The actor talked about having trouble sleeping at night due to job obligations in his most recent article. He also shared the soothing routine he uses at these times. Declaring it to be the “best cure for the soul,” Amitabh talked about how he finds tranquility and eventually falls asleep when he listens to gentle classical music. Amitabh openly discussed staying up late at work on his blog on Tuesday at 4:14 a.m. The actor said that, despite medical advice to the contrary, work frequently takes precedence over sleep when reflecting on his routine. “No sleep process takes over at this hour of the morning from the previous night,” he wrote.

The body grows, develops, and repairs during sleep hours, so what does one do when job takes precedence over sleep? Medical professionals believe it’s wrong to sleep for less than seven hours. I’m addicted to the Ef Blog as I write, but in the quiet of the night, I can hear some of the most heartfelt classical meditation solos being played on a slide guitar and sitar. Aww! This is the best remedy for the soul. The actor further reflected on the emotional connection he feels with



music and how it helps him feel calm during restless nights. He added, “It is the chord that ties the soul to the Almighty... that invisible thread unseen, yet felt despite its absence... I feel... so it strums the strings within... put it on and softly it shall give you the peace of slumber... the seven notes that have invaded all music in whichever part of the world, are the universal commonness of mankind... respect it and it shall respect you.” Amitabh Bachchan will next be seen in the sequel to the sci-fi film Kalki 2898 AD.

The actor will reprise his role as Ashwatthama in the film. He recently shared pictures from the sets with Kamal Haasan and expressed happiness about col-

laborating with him again. Directed by Nag Ashwin, the first instalment released in 2024 and emerged as a major box office success, earning over ₹1,000 crore worldwide.

The film also starred Prabhas and Deepika Padukone in lead roles. While Prabhas will return for the sequel, Deepika is reportedly no longer part of the project. Apart from this, Amitabh also has the courtroom drama Section 84 in the pipeline. Directed by Ribhu Dasgupta, the film also stars Diana Penaty, Nimrat Kaur and Abhishek Banerjee in key roles. While filming has been completed, the makers are yet to announce the release date.

Suraj Nambiar and Mouni Roy Unfollow On Instagram, each other



New work: After getting married on January 27, 2022, in a destination wedding in Goa, Mouni Roy and Suraj Nambiar have been dishing out massive couple goals for over four years. However, the couple recently unfollowed each other on Instagram, which fuelled rumors of a separation. They haven’t, however, spoken out about

the issue. On social media, Mouni and Suraj frequently shared glimpses of their lives with their followers. Fans have taken notice of their recent Instagram behavior, which has generated conjecture. Despite appearing to have unfollowed one another on the platform, the two still have pictures of each other

on their own accounts. Mouni’s profile still features her wedding pictures along with several posts with Suraj. Likewise, Suraj has not removed photos of Mouni from his Instagram account, indicating that he has neither altered nor deleted past posts. A few users also commented on the same thing in Suraj’s comment section. One user wrote, “Please humein ye maat sunana ki aaplog ka divorce ho gaya hai; please apna matter solve karlo or dono sath mein ho jao. You’re such a great couple together; Mouni is just like a goddess, and you look like Shiva. Please don’t break your relationship,” while another commented, “Why did you delete your wedding pictures? Divorce soon?” The couple got married in January 2022 in Goa. Their wedding was held at the Hilton Goa Resort in Candolim and followed both Malayali and Bengali traditions. The celebrations began with Malayali rituals and concluded with a traditional Bengali wedding later the same day. Suraj is a Dubai-based businessman and investment banker, and Mouni is an actor and entrepreneur.

Ranveer Singh will portray Lord Shiva acquires rights to Immortals of Meluha

Mumbai: According to reports, actor Ranveer Singh is working on one of his biggest projects to date: a movie adaptation of Amish Tripathi’s The Immortals of Meluha. Pinkvilla claims that the actor, who would portray Lord Shiva in the movie, has obtained the book’s rights through his production company, Maa Kasam Film. To alter the mythological tale, he has teamed up with Birla Studios.

The project is currently in the scripting stage, according to the source, despite ongoing rumors about Ranveer’s next move following the success of Dhurandhar. While the crew concentrates on developing the screenplay and the franchise’s broader universe, Ranveer and Ananya Birla are reportedly actively working on the adaptation. The report quoted a source close to the production as saying, “Ranveer has been passionate about bringing Meluha to the big screen for a long time now. The acquisition happened recently, and the project is now officially under development. Makers are approaching the franchise as a long-term cinematic universe and the plan is to tell the story over three films.

