

Ancient Human Settlement Site Discovered in Mizoram's Champhai District

Aizawl, May 28: Scientific studies conducted at an ancient site near Dungtlang village in Mizoram's Champhai district have revealed evidence of human habitation dating back several centuries. The findings were announced by Mizoram Art and Culture Minister C. Lalsawivunga. The archaeological research was carried out with financial support from the North Eastern Council. The State Art and Culture Department conducted the study in collaboration with the Department of History of Mizoram University under the Higher and Technical Institute of Mizoram. Field studies and excavations at the Dungtlang ancient site began in May 2024. Samples collected during the excavation were later sent to Beta Analytic Laboratory in Florida, United States, for scientific testing and carbon dating analysis. According to the results, the site near Dungtlang was inhabited during four different historical periods, in-

dicating repeated human settlements over several centuries. Carbon dating placed these settlements between 410 AD and 1830 AD. Researchers stated that the findings suggest the area was occupied successively across different eras rather than continuously, with some periods appearing to have remained uninhabited. Excavations also uncovered human skeletal remains and ancient artefacts believed to be linked to early Mizo ancestry. Among the major discoveries were skeletal remains recovered from the Tlangthang grave site. Scientific examination conducted by Beta Analytic confirmed that the remains date back to between 1740 and 1800 AD, offering further insight into the historical occupation and cultural life of the region. Officials said additional scientific tests and studies are still underway, and more detailed historical information about the site is expected once

the remaining analyses are completed. Apart from its archaeological importance, Dungtlang is also known for its rich folklore and cultural heritage. One of the village's most iconic landmarks is Lianchhiari Lunglen Tlang, a dramatic rock ledge overlooking deep valleys and surrounding hills. Dungtlang is also home to Thangchhuah Mual and is surrounded by rolling hills, cliffs and scenic valleys, making it one of Mizoram's important destinations for archaeological, historical and cultural tourism. Speaking at the programme, Lalsawivunga appealed to the people of Mizoram to help preserve and protect historically important sites and cultural assets across the state. He urged the public to report valuable heritage locations to the Art and Culture Department and refrain from damaging such sites. The archaeological project is being led by archaeologists Vanlalhmua-



ka Singson and Dr. Lalhmingsanga. Residents and representatives of Dungtlang village also attended the programme.

Assam CTC Tea Sets Record at Guwahati Auction

Guwahati, May 28: The Guwahati Tea Auction Centre (GTAC) has recorded robust demand for high-quality teas during Auction Sale Number 22, with several tea gardens achieving impressive price realisations. A major highlight of the auction was a premium lot from Deckiajuli Tea Estate, owned by Parry Agro Industries Ltd., which fetched Rs 800 per kilogram for BOPSM grade—the highest price ever achieved by the estate. Situated on the north bank of the Brahmaputra River in Assam's Sonitpur district, Deckiajuli Tea Estate is widely recognized for producing high-quality, robust black CTC teas, known for their rich caramel notes and bright amber liquor. The tea was marketed by leading broker J Thomas & Co Pvt. Ltd. and purchased by Jain Tea Company. Commenting on the development, Dinesh Bihani, Secretary of the Guwahati Tea Auction Buyers As-

sociation, said, "The strong demand for premium Assam teas in both domestic and international markets continues to drive better price realisation at GTAC. The auction system ensures transparency, efficient price discovery, and fair practices for all stakeholders." He further added that GTAC, one of the largest CTC tea auction hubs globally, plays a pivotal role in strengthening the regional tea economy. Increasingly, tea producers are routing their teas through the platform and expressing satisfaction with the prices achieved. Referring to recent policy support, he noted that the Assam Government's subsidy of Rs 15 per kilogram on orthodox teas is expected to encourage more orthodox tea manufacturers to sell through GTAC, potentially transforming it into a major hub for orthodox teas, which have strong export demand.

Manipur CM Visits Kangpokpi Relief Camp, Promises Early Rehabilitation

Imphal, May 28: Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh on Thursday visited the Makhan Village Relief Camp and interacted with internally displaced persons (IDPs) staying there. Makhan village, located in the Kangpokpi district, lies in a vulnerable buffer zone affected by the ongoing ethnic conflict. The area has seen volatile security situations and has served as a focal point for the crisis. The Chief Minister was accompanied by Deputy Chief Minister L. Dikho, while MLAs Awangboub Newmai, Leishiyoi Keishing, Janghemlung Panmei, Ram Muivah, J. Kumo Sha, Khashim Vashum and H. Dingo were also present.



Taking to social media, the chief minister stated that he had an interaction with the inmates of the camp during which he listened to their concerns and reviewed the relief measures in place. Singh further reiterated the State Government's commitment to the safe resettlement and rehabilitation of all IDPs at the earliest. Notably, the Chief Minister has been conducting regular visits to the relief camps across the state with a focus on reviewing resettlement efforts, assessing security, and providing financial assistance to the IDPs.

SC Calls for Fast-Track Manipur Violence Trial

New Delhi, May 28: Supreme Court of India on Wednesday said that the ongoing trial related to the 2023 violence in Manipur needs to be expedited and sought a status report from the authorities. A bench comprising Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justice Joyimalya Bagchi noted that, according to an SIT report, chargesheets had been filed in 207 cases against more than 400 accused persons. The bench was hearing a plea by the Central Bureau of Investigation against the grant of bail by the Gauhati High Court to two accused in a case involving the alleged sexual assault and public humiliation of women during the violence. The violence broke out on May 3 last year following protests organised in the hill districts.

Manipur Forces Arrest Militants, Destroy Bunkers

Imphal, May 28: Manipur police have arrested at least five alleged underground cadres linked to banned insurgent groups across Manipur over two days, besides recovering arms and explosives during separate operations in hill districts. Security forces also destroyed three illegal bunkers during an operation under Litan police station in Ukhrul district on Tuesday. One bunker was located at Patleijang village, while two others were demolished at Roudei village in the T.M. Kasom area. During the operation, personnel recovered an improvised explosive device weighing around five kilograms, two pompi guns, two Baofeng radio sets with charger, three live 12 bore cartridges and 12 empty cases of different calibres. According to official sources, an active cadre of the proscribed PREPAK outfit, identified as Thingujam Gulapi Singh (45) from Ningomthong Sairom Leirak in Imphal East district, was arrested



ed on Tuesday from Kakwa Lilando Lampak under Singjamei police station in Imphal West district. On the same day, security forces arrested an alleged active cadre of PLA, identified as Waikhom Shanta

Singh alias Torbot (32), a resident of Sabungkhok Mamang Leikai, from Nongada Kameng area under Lamla police station in Imphal East district. In another operation, Ayekpam Dharmendra Singh (48), alleged to be a self-styled captain of RPF/PLA, was apprehended from his current residence under Iriblung police station. Earlier, two alleged cadres belonging to different underground outfits were apprehended from Mayai Keithel near Forest Gate under Nongpok Sekmai police station in Thoubal district on Tuesday. In a separate search operation conducted in the forest area of Hengkot village under Churachandpur police station, security forces recovered a large cache of arms and explosives. The arms haul included an MK-II rifle, an AK-47 rifle with two magazines, a .303 rifle, a 12 bore rifle, several country-made weapons, two SBML guns, an SBBL gun and five IEDs.

Assam CS Discusses Border Management With BSF ADG



Guwahati, May 28: Assam Chief Secretary, Ravi Kota on Thursday met Border Security Force (BSF) additional director general, Sumit Sharan and held substantive discussions on border management and the evolving security dynamics in the region. The meeting touched upon aspects such as the evolving political situation in neighbouring countries and the com-

plexities arising from varied border geographies. The interaction also covered strengthening border check-post infrastructure and the importance of sustained coordination between the state administration and border guarding forces towards ensuring security, stability and effective border governance in Assam and the Northeast.