The writing work has already begun, and the team is taking its time to crack the



screenplay and world-building. The first part is expected to go on floors in 2028.” The report also said Ranveer Singh is expected to play Lord Shiva in the film. The rest of the cast has not been finalised yet, and the makers are currently focusing on the script before taking a call on the director. On that, the source added, “The director will only be locked once the script work reaches a certain stage. Right now, the focus is entirely on developing the material.” Ran-

veer is believed to have acquired the rights to The Immortals of Meluha for a hefty amount, though the exact figure has not been disclosed. Before starting work on the first film in the Shiva trilogy, he is expected to begin shooting for Aditya Dhar’s next directorial venture in March 2027. He also has Pralay, directed by Jay Mehta, which is tentatively expected to go on floors in August 2026. An official announcement on that project is still awaited.

Junaid Khan acknowledges the box office failure of Ek Din



New Delhi: Following the failure of his previous film Loveyapa, Bollywood actor Junaid Khan made a comeback to the big screen with Ek Din. But Ek Din also failed to connect with viewers and did poorly at the box office. Junaid responded to the film’s lackluster performance and disclosed that his father, Aamir Khan, is still unhappy about the movie’s outcome in a recent chat with Vicky Lalwani on his YouTube channel. When discussing the movie’s dismal box office performance, Junaid seemed cool under pressure. Speaking on the reaction to the film, he acknowledged that despite the team’s great expectations, things did not turn out as planned. “Yaa, the film’s not done well,” he remarked. I suppose it didn’t go well, but we were optimistic. Hota hai kabhi kabhi. I had a great time watching this movie. I suppose most people didn’t really enjoy it, but a number of people did. It occasionally occurs. However, Junaid disclosed that the actor-filmmaker is still deeply impacted by the movie’s failure when asked how Aamir Khan, who also supported it as a producer, responded to the unsatisfactory outcome. “He is still moping. Even after all these years, after seeing all of it, it still really bothers him. But he keeps himself busy and goes back out there and does it all over again. He takes a film’s failure very personally, especially when he likes the film,” Junaid shared.

Abhishek Bachchan Responds to Not Charging Raja Shivaji a Fee

Mumbai: Since its May 1 premiere, Raja Shivaji, starring Riteish Deshmukh, has been the talk of the town. The actor previously discussed how his friendship with Raja Shivaji actors Salman Khan and Abhishek Bachchan led to their pro gratis participation in the movie. He emphasized that love and trust are the foundation of certain relationships. Abhishek Bachchan has now expressed his opinions about not having to pay for the movie.

“In today’s day and age, there are all these reels where people talk about facts and figures,” Abhishek Bachchan told News18, dismissing rumors that he and his co-stars charged for Raja Shivaji.

“The media loves to talk about an actor or actress charging so much money and demanding so many vans, but at the end of the day, it’s an art form that starts from the heart,” he went on. If we believe in something, we have no trouble waiving anything. It’s not a deal. It’s an emotional exchange. Inspiration is the first step towards



creating art. He also praised Riteish Deshmukh and Genelia for emphasizing the movie’s purpose over its box office receipts. Abhishek Bachchan added, “At a time when there’s so much mathematics attached to films, they’ve affirmed that not everything is about figures. It was about their belief in wanting to do something larger than all of us. They never approached it as a project. It was very sa-

cred to them.” “It was a very challenging film to make. The scale is something that Marathi cinema hasn’t seen before, and to achieve that seamlessly and make sure that the unit is happy, safe and inspired... kudos to them, really! I don’t know anybody who had any complaints,” added the actor. Calling them family, he reiterated how he said yes to Raja Shivaji without even reading the script.

Arjun Kapoor commemorates Ishaqzaade’s 14th anniversary

Mumbai: Actor Arjun Kapoor commemorated 14 years in the Bollywood industry, marking the anniversary of his debut film, Ishaqzaade, which was released in 2012. He celebrated this milestone on Instagram by sharing artistic sketches inspired by key scenes from the movie and reflecting on the lasting impact of his character, Parma, on his acting journey. In his post, Arjun expressed that “14 years later, Parma still feels like the beginning of everything,” emphasizing the film’s significance as the foundation of his cinematic career. His heartfelt note garnered reactions from fans and industry peers, who reminisced about his breakthrough performance in the romantic action drama. Ishaqzaade, directed by Habib Faisal and produced by Aditya Chopra under Yash Raj Films, is set in the fictional town of Almor, Uttar



Pradesh, and narrates the tumultuous love story between Parma Chauhan and Zoya Qureshi, played by Parineeti Chopra. Their romance, stemming from rival political backgrounds, defies entrenched religious and social divides within their community. The film also featured performances from Gauahar Khan, Nattasha Rastogi, Anil Rasto-

gi, and Shashank Khaitan in supporting roles, and is an official remake of the Bengali drama Dujone. In recent times, Arjun was seen in the film Mere Husband Ki Biwi alongside Rakul Preet Singh and Bhumi Pednekar, but he has yet to formally announce his next project, hinting instead at future endeavors full of “exciting projects.”

Shakira releases a teaser for the 2026 FIFA World Cup anthem

New Delhi: Colombian singer Shakira has revealed a teaser for “Dai Dai,” the official anthem of the 2026 FIFA World Cup, marking her return to the tournament after 16 years since “Waka Waka (This Time for Africa).” The 49-year-old artist shared a one-minute teaser on Instagram on May 7, announcing the full release of the track featuring Nigerian Afrobeats star Burna Boy on May 14. In her post, she highlighted the anthem’s debut at “Maracanã Stadium” and expressed excitement for the event. The teaser showcases Shakira performing with dancers in team colors for the upcoming tournament. This release signifies her second World Cup anthem following “Waka Waka” in 2010. She also contributed to the 2006 and 2014 tournaments with performances of “Hips Don’t Lie” and “La La La (Brazil 2014).” The 2026 FIFA World Cup, co-hosted by the United States, Mexico, and Canada, is set to take place from June 11 to July 19.



Hardik Pandya trains alone and sends a clear selection message

New Delhi: Hardik Pandya, the captain of the Mumbai Indians, was seen working out by himself in the nets prior to Thursday’s game against the Punjab Kings in Dharamsala. Hardik was reportedly suffering from back spasms, which kept him out of the team’s previous two games in the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026 season. Although the team has not yet provided an update on his availability for the match against Punjab, the all-rounder posted a video to his Instagram account, making it clear that he is fit to return to the field. Hardik was reportedly unable to play in MI’s last two games due to back spasms. The all-rounder posted a video on his Instagram account indicating that he is well enough to return to his on-field responsibilities, even though the team has not yet provided an update on his availability for the game against Punjab. The Mumbai Indians were eliminated from the IPL 2026 playoffs after a last-ball loss to the Royal Challengers Bengaluru on May 10. Hardik did join the team prior to the game, but he wasn’t considered fit to be included in the playing XI. Prior to the match against PBKS, Hardik displayed obvious signs of recovery and was spotted practicing batting in the nets. Regarding the Mumbai Indians’ remaining campaign, the legendary Sunil Gavaskar has urged the team to give young players opportunities in their final three games. Although Hardik joined the team prior to the game, he was not considered fit enough to be included in the starting



lineup. Hardik was seen practicing batting in the nets prior to the game against PBKS, and he was clearly recovering. The legendary Sunil Gavaskar has urged the Mumbai Indians to give young players opportunities in their final three games of the season. “In T20 cricket, ups and downs are bound to happen. Once the season ends, that’s the right time to properly assess what went wrong. But at this stage, my view is that the senior players have given everything they had. Now, it may be the right opportunity to give younger players a chance in the remaining matches. That will help the franchise understand how these youngsters handle pressure and whether they can justify the faith shown in them,” he said in a chat on Star Sports’ ‘Amul Cricket Live’. While the match against PBKS is a dead-rubber for MI, the Shreyas Iyer-led franchise is in desperate need of a win, having suffered four consecutive losses this campaign. For Punjab to secure a top-2 spot in the points table, a win against Mumbai is crucial.

NIA arrests Hizbul terror financier Iqbal Singh Shera

New Delhi, May 17 : Alleged “narco-terrorist” Iqbal Singh, also known as Shera, was detained by the NIA on Wednesday shortly after he was extradited to India from Portugal as a result of persistent legal and diplomatic efforts. In the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (HM) terror-financing case, the agency claimed that Shera was the mastermind. After fleeing to Portugal in 2020, he was apprehended by an NIA team at the airport in Delhi. The NIA stated, “His successful extradition and arrest come as a major shot in the arm for the NIA’s fight against narco and cross-border terrorism backed by Pakistan.”