Arunachal Pradesh to create dedicated ILP Department

Itanagar, May 28: Following demands for stronger Inner Line Permit (ILP) regulations for protection of the rights of the indigenous tribal people, the Arunachal Pradesh government will create a dedicated ILP Department. "In principle, Arunachal Pradesh will now move towards creating a separate dedicated ILP Department, a major step towards strengthening the ILP system and protection of indigenous rights," said Chief Minister Pema Khandu after a Consultative Meeting on Indigenous Tribal Rights, ILP and APST matters on Wednesday. Student leaders, legal experts, representatives of political parties, CBOs and civil society



organisations attended the meeting. The meeting also decided that a seven-member delegations from Arunachal Indigenous Tribes Forum, AAPSU, ST Bachao Andolan Committee and legal experts will hold a high-level follow-up meeting on May 29 to give final shape to a future roadmap in this regard. The decision followed the enforcement of a 36-hour shutdown on May 14 by the ST Bachao Andolan Committee, a local organisation. The shutdown affected normal life in several parts of the State bordering Assam, specifically in Itanagar and Naharlagun. The ILP, issued under the Bengal

Eastern Frontier Regulation of 1873, is a temporary travel document that Indians who are not permanent residents of Arunachal Pradesh must possess to enter the State. Community-based and student organisations have been pressuring the State government to make the document forgery-proof.

In Brief

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Assam BJP Celebrates Victory of New MLAs

Guwahati, May 28: Assam BJP honoured all the 82 MLAs from the party who were elected to the Assam Legislative Assembly recently, during a felicitation programme at the party headquarters in Guwahati on Tuesday. During the programme, Himanta Biswa Sarma, who assumed the office of Chief Minister of Assam for the second time after being elected as an MLA to the Assam Legislative Assembly for the sixth time, was congratulated by state BJP president Dilip Saikia on behalf of all party workers. It is noteworthy that in the recently-concluded Assembly election, the people of Assam, gave an unprecedented mandate to the Bharatiya Janata Party, electing 82 MLAs and, together with the NDA, 102 MLAs. The state BJP also held an important organisational meeting on Tuesday. Detailed discussions on the review of the past Assembly elections and the upcoming organisational programmes were held. The organisational meeting was presided over by the state president Dilip Saikia, and was addressed by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. Union Ministers Sarbananda Sonowal, Pabitra Margherita; BJP National General Secretary Kamakhya Prasad Tasa, State Organisational General Secretary Ravindra Raju, besides state general secretaries; mandal presidents, district presidents and district general secretaries were present during the meeting.

KCP member arrested in Delhi during joint operation by security agencies

Imphal, May 28: The Delhi Police Special Cell, in a joint operation with the Manipur Police and central security agencies, has arrested an alleged member of the banned Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP), officials said on Wednesday. The accused has been identified as Haobijam Dilip Singh.

According to officials, he was allegedly associated with the proscribed insurgent outfit and was operating secretly in the national capital at the time of his arrest. Security agencies reportedly acted on specific intelligence inputs regarding his movement and activities in Delhi.

After surveillance and coordinated tracking, the joint team carried out the operation and took him into custody. Officials said preliminary investigation suggests that the accused was on a covert mission in Delhi. However, agencies have not yet disclosed the exact nature of the mission.

Investigators are now questioning him to gather more details about his contacts, activities and possible links within and outside the capital.

Sources in the security establishment said agencies are also examining suspected arms supply routes, financial networks and possible sleeper cells linked to the banned outfit. Investigators are trying to determine whether any support network was active in Delhi or other parts of the country.

The Kangleipak Communist Party is a banned insurgent group operating in Manipur and has been under the watch of security agencies for its alleged involvement in unlawful activities in the region.

Officials said further investigation is underway and more details are expected to emerge after interrogation and verification of electronic and financial records connected to the accused.

Arunachal to set up separate ILP department to strengthen tribal protection

Itanagar, May 28: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu has announced that the state government would create a separate department dedicated to the Inner Line Permit (ILP) system to strengthen its enforcement and safeguard the rights of indigenous tribal communities in the state.

The announcement came after a seven-hour-long high-level consultative meeting held in Itanagar, where representatives of student bodies, community-based organisations (CBOs), political parties, legal experts and civil society groups discussed issues related to indigenous rights and implementation of the ILP system. Describing the meeting as one of the most extensive discussions on the future of the state and its tribal communities, Khandu said the government was committed to protecting the identity, demographic security and constitutional rights of the indigenous people of Arunachal Pradesh.

“All community-based organisations, student bodies, representatives of political parties and other stakeholders attended the consultative meeting and shared their concerns and suggestions,” the Chief Minister told reporters after the meeting. The discussions also focused on demands raised by the Arunachal Pradesh ST Bachao Andolan Committee (APSTBAC).

The organisation had sought stronger protection of tribal rights, strict implementation of the ILP system, action against illegal immigrants and opposition to granting Scheduled Tribe status to non-tribal communities. Khandu said the government had accepted all four demands “in principle” and described them as genuine concerns raised by the people.

The Chief Minister also said the government would take action against alleged illegal religious structures in the state. Referring to allegations regarding illegal mosques, he said directions had already been issued to the Chief Secretary to prepare a detailed report for further action.

As part of the next step, Khandu announced that seven-member delegations from the Arunachal Indigenous Tribes Forum (AITF), the All Arunachal Pradesh Students’ Union (AAPSU), APSTBAC and legal experts had been invited for another meeting on May 29 to prepare a roadmap on the issues discussed during the consultation. The developments come amid protests over the “Arunachal Pradesh Inner Line Permit Guidelines, 2026”. The APSTBAC had earlier called a 36-hour bandh from May 14, alleging that the new guidelines could weaken indigenous safeguards and dilute provisions of the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873.

The bandh turned violent on May 15 after clashes were reported between protesters and security personnel. The committee had also warned of a 72-hour state-wide bandh if its demands were not addressed by the government. Responding to questions about a proposed 24-hour capital bandh announced by the Arunachal Pradesh Indigenous Youth Organisation (APIYO) over alleged illegal mosques in Itanagar, Khandu said the organisation had declared the protest without waiting for the outcome of the consultative meeting. “Their demands are genuine, and the government has already announced action during the meeting,” he said while appealing to all organisations and citizens to maintain peace, restraint and cooperation.



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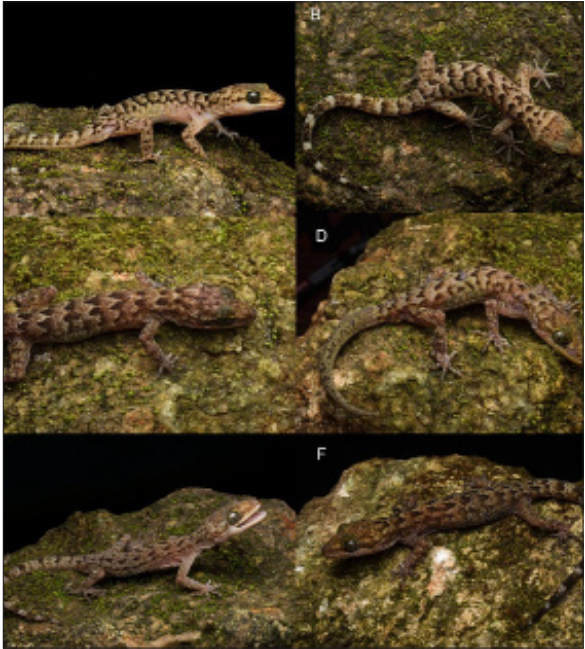
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Assam records first sighting of bent-toed gecko at Urapad Beel

Guwahati, May 28: Assam has recorded the first confirmed sighting of the bent-toed gecko species *Cyrtodactylus bapme* at Urapad Beel, adding another important discovery to the state’s growing biodiversity records. The finding has drawn attention from researchers and conservationists, who said the presence of the species reflects the ecological richness of Assam’s wetlands and forest ecosystems.

They noted that such habitats continue to support several rare and lesser-known species despite increasing environmental challenges. The gecko was documented at Urapad Beel, a wetland area known for its ecological importance and diverse wildlife population. The wetland has long served as a habitat for various aquatic and terrestrial species, and experts believe the latest discovery further highlights the need to protect such fragile ecosystems.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma also



shared the development on social media platform X and described the sighting as another example of the state’s rich natural heritage. “Nature continues to reveal new wonders from Assam. The first confirmed record of the bent-toed gecko (*Cyrtodactylus bapme*) in Assam from Urapad Beel highlights the extraordinary biodiversity

our ecosystems support,” the Chief Minister wrote.

“Our continued conservation efforts are helping preserve these fragile habitats where diverse species continue to thrive,” he added. Researchers said the discovery underlines the importance of continued scientific exploration and ecological monitoring across Assam and the

Northeast. They pointed out that many species in the genus *Cyrtodactylus* are known for their limited habitat range and sensitivity to environmental changes.

The bent-toed gecko belongs to one of the most diverse gecko groups in the world, with several species found only in specific ecological zones. Experts said the confirmation of the species in Assam could help encourage further studies on reptile diversity in the region.

Conservationists have also stressed the importance of protecting wetlands, forests and associated ecosystems to ensure the survival of rare and endemic wildlife species. They said ongoing habitat protection and conservation measures remain crucial for maintaining the ecological balance of the region. The latest finding is being seen as another reminder of Assam’s rich biodiversity and the role of its natural ecosystems in supporting unique wildlife species.

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The State Art and Culture Department conducted the study in collaboration with the Department of History of Mizoram University under the Higher and Technical Institute of Mizoram.



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Excavations also uncovered human skeletal remains and ancient artefacts

believed to be linked to early Mizo ancestry. Among the major discoveries were skeletal remains recovered from the Tlangthang grave site.

Scientific examination conducted by Beta Analytic confirmed that the remains date back to between 1740 and 1800 AD, offering further insight into the historical occupation and cultural life of the region. Officials said additional scientific tests and studies are still underway, and more detailed historical information about the site is expected once the remaining analyses are completed. Apart from its archaeological importance, Dungtlang is also known for its rich folklore and cultural heritage.

One of the village’s most iconic landmarks is Lianchhiari Lunglen Tlang, a dramatic rock ledge over-

looking deep valleys and surrounding hills. Dungtlang is also home to Thangchhuah Mual and is surrounded by rolling hills, cliffs and scenic valleys, making it one of Mizoram’s important destinations for archaeological, historical and cultural tourism. Speaking at the programme, Lalsawivunga appealed to the people of Mizoram to help preserve and protect historically important sites and cultural assets across the state.

He urged the public to report valuable heritage locations to the Art and Culture Department and refrain from damaging such sites. The archaeological project is being led by archaeologists Vanlalhmua Singson and Dr. Lahmingsanga. Residents and representatives of Dungtlang village also attended the programme.

New Toad Species Discovered in Meghalaya’s Sacred Groves, Named After Khasi Attire ‘Dhara’

Shillong, May 28: A remarkable new species of toad has been discovered in the sacred groves of Mawphlang in Meghalaya’s East Khasi Hills, adding another significant chapter to the rich biodiversity of Northeast India. Scientists have named the newly identified species *Duttaphrynus dhara* in honour of the traditional Khasi female attire “Dhara”, paying tribute to the region’s cultural heritage, deep-rooted traditions and the close relationship between the Khasi people and their forests.

The discovery was made during routine field surveys in the high-altitude landscapes of Mawphlang, located at around 1,854 metres above sea level. Researchers found the tiny toads hiding among leaf litter and low vegetation in fallow agricultural fields bordering dense montane forests. Unlike the common Asian toad often seen near human settlements, the newly discovered species appears to prefer quiet forest-edge habitats in the hills.

Researchers described *Duttaphrynus dhara* as a small-sized toad, with adult males measuring between 40 and 41.8 millimetres in length. The species has a compact body, a broad head without prominent cranial ridges



and rough skin covered with pointed warts.

Its appearance includes a brown body marked with irregular black patches, a thin pale stripe running along its back, dark-coloured fingers and toes, and a creamy white belly with black blotches. Scientists confirmed the discovery through both traditional morphological studies and advanced genetic analysis using mitochondrial 16S rRNA sequencing.

The findings showed that the species forms a distinct genetic lineage within the *Duttaphrynus* genus. According to the study, the new species shows a genetic difference of 4.4 to 6.7 percent from its closest relatives — *Duttaphrynus stuarti* and *Duttaphrynus chandai*. Morphometric comparisons also

clearly distinguished it from related species. At present, the species is known only from its type locality in Mawphlang, making it both unique and potentially vulnerable.

Researchers said its restricted distribution highlights the urgent need to conserve Meghalaya’s fragile ecosystems, which form part of the Indo-Burma biodiversity hotspot known for exceptional amphibian diversity.

The discovery also underlines the ecological importance of the sacred groves of Meghalaya, which continue to preserve rare and undocumented species. The study was led by researchers Holiness Warji, Madhurima Das, A.A. Thasun Amarasinghe and Jayaditya Purkayastha, and has been published in the scientific journal *Taprobanica*.

Assam Governor attends 126th foundation day of Cotton University, presents Governor’s Excellence Awards to meritorious students

Guwahati, May 28: Assam Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya attended the 126th foundation day celebration of Cotton University in Guwahati and presented the Governor’s Excellence Awards to meritorious undergraduate and postgraduate students at the KBR auditorium of the university here on Wednesday. Speaking on the occasion, the Governor extended his greetings and congratulations to the students, faculty members and alumni of the university and described Cotton University as one of the most prestigious centres of higher education, intellectual awakening and cultural renaissance in the Northeast.

Recalling the institution’s rich legacy since its establishment in 1901, he said the university has played a pivotal role in shaping Assam’s literary, cultural and intellectual landscape and has significantly contributed to the freedom movement and nation-building. Paying his tributes to the stalwarts associated with the institution, the Governor said that eminent personalities such as Dr. Bhupen Hazarika, Dr. Ma-



moni Raisom Goswami, Bhabendra Nath Saikia, Lakshmi Nandan Bora, Hem Barua to name a few remain enduring symbols of the institution’s glorious heritage. He expressed happiness that the present generation of students is carrying forward the legacy of excellence established by these luminaries. Congratulating the recipients of the Governor’s Excellence Awards, Acharya said that the initiative, launched by Lok Bhavan in 2022 aims to encourage academic brilliance, innovation and healthy competition among students.

He said the scheme has emerged as a source of inspiration for meritorious students and reflects soci-

ety’s recognition of their dedication and hard work. The Governor’s award was presented to the toppers of Under Graduate and Post Graduate students which carried a gold medal, a certificate, bundle of books and a cheque of Rs. 5000 each. Highlighting the role of youth in nation-building, the Governor said that the true strength of a nation lies in its young generation whose determination and vision can transform society and shape the future of the country.

He urged students to dream big, remain fearless in the face of challenges and dedicate themselves towards the service of society and the nation. Underscoring the impor-

tance of the Guru-Shishya tradition in Indian culture, Acharya said that teachers not only impart knowledge but also shape character and provide direction in life. He paid rich tributes to the faculty members of the university for their contribution towards nurturing responsible and enlightened citizens. Referring to great teacher-disciple traditions from Indian history, including Srimanta Sankardeva and Madhavdev, Chanakya and Chandragupta Maurya, Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Vivekananda, he said that every great personality has been shaped under the guidance of a dedicated Guru.