According to the NIA investigation, Shera, a resident of Amritsar, Punjab, was the mastermind behind the plot to smuggle drugs into the border state from Pakistan. He had coordinated and overseen the trafficking and distribution of the drugs, and channelised the proceeds through hawala networks to Pakistan and Kashmir-based operatives of HM to facilitate terror activities, the agency said. To carry forward the anti-India narco terror conspiracy, Shera had allegedly formed a terror gang and operated a Punjab-based network of associates engaged in the trafficking of large quantities of heroin, collection of sale proceeds, and transfer of funds to handlers and terror operatives. He had also maintained close links with Pakistan-based HM terror operatives. The case was originally registered by the Punjab police following the arrest of an HM overground worker, identified as Hilal Ahmed Shergojri. The police had also recovered ₹29 lakh of alleged drug proceeds from the possession of Hilal, a close aide of the deceased terrorist commander Riyaz Ahmed Naikoo. Further probe had led to the recovery of another ₹32 lakh from Punjab-based members of the terror gang.

Rahul Gandhi accuses institutional capture and criticizes the CBI director selection process



New Delhi, May 17 : Head of the Opposition In a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday night, Rahul Gandhi expressed his strong disapproval of the selection process for the new CBI director and accused the government of “institutional capture” of the agency in order to target critics, journalists, and political rivals. “I have expressed my disapproval of the CBI Director selection process in writing to the Prime Minister. By taking part in a biased exercise, I cannot renounce my constitutional obligation. After attending a meeting of the influential committee, he wrote on X, “The Leader of Opposition is not a rubber stamp.” “Your government has repeatedly misused the CBI, intended to be India’s premier

investigative agency, to target political opponents, journalists, and critics. It is to prevent such institutional capture that the Leader of Opposition is included in the selection committee. Regrettably, you have continued to deny me any meaningful role in the process,” Rahul wrote.

The panel, which is led by the Prime Minister and includes the Chief Justice of India and the Opposition leader, met for more than an hour at the Prime Minister’s residence. The meeting lasted more than an hour and was held at the Prime Minister’s home at 7, Lok Kalyan Marg. The government has not yet addressed Rahul’s accusations or revealed the name of the new CBI director following the meeting. Praveen Sood, the current di-

LoP says government denied key candidate records to Opposition members and reduced high powered panel to a mere formality

rector of the CBI, will step down on May 24. “The CBI, which was supposed to be India’s top investigative agency, has been repeatedly abused by your government to target journalists, critics, and political rivals. The Leader of Opposition is a member of the selection committee in order to avoid such institutional capture. Rahul wrote, “Unfortunately, you have persisted in denying me any significant role in the process.” He claimed he was not provided with the self-appraisal reports or 360-degree reports of the eligible candidates despite repeated written requests. “I was expected to examine the appraisal records of the 69 candidates for the first time during the committee meeting. The 360-degree reports were denied to me outright. A detailed review of these records is crucial to assess each candidate’s history and performance,” Rahul said. “This deliberate denial of information, without any legal basis, makes a mockery of the selection process and ensures that only your pre-decided candidate is selected.” The LoP said he had recorded his dissent in the previous meeting on May 5 last year and later written to the Prime Minister on October 21, suggesting measures for a fair and transparent process, “to which I have not even received a response”. “By denying the Selection Committee crucial information, the government has reduced it to a mere formality... I thereby dissent in the strongest terms,” Rahul said.

SC requires GPS tracking and panic buttons in public transportation vehicles



New Delhi, May 17 : Before issuing fitness certificates or permits, the Supreme Court on Wednesday ordered states and Union Territories to make sure that all public service vehicles are required to have “panic buttons” and vehicle location tracking devices (VLTs) installed in a “time-bound manner.” The guidelines were issued by a bench of Justices J.B. Pardiwala and K.V. Viswanathan in an attempt to protect women, children, and the elderly who ride in these vehicles and to enable prompt emergency response in dire circumstances.

The bench observed that only 1% of vehicles have panic buttons and VLTs, despite Rule 125H of the Central Motor Vehicle Rules, 1989 requiring their installation in public service vehicles.

Previously, on November 28, 2016, the Road Transport and Highways Ministry issued a notification requiring VLTs and one or more emergency buttons in public service

vehicles starting on April 1, 2018, with the exception of two-wheelers, e-rickshaws, three-wheelers, and transport vehicles that do not require a permit under the Motor Vehicle Act, 1988.