The Governor further stated that in an era marked

by rapid technological advancement, artificial intelligence and global competition, education must go beyond academic excellence and focus equally on skills, sensitivity, innovation and moral values.

Referring to the vision of “Viksit Bharat 2047”, he expressed confidence that the youth of Assam would play a vital role in building a developed and self-reliant India. Eminent educationist Sourabh Pal delivered the 126th Foundation Day Lecture and spoke extensively on the evolving architecture of education in the age of artificial intelligence.

He emphasized the importance of intellectual agency, contextual learning, human values and continuous self-development to remain relevant in a rapidly changing world. Vice Chancellor Cotton University Dr. Ramesh Chandra Deka, Registrar Dr. Hiren Deka, Chairperson of the organising committee Dr. Akunthita Borthakur, faculty members, students and several distinguished guests were present on the occasion. (EOM)

NPP Launches Major Campaign in Nongstoin

Shillong, May 28: The National People's Party (NPP) on Tuesday organised an election campaign meeting at New Nongstoin as part of its campaign for the upcoming Shillong Lok Sabha by-election.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Chief Minister, Prestone Tynsong, along with Nongstoin MLA, Gabriel Wahlang, Rambrai-Jyrngam MLA and MDC, R.G. Momin and Lurshai Kharbani, former Mawsynram MLA Himalaya Shangpliang, and several other party leaders.

NPP's MP candidate, Dr D.R.L. Nonglait, was also present and addressed the gathering, highlighting

the party's vision, principles, and commitment towards serving the nation and the community if elected to Parliament.

The programme was chaired by G. Marbaniang, Secretary of New Nongstoin shnong.

Addressing the gathering, Deputy Chief Minister Tynsong stated that Dr Nonglait is contesting not only on behalf of the NPP, but also for the interest of the nation and the community as a whole. He also spoke about various developmental initiatives undertaken by the state government for the welfare of the people.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Non-



glait elaborated on the principles and objectives behind his decision to contest the election and outlined his

vision and plans that he intends to implement if elected as Member of Parliament.

Meghalaya Eases Motor Vehicle Tax Penalties With New Settlement Scheme

Shillong, May 28: The Meghalaya Cabinet on Wednesday cleared a one-time settlement scheme with up to 90 per cent exemption on penalties relating to motor vehicle tax, passenger and goods tax and fitness fees.

The cabinet also approved proposed regulations on the use of name boards on Meghalaya government official vehicles and strengthen the forest administration in the state.

Announcing the decision after the cabinet meeting, Chief Minister Conrad Sangma said many commercial vehicles had accumulated heavy dues over the years due to pending renewals of taxes and fitness certificates.

"While the actual fees are modest, penalties imposed over time became disproportionately high, creating severe financial stress for many, especially local transporters who depend on these vehicles for their livelihood. Keeping this in mind, and recognising that most transporters are our own local citizens, the Government has decided to grant 90 per cent exemption on penalties for pending fitness certificates and 80 per cent exemption on pending



MV Tax and Goods & Passenger Tax," Sangma said.

This one-time settlement will be valid till August 31, 2026 and is aimed at helping transporters return to normalcy, ease financial burden, and ensure better compliance moving forward.

The Chief Minister urged all transporters and vehicle owners to take advantage of this opportunity and regularise pending dues.

The Cabinet has approved the proposed regulation on the use of name boards on official vehicles of the Government of Meghalaya.

"To address the concerns around VIP

culture, we had earlier introduced an SOP regulating the use of sirens, lights, and other privileges on government vehicles. In line with that, the Transport Department has now identified the specific positions authorised to use official name boards and prescribed a standard format based on designation," Sangma said.

The approved guidelines primarily cover officials in government, judiciary, administration, and select statutory positions. This step will ensure greater clarity, consistency, and discipline in the use of official vehicles across the state, he added.

Mizoram Marks 'No Official Vehicle Day'

Aizawl, May 28: Mizoram observed 'No Official Vehicle Day' on Wednesday in response to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal to conserve fuel among other austerity measures.

In accordance with a government notification issued recently, the initiative kicked off with government employees commuting to their respective offices using public transportation, relying on city buses, line buses, and Mizoram State Transport (MST) buses.

To facilitate a smooth commute for government staff, special transport schedules were arranged for the day.

The fuel conservation drive comes as a direct response to the ongoing conflicts in West Asia, which have severely impacted the import and supply of fuel.

The state government has announced that 'No Official Vehicle Day' will continue to be observed every Wednesday until further notice.

AICC Approves New Assam CLP Leader

Guwahati, May 28: The All India Congress Committee (AICC) has approved the proposal for appointment of the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Congress Legislative Party in Assam. Accordingly, Wazed Ali Choudhury has been appointed as the Leader of the CLP in Assam, while Dr Joy Prakash Das has been appointed as the Deputy Leader. The appointments came into effect from Tuesday, according to statement issued by the party's General Secretary, K.C. Venugopal.

The announcement comes days after intense discussions within the party regarding the leadership structure of the Congress Legislature Party in Assam amid the ongoing session of the 16th Assam Legislative Assembly. Earlier, Assam Pradesh Congress Committee president Gaurav Gogoi had said the decision on the CLP leadership would be taken by the AICC after consultations with party MLAs and observers from the central leadership. Speaking to mediapersons after returning from Delhi, Gogoi had said the party leadership would take the final call after discussions with legislators, and that the state unit would abide by the decision.

Senior Lawyer VGK Kynta Chosen by UDP for Shillong Election

Shillong, May 28: The United Democratic Party (UDP) will on Thursday formally announce senior lawyer V.G.K. Kynta as its candidate for the upcoming by-election to the vacant Shillong Parliamentary seat.

According to party sources, the decision on Kynta's candidature was finalised weeks ago. However, the announcement was deferred as the party wanted to place his name before the Regional Democratic Alliance (RDA), which comprises the UDP and the Hill State People's Democratic Party (HSPDP).

Accordingly, the RDA leaders met on Monday, during which both parties endorsed the proposal to field Kynta as the alliance's common candidate for the by-election. With the UDP's announcement, the upcoming by-poll is set to witness a multi-cornered contest among the VPP's Batskhem Myrboh, NPP's D.R.L. Nonglait, Congress's Vincent H. Pala and the UDP candidate. The BJP is also poised to nominate its candidate for the electoral contest with as many as nine aspirants vying for the party ticket. In the 2024 Lok Sabha elections from Shillong, the UDP



had put up Robertjune Kharjahn as its candidate but he managed to secure only the fourth position behind

Ricky A.J. Syngkon (the eventual winner), Vincent H. Pala (Congress) and Ampareen Lyngdoh (NPP).

New Toad Species Discovered in Meghalaya's Sacred Groves, Named After Khasi Attire 'Dhara'

Shillong, May 28: A remarkable new species of toad has been discovered in the sacred groves of Mawphlang in Meghalaya's East Khasi Hills, adding another significant chapter to the rich biodiversity of North-east India.

Scientists have named the newly identified species *Duttaphrynus dhara* in honour of the traditional Khasi female attire "Dhara", paying tribute to the region's cultural heritage, deep-rooted traditions and the close relationship between the Khasi people and their forests.

The discovery was made during routine field surveys in the high-altitude landscapes of Mawphlang, located at around 1,854

metres above sea level. Researchers found the tiny toads hiding among leaf litter and low vegetation in fallow agricultural fields bordering dense montane forests.

Unlike the common Asian toad often seen near human settlements, the newly discovered species appears to prefer quiet forest-edge habitats in the hills.

Researchers described *Duttaphrynus dhara* as a small-sized toad, with adult males measuring between 40 and 41.8 millimetres in length. The species has a compact body, a broad head without prominent cranial ridges and rough skin covered with pointed warts.