The Supreme Court issued the directives on Wednesday while addressing a PIL filed by a social activist titled “Rajasekharan vs Union of India” on measures to combat rising road accidents. However, states and UTs had been slow to implement the measures despite the notification.

The bench directed the authorities to withhold the grant of fitness certificates or permits to public-transport vehicles under Sections 56 and 66 of the Motor Vehicles Act till the installation of VLTs and panic buttons was complete. It asked the Centre to hold talks with manufacturers to ensure that such devices were installed at the time of vehicle manufacturing. The official order was not uploaded at the time of filing the report.

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As AIADMK infighting becomes public, EPS makes a significant claim

Chennai, May 17: The rumored AIADMK feud erupted in public during Chief Minister Vijay’s floor test on Wednesday in the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly after party General Secretary Edappadi K. Palaniswami made a big claim that his MLAs were offered cash to vote in favor of the TVK chief. Palaniswami stated that the 47 AIADMK MLAs would oppose the motion supporting Vijay, while party leader SP Velumani, who is reportedly leading the “rival” faction, publicly pledged support for Vijay. Party leader SP Velumani, who is allegedly in charge of the “rival” faction, publicly pledged support for Vijay while Palaniswami stated that the 47 AIADMK MLAs would oppose the motion. Days after taking the oath of office, Vijay, the newly appointed chief minister, had to prove his majority in the House through a trust vote. “There have been horse-trading attempts to poach AIADMK MLAs. I have got information that some might get ministerial births and take part in the ruling government. You said you want to run a pure and transparent government and we hope so,” EPS said during the House’s debate on the confidence motion. He claimed that six of the MLAs were also offered ministerial berths, which led to some former ministers voting for TVK. He continued by saying that six MLAs were also given ministerial positions, which caused some former ministers to vote for TVK. There have been attempts to steal AIADMK MLAs through horse trading. I’ve been informed that some people may be born into ministerial positions and participate in the current administration. We hope that you will run an honest and open government, as you stated,” EPS stated. “We oppose the resolution.”

All AIADMK MLAs will vote against it,” the former chief minister declared, adding, “All parties have difference of opinion. We sought votes for the AIADMK alliance to win. 47 won



under the Twin Leaves symbol. Around 66 percent people did not vote for the TVK.” However, things took an unexpected turn when Speaker JCD Prabhakar allowed AIADMK MLA SP Velumani to speak right after EPS, a gesture vehemently opposed by the party general secretary. Team EPS argued that two separate leaders from the same party cannot speak at a time. “SP Velumani spoke yesterday and had asked to speak today too,” said the Speaker, adding that it was his prerogative to decide who he has to allow to speak during a debate. Exuding complete defiance to the party line declared by Palaniswami, SP Velumani openly vowed support to Vijay. “Respecting the wish of the people, the AIADMK supports the Confidence Motion brought by

CM”, he said. Later, Chief Minister Vijay, when he rose to speak during the proceedings, extended gratitude to Velumani for pledging support to the TVK. Meanwhile, adding to the drama was Leader of Opposition, Udhayanidhi Stalin, who launched a sharp attack on the TVK government, before the DMK staged a walkout from the House. Questioning the legitimacy of the new government, Udhayanidhi said, “Majority numbers, 118 is need to form Government which this party does not have”. He argued that while 4.97 crore people voted in the election, only 1.70 crore voted for TVK, claiming that “65% has rejected the Government” and that most voters did not back Vijay to lead the state. He also referred to legal and procedural issues, saying one MLA

had been barred by the High Court from participating in the confidence motion, bringing the effective majority mark into focus.

Udhayanidhi alleged that the government was surviving only because parties like the Communist Party of India, the Communist Party of India (Marxist), Viduthala Chiruthaigal Katchi (VCK) and the Indian Union Muslim League (IUM) extended support to prevent President’s Rule.

Taking aim at the alleged political outreach, he said, “This is my decent version, but TTV said they were involved in horse-trading even before coming to power,” while accusing the TVK of seeking support from rivals, including sections of AIADMK. With the AIADMK internal rift playing out in the open and the DMK staging a walkout of the House, Chief Minister Vijay won the trust vote with the support of 144 MLAs, easily crossing the majority mark of 118. While 144 MLAs voted in support of the Vijay-led TVK, five MLAs abstained from voting while another 22 opposed the government. The DMK walked out with its 59 MLAs before the voting could even begin. Interestingly, 25 MLAs of the SP Velumani faction of the AIADMK supported the TVK, while the 22 MLAs that opposed the motion were all from the EPS faction of the party. With SP Velumani’s faction openly backing the TVK government and the EPS camp of the AIADMK opposing it, the party’s internal battle has moved from speculation to open confrontation. The split raises questions over AIADMK’s unity, leadership and its role in the opposition space, especially as the state heads toward future electoral contests. If the divide widens, Tamil Nadu could witness a major realignment, with Vijay’s government potentially gaining from a fractured opposition and shifting alliance equations.

The Ligue 1 title is extended by Paris Saint-Germain



New Delhi: With a 2-0 victory over nearest rival Lens on Wednesday, Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) secured a record-extending 14th French league title. With one game remaining, PSG leads Lens by nine points after winning Ligue 1 for the fifth time in a row with just a draw. After Lens missed multiple opportunities to score at Stade Bollaert-Delelis, Khvicha Kvaratskhelia scored in the 29th minute, and Ibrahim Mbaye added the second goal in stoppage time. In order to support titleholder PSG's Champions League aspirations, the French league rescheduled the game from April 11. On May 30 in Budapest, PSG will play Premier League leader Arsenal in the Champions League final. Although the

postponement was strongly contested by Lens, coach Pierre Sage's side had no say in the matter. Lens also has a final to prepare for — against Nice in the French Cup on May 22 — and Sage left his two best forwards — wingers Florian Thauvin and Allan Saint-Maximin — on the bench against PSG until the hour mark. PSG punished a Lens error when forward Ousmane Dembélé intercepted a sloppy pass from defender Malang Sarr and fed Kvaratskhelia, who scored with a clinical finish. PSG scored in stoppage time through Mbaye, the 18-year-old forward who thumped a pass from Désiré Doué in off the crossbar moments after Lens had fluffed yet another chance.

Thailand Open 2026 Srikanth, Lakshya, and Sindhu advance to the round of 16; Ayush is eliminated

New Delhi: On Wednesday, P. V. Sindhu, Lakshya Sen, and Kidambi Srikanth secured their places in the round of 16 of the Thailand Open in Bangkok with convincing victories. Both young Devika Sihag and Malvika Bansod advanced to the second round; the latter achieved her first Super 500 victory. Seeded sixth, two-time Olympic medallist Sindhu defeated Chinese Taipei's World No. 43 Tung Ciou-Tong 21-9, 21-12 in 33 minutes to advance to a second-round matchup with Danish World No. 41 Amalie Schulz, a player the Indian has never faced in her quest to win her first championship since the Syed Modi International in 2024. World No. 11 Lakshya extended his head-to-head record to 6-0 against Singapore's Jia Heng Jason Teh with a 21-16, 21-17 victory in 43 minutes. Barring a few nervous moments towards the end, World No. 29 Srikanth faced no difficulties in defeating eighth-seeded Singaporean Loh Kean Yew 21-14, 21-15 in a rematch of the World Championships 2021 final. The Indian, who won the Thailand Open in 2013, will next face World No. 49 Su Li Yang of Chinese Taipei. Badminton Asia Championships silver medallist Ayush Shetty en-



tered his campaign opener against Kodai Naraoka, the sixth-seeded Japanese, with a 2-1 head-to-head advantage. After conceding the first game, 21-year-old Ayush bounced back to force a decider. However, World No. 9 Naraoka completely outplayed the Indian, ranked 20th in the BWF Rankings, in the third game to record a 21-13, 17-21, 21-4 victory in 59 minutes. The 21-year-old Devika triumphed over Japan's Natsumi Nidaira (World No. 26) with a score of 21-19, 13-21, 21-15, and will face World No. 28 Hina Akechi next. Malvika, ranked

World No. 50, had a dramatic match against Wen Yu Zhang (World No. 44), overcoming a first-game loss and saving multiple game points to secure a third game. She will compete against reigning champion Chen Yu Fei, who defeated Anmol Kharb, a 19-year-old Indian player. Anmol held a lead in the final game but ultimately lost 19-21, 21-13, 21-18. In another match, Unnati Hooda faced Pompaewee Chochuwong, losing 11-21, 21-17, 21-16 despite winning a game. Isharani Baruah is also scheduled to compete later in the day.