Its appearance includes a brown body marked with ir-

regular black patches, a thin pale stripe running along its back, dark-coloured fingers and toes, and a creamy white belly with black blotches. Scientists confirmed the discovery through both traditional morphological studies and advanced genetic analysis using mitochondrial 16S rRNA sequencing. The findings showed that the species forms a distinct genetic lineage within the *Duttaphrynus* genus.

According to the study, the new species shows a genetic difference of 4.4 to 6.7 percent from its closest relatives — *Duttaphrynus stuarti* and *Duttaphrynus chandai*. Morphometric comparisons also clearly distinguished it from related species. At present, the spe-

cies is known only from its type locality in Mawphlang, making it both unique and potentially vulnerable. Researchers said its restricted distribution highlights the urgent need to conserve Meghalaya's fragile ecosystems, which form part of the Indo-Burma biodiversity hotspot known for exceptional amphibian diversity.

The discovery also underlines the ecological importance of the sacred groves of Meghalaya, which continue to preserve rare and undocumented species. The study was led by researchers Holiness Warjri, Madhurima Das, A.A. Thasun Amarasinghe and Jayaditya Purkayastha, and has been published in the scientific journal *Taprobanica*.

Anti-Drug Activist Gumin Mize Released on Interim Bail; East Siang Bandh Withdrawn

Lakhimpur, May 28: Anti-drug activist Gumin Mize was released from judicial custody after Assam's Lakhimpur District and Sessions Court granted him interim bail.

Following his release, the 12-hour bandh called by the Adi Students Union (AdiSU) along with several other local student organisations in Arunachal Pradesh's East Siang district was withdrawn at noon.

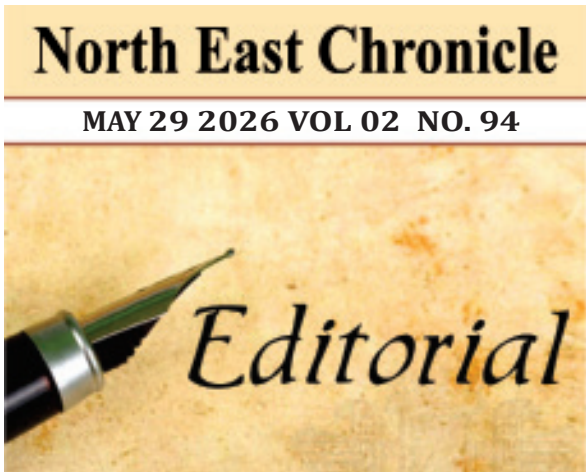
The bandh had been called in protest against the arrest of Mize by Assam Police and allegations of custodial torture.

The shutdown began at 5 am and affected normal life across several areas, including Ruksin, Sille Oyan, Mebo and Pasighat. Shops, markets and business establishments remained closed for several hours, while vehicles stayed off the roads during the protest period.

Protesters also blocked National Highway-15 and several rural roads



at different locations, causing disruptions to traffic movement. However, the bandh concluded peacefully without any reports of violence or other untoward incidents related to the protest.



The Need to Preserve Traditional Skills

Traditional skills and crafts are gradually disappearing as industrial production and modern lifestyles dominate markets. Artisans and skilled workers often struggle to sustain livelihoods due to declining demand and limited support. These traditional practices represent cultural identity, local knowledge, and generations of expertise. Once lost, they are difficult to revive. Preserving traditional skills requires market access, institutional support, and public appreciation for handmade and local products. Modernisation should not erase cultural heritage. Economic progress and preservation can co-exist when traditional skills are valued properly.

How the plastic bottle cap came to symbolize the importance of EU regulation



A European Union law mandating that plastic bottle caps stay affixed to their bottles went into effect in July 2024. Both Silicon Valley billionaires and social media jokers made fun of the rule. People claimed that this was Brussels at its worst, with bureaucrats micromanaging and treating residents like children who couldn't be relied upon to recycle a cap. The evidence for it went virtually unreported. Over decades of coastal cleaning data, plastic bottle caps have been discovered to be among the most common materials detected fouling European beaches. The caps are tiny, light, and composed of a different plastic than the bottle itself. Once split, they float on their own and cover much greater distances than the bottles from which they originated. Because they are mistaken for food, seabirds, fish, and marine turtles are significantly more likely to consume them. Think about what transpired next. Some of the biggest beverage firms in the world changed and modified their caps after campaigning against the legislation. However, corporations like Coca-Cola also made a startling move: they kept the removable caps almost everywhere else while praising the new design as an indication of their steadfast dedication to sustainability. Not because the physics of plastic pollution are different on different continents, but rather because no other nation, whether in the US or Asia, has enacted a national law mandating the shift.

The bottle cap story is a parable for a larger fight playing out at the highest levels of European politics. One side claims that EU rules are the problem: a self-imposed burden of standards on business that slow Europe down while the US and China race ahead. The other says those rules are not a handicap but a source of power, the only instrument a continent without a single government possesses to shape its own economic future while protecting its people and the planet. At present, the first camp is winning.

What is the purpose of war? That's a fantastic method for Donald Trump to avoid attending his son's wedding

For your son, how far would you go? For Donald Trump, the response is straightforward: "The Bahamas? That's just too much! Why can't you simply tie the knot on the golf course where your mother was buried? Or even better, the one I'm being transported to as soon as I exit the fortified toilet where I'm typing this. Thus, the president politely objected to his enormous adult son Don Jr.'s most recent marriage, which happened last weekend somewhere in the Bahamas. You were correct if, on Sunday morning, you sensed that the world was strangely changed. We now inhabit a post-Troth culture. In other ways, though, the world would have felt quite samey. Those whose notional protest placard reads "IRAN DEAL WHEN?" remain fobbed off round the clock by a US administration that is always "close", looking at a "pretty solid thing on the table" and debating "specific language in the initial document". The Iranian

government, meanwhile, is laying mines in the strait of Hormuz, expressing "resolute" support for Hezbollah and saying gnomically trolling things like how the two sides are both "very close and very far". The president loves to imply that deals are always like this, once again confusing commercial Floridian real estate with the fanatical remnants of a dysfunctional regime in whose interest it is to play him. On the plus side, this is all the perfect excuse to bin off attending your child's wedding. Or as Trump preferred to put it on his thwarted desire to schlep to the Bahamas: "Circumstances pertaining to government, and my love for the United States of America, do not allow me to do so." Weird – those are exactly the words I'm hoping will get me out of my next destination-second-wedding-invitation. I feel it strikes the perfect balance between "solemnity" and "any old shit". We all know the old Taco rule – Trump Always

Chickens Out. But does Trump perhaps always flake too – or certainly seek to? Could it be, for a simple-souled psychopath, that a self-launched war that never quite ends up being resolved is the absolute holy grail of social bailing: the perfect rolling excuse not to have to do things he doesn't want to do? Many ordinary flakers get like this when they have children, realising that they now have the perfect long-term citation to get out of any social occasion they're not quite feeling by texting at 5pm about vomiting bugs/rashes/fevers/not-a-fever-but-definitely-an-elevated-body-temperature. Truly, children are precious in myriad ways. Personally, I would try serial social flakers at The Hague, but I don't make the rules. So in more ways than one, Iran is Trump's baby. On the one hand, it's an unnecessarily self-started conflict that is racking up civilian casualties, will fail even on its own aims, has destabilised an already perilously de-

stabilised region, and is causing a severe energy-supply shock that the world is only on the threshold of seeing the huge, varied and in some cases catastrophic effects of. On the other: it gets you out of boring things that require effort, travel and you not being the centre of attention for up to 30 minutes. But let's see Earth's leading flaker put this excuse into action. Asked last week in the Oval Office if he'd be attending Don Jr's wedding, Trump replied: "He'd like me to go ... I'm going to try and make it. I said: 'You know, this is not good timing for me. I have a thing called Iran ...' That's one I can't win on." If your first thought was: great, he's finally admitting he can't win on Iran – maybe we can just bring this demented misadventure to a close, ideally as soon as Don Jr and his latest are exchanging their ghostly barefoot vows, then ... prepare for disappointment. Because unfortunately, there was more. "If I do attend, I get killed. If I don't

attend, I get killed." Killed as in "assassinated", or killed as in "possibly mildly criticised but way less than you have been for spending vast tracts of both your presidencies on the golf course while any number of volatile situations burn"? Oh, the latter. Still, some things are more important than the slings and arrows of a media that simply lacks the imagination to set its sights on the possibility of surprise love, either between Don Jr and his current wife, or between the adversaries in a war Trump once insisted would be over and done with in four to five weeks. In any case, Mr. President, tell us about your son's new bride. "I've known him for a long time, and he has a very – person." Someone you've known for a very long time? Why, she sounds so amazing! "Hopefully," Trump added with a hint of skepticism, "they're going to have a great marriage." Quiet, that is. He can always catch the next one if not.

The Surat split paradigm: Bangladesh's radical plan



Beyond only giving the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) a legislative majority, the Awami League's (AL) official suspension in May 2025 and complete exclusion from the general elections in February 2026 created a political void. It has caused an ideological realignment that is reminiscent of the Indian National Congress's 1907 Surat Split. A highly educated and traditionally devout new generation of the AL constituency is flocking into the Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI) after being systematically alienated, economically frozen, and physically pursued by the ruling BNP apparatus. The Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) is using a sophisticated absorption technique to facilitate this movement. But a more thorough structural investigation uncovers a more troubling truth. These new Awami Leaguers are going to act as a shallow, moderate façade, much like the moderate constitutionalists who lost control of the Congress platform to extremist nationalists during the Surat crisis. The puritanical, radical hardliners of the parent AL apparatus have successfully established total control over the party's ideological core behind this technological façade. ICS and the parent JeI apparatus have implemented a highly complex, three-tiered structural system to operationalize the absorption of the new generation AL traditionalists and the erstwhile Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) second-rung leadership. By early 2028, this system is intended to handle ideological conflict, ensure complete security, and methodically transform unskilled technocratic talent into useful assets for the nascent Nizam-e-Mustafa. For these particular crossovers, the ICS has abandoned its open-enrollment paradigm in favor of a strict, dual-track vetting process to prevent ideological taint or infiltration by hostile state actors. The ICS has developed a modified, very practical paradigm for ideological transformation since it recognizes that secular-educated AL cadres cannot be immediately converted into orthodox Salafi schol-

ars. The first training phase substitutes structural political theory for abstract theological beliefs. On university campuses and in Dhaka's business sectors, the ICS has created a network of new, ostensibly autonomous IT cooperatives, data analytics companies, and student welfare societies. These organizations serve as institutional washing machines; a former BCL coordinator enters as a politically vulnerable target and leaves as an independent technology consultant or social entrepreneur who is "clean." The second-rung leadership of the BCL and the next generation of AL traditionalists have already taken the deliberate, group choice to join the JeI fold, so this strategic migration is no longer a subject of far-off conjecture. These young political actors have no realistic domestic alternative for self-preservation because the ruling BNP state apparatus targets them with systemic victimization, legal warfare, and physical purges because to an urgent need for institutional survival. The JeI provides much more than just a physical and legal defense against state-sponsored retaliation for this highly aspirational and politically educated group. It offers a special chance to rethink ideologies. These former BCL cadres can overcome the stigma associated with the corruption and dictatorial excesses of the Hasina regime by entering a highly disciplined organizational structure. However, the parent JeI leadership has successfully used this migration as a shield, much as the historical Surat Split shown that a strongly determined, radical cadre can entirely marginalize moderate individuals. The incoming "moderates" lack the institutional or ideological power to change the party's fundamental goals. They are being used as technocratic executives instead. In the meantime, the puritanical hardliners have prevailed in the internal conflict, swiftly destroying the secular-linguistic consensus that characterized Bangladesh after 1971 and returning the state's social structure to a time when religious orthodoxy

predominated. Bangladesh's strategic direction is aggressively changing on two fronts, with the extremist side securely securing the ideological core. A significant geopolitical realignment has been made possible by the disintegration of the post-1971 cultural paradigm. The present course indicates a methodical "Pakistanization" of the eastern seaboard of the Bay of Bengal. The hardline leadership is building strong institutional, military, and intelligence ties with Rawalpindi because they have similar ideological underpinnings and a strong desire to undo the historical consequences of 1971. As a counterweight to regional powers like India, this systemic realignment has progressed to the point where elite theological and political circles are actively debating a formal, sovereign confederation—or a strategic merger relating Bangladesh with its former western wing. Concurrently, the governmental machinery is being transformed into a highly advanced, digitally advanced implementation of a Nizam-e-Mustafa (Order of the Prophet). This new Islamic authority, far from being a closed-off, antiquated government, uses state-of-the-art technology, a global public relations network, and sophisticated surveillance techniques to impose totalitarian religious rule domestically and project power overseas.

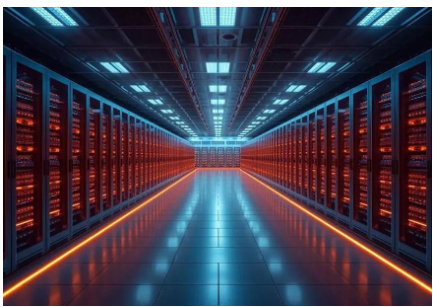
This technologically advanced global Salafism exhibits surprising diplomatic adaptability. It upholds strict, unyielding Islamic control at the top. However, at its core, it conducts transactional, very pragmatic foreign policy with major world powers. For example, by positioning itself as a stable, anti-anarchy anchor in the region, it maintains vital maritime security and counterterrorism discussions with Washington while simultaneously securing vital infrastructure development and digital surveillance tools from Beijing. This entire government concept is united by a systemic, unyielding anti-Indian stance. The hardline regime effectively neutralizes do-

mestic dissent, ensures the permanent exclusion of secular alternatives, and solidifies its position along the vital sea lines of communication in the Bay of Bengal by portraying New Delhi as an existential threat to the Islamic state and its economic sovereignty. Opponents of this notion might believe that the AL's former leadership, particularly Sajeeb Wazed Joy, holds the key to its future. However, Joy's capacity to lead the AL's remains from his US base has reached an impassable barrier. His digital decrees have no operational significance within Bangladesh due to the party's permanent outlawing and the freezing of its financial pipelines. As a result, his public relations campaigns are reduced to the echo chamber of an exiled elite. Joy's power is quickly waning as the domestic constituency shifts toward survival and other coalitions. Cut off from the machinery of state power and unable to protect his fractured grassroots base, he will inevitably fall into political obscurity, much like his mother Sheikh Hasina, whose physical and legal confinement in Delhi solidifies her permanent exclusion from the political future of the region. The short-sighted alienation strategies of the ruling BNP have forced the new generation of traditional Awami Leaguers into the JeI, which has unintentionally created the ideal cover for a significant structural change. The state's ideological core has been safeguarded by the puritanical vanguard, even though these new members present an impression of moderation and administrative continuity.