Nikhat Zareen hits out after crashing out of Asiad race

New Delhi: Following his elimination from the Asian Games and Commonwealth Games selection trials on Thursday, May 14, one of India's best boxers, Nikhat Zareen, has taken aim at the administrative chaos surrounding Indian boxing. Following the event, Nikhat responded that the conflict between the Boxing Federation of India (BFI) and the Sports Authority of India (SAI) had left athletes "mentally and physically drained." Nikhat lost 1-4 to Sakshi Chaudhary in the 51kg semi-finals of the selection trials on Thursday, ending her chances of making it to the two major events. The two-time world champion told PTI following the fight that the boxers' lives had been very challenging over the past few weeks due to the uncertainty surrounding the selection process. For us boxers, the past two weeks have been like torture. I don't want to assign blame to any specific individual or entity. However, the conflict between those two (SAI and BFI) crushed the athletes," Nikhat stated. Following complaints from multiple boxers, SAI objected to BFI's proposed assessment-based system, which caused confusion in the selection process. Eventually, the federation was compelled to switch back to the conventional trials-based format and abandon the model in the middle. Nikhat revealed that athletes had spent weeks preparing according to constantly changing schedules while also trying to maintain strict weight targets. "We were told the camp will start from April 25 but then the sanction didn't come. Then they said once the camp starts on April 29 the assessment system will also start," she explained. The Hyderabad boxer said athletes were warned that missing training sessions or modifying schedules due to injuries would lead to point deductions. Boxers were also repeatedly asked to stay within varying body-weight limits during the camp. "First five per cent bodyweight, then four, then two and then one. They kept taking weight till May 10," she said. Nikhat added that the entire assessment process was eventually scrapped, leaving athletes frustrated after weeks of intense preparation. "We had physical tests, beep tests, strength tests and everyone gave their best. In the end, we were told that whatever tests we took, the points given won't be counted," she said. The 29-year-old admitted that she now plans to take a break after an exhausting few months. Despite missing out on the Asian Games and Commonwealth Games, the former world champion said her focus was already shifting towards next year's Olympic qualification cycle.

India's historic run at the AFC U-17 Women's Asian Cup comes to an end when they lose to China



New Delhi: India's participation in the AFC U-17 Women's Asian Cup ended on Monday when they lost 0-3 to the hosts, China, in the quarterfinals in Suzhou. The outcome eliminated the Young Tigresses' chances of qualifying for this year's FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup in Morocco. However, with their first appearance in the knockout stage, this was India's best-ever

performance in the competition. Joya took Anushka Kumari's place in the starting lineup as head coach Pamela Conti made one change from the team that defeated Lebanon in the final group-stage game. With the support of a boisterous home crowd, China got off to a fast start and sought to establish themselves in the last third with swift passes and movement. Huang Qinyi, Liu Yuxi (penalty)

and Li Qixian were the scorers. India defended resolutely in the opening stages but the hosts gradually gained control. China dominated possession. Despite spending long spells without the ball, India remained disciplined and almost caught China against the run of play near the half-hour mark. Pritika Barman delivered a dangerous cross into the penalty area for Joya, but the forward's effort was blocked.

Elina Svitolina of Ukraine criticizes the IOC for its lax attitude toward Belarusian athletes

New Delhi: Elina Svitolina of Ukraine has harshly criticized the International Olympic Committee for easing restrictions on Belarusian athletes participating in international competitions while flying their country's flag. The tennis player from Ukraine claimed that it was "painful" to witness Belarusian athletes being welcomed back while the conflict in Ukraine rages on. Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, which used Belarus as a staging area, the IOC first suggested banning athletes from Russia and Belarus. The IOC did, however, declare last week that it no longer advised prohibiting Belarusian athletes and teams from competing in events run by international federations. The ruling essentially makes it possible for Belarusian athletes to compete at the 2028 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles under their own flag and anthem. One of the most outspoken Ukrainian athletes since the start of the conflict, Svitolina, expressed dissatisfaction with the move's timing. "Ukraine is still receiving rockets. At the Italian Open in Rome,



Svitolina told reporters that "those two countries are still considered aggressors. It's very sad and very painful for us to see this even considered, they're talking about it." It's a serious subject. I want to say a lot. It's not the best time, in my opinion. Svitolina continued, "I definitely don't support the talks." Since 2022, Svitolina has consistently refused to shake hands with Russian and Belarusian players after matches in protest against the war. The decision has also sparked debate across the sporting world.

Belarusian World No.1 Aryna Sabalenka recently welcomed the prospect of athletes competing again under their national identity, saying she hoped tennis authorities would "give us our flag back." Meanwhile, several sporting bodies remain unconvinced by the IOC's latest stance. World Athletics has already rejected the IOC's recommendation and confirmed that Belarusian and Russian athletes will remain banned from its events until there is tangible progress toward peace. The International Tennis Federation

(ITF) also announced that Russian and Belarusian players will continue to compete as neutral athletes. The IOC, however, defended its move by arguing that athletes should not be punished for the actions of their governments. The organisation said Belarus's Olympic committee was in good standing and compliant with the Olympic Charter, unlike Russia, whose Olympic committee remains suspended amid anti-doping investigations and issues relating to occupied Ukrainian territories.

The front-runner for the permanent manager position at Manchester United is Michael Carrick

New Delhi: Senior executives at Manchester United are anticipated to suggest Michael Carrick to Jim Ratcliffe for the position of permanent manager. Carrick, a 44-year-old former United midfielder, has been seen as the front-runner for the position ever since he qualified for the Champions League the following season while serving as interim head coach. After Ruben Amorim was fired in January, United planned to wait until the end of the season to decide on a replacement. However, it is believed that director of football Jason Wilcox and external chief executive Omar Berrada have decided Carrick is the best candidate for the position and will inform Ratcliffe of their decision this week, as first reported by The Athletic. United will begin formal talks with Carrick once minority shareholder Ratcliffe gives the green light. Carrick has won 10 of his 15 matches in charge, losing



just twice, to guide United from seventh to third in the Premier League table and secure a return to the Champions League. No Premier League club has won more points than the 33 Manchester United have collected since Carrick's appointment on January 13. Carrick oversaw victories over title contenders Manchester City and Arsenal as he won each of his first four matches in charge in a superb start to his role as caretaker. A seven-game unbeaten run was eventually ended in March, but subsequent key victories

over Champions League rivals Aston Villa, Chelsea and Liverpool helped to ensure a return to Europe's elite club competition. United were in disarray when Amorim was dismissed, with poor results and disagreements over the Portuguese's tactics and formation leading to an increasingly strained relationship with club officials towards the end of his 14-month tenure. Carrick has made a positive impression behind the scenes and been praised internally for his commitment to United's youth development programme.

Andrea Pellegrino is eliminated by Jannik Sinner to advance to the Italian Open Quarters

New Delhi: Alexander Zverev was shockingly eliminated by Luciano Darderi, another local hero, while Jannik Sinner, the world number one, calmly defeated his countryman Andrea Pellegrino 6-2, 6-3 on Tuesday to continue his quest for his first Italian Open title. In front of an enthusiastic crowd that cheered on 18th-seeded Italian Darderi, second-seeded Zverev lost 1-6, 7-6 (12/10), and 6-0. However, in a match that was actually never much of a contest, top seed Sinner defeated qualifier Pellegrino on center court, as was to be expected. Sinner, 24, has now tied Novak Djokovic's record run in Masters 1000 events with 31 consecutive victories. Sinner of Pellegrino remarked, "I'm very happy about the outcome, but I'm also very happy for him because I know he's working very hard." I need to take tomorrow off in order to rest, and hopefully I'll be ready for quarters."

By far Pellegrino's best performance in a Masters 1000 event was reaching the round of 16 of his home tournament. The 29-year-old is set to move up to a career-best world ranking of 123rd after not just making the main draw of a top-ranked ATP tournament



for the first time but also getting to face his country's biggest sporting star in front of over 10,000 fans. Pellegrino received warm cheers as he put in a creditable performance against the dominant force in tennis, and he also showed some deft technique when given room to breathe by Sinner. But Sinner was never in top gear and still comfortably dealt with Pellegrino to set up a clash with 12th seed Andrey Rublev.

Should Sinner win a record-extending sixth straight Masters 1000 title, he will be the first Italian to win at the Foro Italico since Adriano Panatta 50 years ago. With great rival Carlos Alcaraz out injured and Zverev now gone, Sinner is red-hot favourite for victory as he builds towards completing the career Grand Slam at Roland Garros. Zverev, the 2024 champion in Rome, slumped in three sets as Darderi rallied to his

first ever win over an opponent ranked among the world's top 10 players. "It's my most important win, to beat Zverev at Roma is the most exciting win of my career," said Darderi. While Sinner and Darderi -- set to rise to a career-high 17th in the world -- reached the last eight, their compatriot Lorenzo Musetti was not so fortunate as physical problems led to him being beaten 6-3, 6-1 by Casper Ruud.