This hardline leadership is effectively eliminating the socio-cultural borders of 1971 by combining an uncompromising Nizam-e-Mustafa with cutting-edge international technology and reorienting the nation's strategic orientation against Pakistan. By doing this, they are creating an extremely strong, fiercely anti-Indian, and internationally interconnected Islamist state right on the Bay of Bengal. Moreover, there are increasing signs of a more profound and well-thought-out geopolitical alignment beneath this significant internal change. Strong evidence and covert diplomatic indicators suggest that Washington and JeI's top leaders are currently in discussions to develop a comprehensive strategy to create this new situation, with an early 2028 start date. In addition to acting as a strong maritime barrier to keep an eye on the Bay of Bengal, a highly disciplined, technocratically run Islamist state in Dhaka provides the United States with a stable, corruption-resistant option to the BNP's previous volatility. By discreetly approving this change, Washington hopes to safeguard its vital Indo-Pacific sea lines with a stable, if puritanical, government that is prepared to exchange fierce anti-India rhetoric for Western security alliances, thereby solidifying Bangladesh's transformation into a hyper-securitized, internationally integrated Islamic republic by the start of the decade.

India Ranks 2nd in Asia Pacific Data Centre

Mumbai: India has emerged as the second-largest data centre market in the Asia-Pacific region with 1.6 GW of operational capacity and is among the top three markets by development pipeline, with 3.1 GW under construction and planned, according to a new report by Cushman & Wakefield released on Wednesday. The country’s rapid rise is being driven by accelerating AI adoption, hyper-scale cloud expansion and rising enterprise demand, which continue to reshape global data centre development patterns. India’s data centre ecosystem is supported by a multi-market presence, with Mumbai, Hyderabad, Chennai, Delhi-NCR, Pune and Bengaluru among the 107 global markets evaluated in the report. Mumbai anchors India’s position as a primary market in Asia Pacific, playing a central role in regional expansion and expected to surpass 1 GW of operational capacity by the end of 2026, while Hyderabad has been highlighted as the top secondary market in Asia Pacific and ninth globally, underscoring its growing prominence in the data centre landscape. Growth is increasingly being supported by secondary markets such as Hyderabad, Chennai, Delhi-NCR and Pune, which are seeing rising levels of investment and development activity, while Bengaluru



is positioned as a tertiary data centre market within the regional landscape. Gautam Saraf, Executive Managing Director at Cushman & Wakefield, noted that the global data centre sector is moving into a more execution-driven phase of growth, where access to power, infrastructure readiness and delivery capability are becoming as important as demand itself, adding that India is well positioned within this shift given its strong demand visibility, expanding development pipeline and growing multi-market ecosystem. Over 10.5 GW of capacity remains at the land stage, reflecting strong future development potential as operators continue to secure sites and prepare for sustained demand, further reinforcing India’s long-term expansion prospects in the global digital infrastructure landscape.

Gold and silver are experiencing a decline in trading prices

Mumbai: Gold and silver prices traded lower on Tuesday, declining up to nearly 2% after the US military launched fresh strikes on southern Iran. On the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), gold futures (June 5) were trading 0.61% or Rs 971 lower at Rs 1,58,110 at around 10:25 am. The yellow metal touched an intraday low of Rs 1,58,000, down 0.67% or over Rs 1,000 from the previous close of Rs 1,59,081. It also recorded an intraday high of Rs 1,58,789, down 0.18% or Rs 292. On the other hand, silver futures (July 3) also witnessed selling pressure, slipping nearly 2% or over Rs 5,000 to hit an intraday low of Rs 2,71,972 so far. At the last count, the white metal was trading at Rs 2,72,008, down 1.7% or Rs 4,708. It recorded an intraday high of Rs 2,74,727, still lower by 0.71% or Rs 1,989. On the commodity exchange, silver and gold earlier opened at Rs 2,74,727

and Rs 1,58,789, respectively. The selling pressure in the precious metals came after the US military launched fresh strikes on southern Iran and targeted missile sites and boats allegedly attempting to lay mines. Washington described it as a ‘self-defence’ operation. The attacks came even as senior Iranian negotiators were in Doha for talks with Qatar’s prime minister on a possible agreement to end the three-month-long conflict involving the US and Israel. According to commodity market experts, MCX gold opened with a mild gap down and continued to trade above the Rs 1,58,000 mark, indicating a cautious undertone in price action. “Immediate resistance is placed in the Rs 1,59,000-Rs 1,59,500 range, while a sustained move above this zone could push prices towards the Rs 1,60,000-Rs 1,60,500 levels,” they said, adding that on the downside, a break be-



low Rs 1,58,000-Rs 1,57,500 may extend weakness towards the Rs 1,56,000-Rs 1,55,000 zone. For silver, they said that MCX silver was holding above the Rs 2,73,000 mark, with resistance seen near Rs 2,75,000. A sustained breakout above the level could support recovery towards Rs 2,77,000-Rs 2,78,000, while support is placed around Rs 2,72,000.

“Safe-haven demand and geopolitical developments continue to influence the direction of precious metals,” the experts noted. Meanwhile, global crude oil prices rebounded, with international benchmark Brent crude rising 1 per cent to \$98 a barrel, while US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude gained more than 3 per cent to nearly \$94.

India and Canada are striving to finalize a trade agreement by the end of the year

A free trade deal with India

Mumbai: India and Canada have signalled a rapid reset in bilateral ties, with leaders from both countries expressing optimism about concluding a long-pending free trade agreement by the end of this year while sharply expanding trade, investment and business cooperation.Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney said negotiations on a free trade agreement with India would be “a game changer for Canadian workers and businesses”.“We’re negotiating a free trade deal with India. This will be a game changer for Canadian workers and businesses — unlocking a massive new market,” Carney wrote on social media on Monday (local time) after meeting Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal in Ottawa. Carney said both sides reviewed progress in negotiations and explored opportunities in “energy, agri-food, tech, and education”.Goyal, who is leading what Canadian officials described as the largest-ever Indian business delegation to Canada, said he conveyed

“warm greetings” from Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Carney and recalled the Canadian leader’s recent visit to India.“His recent visit to India has imparted fresh momentum and renewed confidence to the India-Canada partnership,” Goyal said. He said both countries held “forward-looking discussions on further deepening bilateral cooperation” and expressed optimism over an early conclusion of the India-Canada Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA). In a joint media address in Ottawa, Canada’s International Trade Minister Maninder Sidhu said both countries were moving quickly to conclude the agreement.“We promised Canadians that we’d be moving fast,” Sidhu said, adding that two rounds of negotiations had already been completed. He said Canada wanted to diversify trade ties and unlock “roughly \$300 billion of additional non-US exports”.Goyal described the relationship as “being reset very, very rapidly”.“It has set in motion the pathway to a complete overhaul of



this relationship, setting new agendas, new goals in mission mode,” he said.The minister said the two Prime Ministers had tasked negotiators with completing “the free trade agreement with a comprehensive outlook before the end of this year or earlier”.He added that both countries aimed to sharply raise bilateral trade by 2030.“We feel empowered to be able to make rapid progress to deliver results not only to businesses, but to the people of both countries,” Goyal said.During his visit, Goyal also met Canadian For-

eign Minister Anita Anand, Agriculture Minister Heath MacDonald and Sidhu to discuss trade, food security, agri-tech, sustainability, technology and investment cooperation.Anand said she discussed “strengthening and expanding our trade relationship to create new opportunities for businesses, workers, and investors in both our countries”.Sidhu said India was “one of the world’s fastest-growing major economies” and strengthening ties with New Delhi was central to delivering economic results for Canadians.

Rupee depreciated by 47 paise, at 95.73 against

Mumbai: The rupee depreciated 47 paise to close at 95.73 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday, on renewed geopolitical tensions in West Asia and a rise in crude oil prices.Forex traders said a strong US dollar and weak domestic markets also pressured the rupee.At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 95.43 against the US dollar, and touched an intra-day high of 95.33 and a low of 95.76 against the American currency. At the end of Tuesday’s close, the rupee was quoted at 95.73 (provisional), down 47 paise from its previous closing.On Monday, the rupee gained 34 paise to close at 95.26 against the US dollar with the RBI selling dollars and keeping the rupee well bid at all upper levels.“We expect the rupee to trade with a negative bias on uncertainty between the US and Iran and concerns over military action in the Middle East.”However, softening of crude oil prices from higher levels may support the rupee at lower levels. USDINR spot price is expected to trade in a range of 95.20 to 95.85,” said Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst at Mirae Asset ShareKhan. Forex traders said the rupee remains vulnerable to rising crude oil prices and the strength of the American currency in the overseas market.The dollar index, which gauges the greenback’s strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading at 99.05, down 0.19%.Brent crude, the



global oil benchmark, was trading up 3.43%at USD 99.94 per barrel in futures trade after reports that the US had carried out fresh attacks against Iran, offsetting hopes of a deal to reopen the Strait of Hormuz.US President Donald Trump on Monday said negotiations with Iran to end the war were progressing “nicely”, but officials pointed out that a final decision may take some time due to the complex communication networks Tehran deploys to consult with its supreme leader.On the domestic equity market front, Sensex dropped 479.26 points to settle at 76,009.70, while the Nifty declined 118 points to 23,913.70.Foreign institutional investors turned net buyers and purchased equities worth Rs 821.75 crore on Monday, according to exchange data. b3

DoT Rolls Out QR-Based Login and Short-Duration Plans Under PM-WANI Wi-Fi Reforms

Mumbai: The Department of Telecommunications has introduced a series of user-friendly reforms under the PM-WANI framework aimed at expanding affordable and accessible public Wi-Fi across the country, the government announced on Tuesday. The key measures include QR-based authentication for secondary devices such as laptops, flexible short-duration Wi-Fi plans of 15, 30 and 60 minutes, and standardisation of PM-WANI hotspot names to improve identification and reliability. Under the updated framework, users will be able to connect laptops and other devices by scanning a QR code via an authenticated smartphone app, significantly reducing login friction. The sachet-style short-duration plans are aimed at commuters, students and users requiring brief internet access at public locations such as transit hubs and malls,



while the unified PM-WANI branding system for hotspot naming will help users easily identify authentic networks and reduce confusion. All stakeholders have been di-

rected to implement the revised guidelines within eight weeks, with full rollout expected by July 2026.

The reforms are part of the government’s

broader efforts to translate Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s vision of accessible and affordable digital connectivity for every citizen into reality. Under Communications Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia, the PM-WANI ecosystem is undergoing a comprehensive transformation focused on improving accessibility, interoperability, ease of use and citizen adoption. Minister of State for Communications Dr. Chandra Sekhar Pemmasani said PM-WANI is being positioned as a platform for universal public Wi-Fi access, adding that QR-based login now allows users to connect their laptops simply by scanning a code on their phone. The PM-WANI ecosystem, which operates through a distributed network of Public Data Offices, PDO aggregators and app providers, is expected to witness wider adoption with the rollout of these new reforms.

FM urges focus on fuel, fertiliser, forex



Mumbai: Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday called for increased focus on 3Fs — fuel, fertiliser and forex — amid the West Asia crisis, underlining that the domestic economy continues to be resilient.Speaking at an event to celebrate the 37th anniversary of SIDBI here, the FM hit out at naysayers for creating a cynical and pessimistic narrative after PM Narendra Modi’s appeals on austerity, pointing out that India cannot afford fearmongering and that giving the confidence to people is necessary.Stating that India’s policy response has been calibrated to preserve domestic growth, FM said the cut in diesel and petrol excise duties will lead to a revenue impact of Rs 1 lakh crore.Apart from rising crude prices, the fertiliser prices have hit “unimaginable” levels, the FM said, adding that high gold prices are creating “some challenges” on the external front.There is a need to focus on the three Fs of fuel, fertiliser and forex, Sithara-

man said, pointing out that PM Modi’s appeals are in this context.However, some “naysayers” have jumped into the situation, claiming that everything is “crumbling”, which is not just right, the FM said.“All the good that is being done by the common people themselves, that is forgotten. And a pessimistic, cynical narrative is generated, which is just not right,” she said.“We should appreciate that the challenges are more externally driven. We must also recognise that India’s domestic economic situation remains positive and resilient even today,” the FM said.“India cannot afford fearmongering. We need to give confidence to the people with our words and with our actions,” she said.FM also highlighted that the issue of Rs 8.1 lakh crore locked in delayed payments for MSMEs is impacting their working capital and growth. She urged public sector undertakings not to exceed the 45-day window to make payments to MSMEs.

India’s services trade remains resilient West Asia tensions

Mumbai: The report from BZK Analytics said strong performance in the services sector helped offset a widening merchandise trade gap driven by higher energy costs. India’s overall trade deficit, including merchandise and services, narrowed to \$7.8 billion during the month. Merchandise exports rose 13.8% to \$43.56 billion in April, but imports surged 10% to \$71.94 billion, leaving a merchandise trade deficit of \$28.38 billion compared with \$27.10 billion a year earlier.Merchandise

import value jumped largely due to higher crude oil prices and rising energy-related costs amid ongoing geopolitical tensions in West Asia, the report noted. Closure of the Strait of Hormuz and stalled US-Iran peace negotiations have significantly disrupted global energy supply chains, resulting in higher oil prices and renewed inflationary pressure across major economies.On the import side, Russia emerged as a key energy supplier as India increased crude purchases

amid supply disruptions in the Gulf region, the report noted. The United States remained India’s largest export destination, while exports to markets such as Singapore, the UAE, Bangladesh, and the Netherlands recorded strong sequential growth as India continued to diversify its trade partnerships.Overall, India’s exports are concentrated in manufacturing and commodity-linked sectors while imports are driven by energy, electronics, and precious metals.Rising crude prices, rupee deprecia-

tion, and geopolitical instability remain key risks to India’s external sector outlook and broader economic growth in FY27, the report said.Further, the weakening rupee could enhance India’s potential export competitiveness by making Indian goods cheaper, the firm said.Despite the ongoing geopolitical tensions, Union Minister of Commerce and Industry, Piyush Goyal, has said that the government is aiming for a \$1 trillion export target for FY2027, driven by India’s new trade agreements.

Toyota Kirloskar Motor is establishing a ‘Bizintel

Mumbai: The MoU was signed in the presence of Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, Industries Minister Dr. M.B. Patil, senior government officials, and representatives from Toyota Kirloskar Motor. Spread across 300 acres, the proposed hub will focus on testing and evaluation of mobility solutions, digital transformation, and intelligent manufacturing initiatives. The project is expected to enhance India’s role in Toyota’s global operations by leveraging the country’s skilled engineering and IT

talent.Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said the partnership would boost technology-driven investments, generate quality employment, and support sustainable industrial growth in Karnataka.Make in India” and “Atmanirbhar Bharat.” The TKM Bizintel Hub will be located in KWIN (Knowledge, Wellbeing, and Innovation) City along the Doddaballapur–Dabaspet Highway, a smart city project being developed by the Karnataka government with a focus on innovation, healthcare, and information technology.

According to the agent, the man accused in the DC shooting was strolling to JD Vance’s motorcade



Washington: According to a court document on Wednesday, the individual accused of shooting law enforcement officers near the Washington monument this week was following JD Vance’s motorcade prior to the shooting and made a derogatory comment about the White House during the altercation.

A Secret Service member stated in an affidavit that Michael Marx, 45, of Midland, Texas, was wounded many times during the altercation on Monday and was in the back of an ambulance on route to a hospital when he yelled, “F—k the White

House” and “Kill me, kill me, kill me.”Whether the investigators think Marx had a specific objective is not stated in the sworn declaration. In a statement, US lawyer Jeanine Pirro said that her office “will pursue the most serious charges available against anyone who brings gun violence to our streets, particularly when that violence unfolds steps from the seat of our government and the path of the vice-president of the United States.”Officers saw Marx near the junction of 15th Street and Independence Avenue while he was following Vance’s mo-

torcade. According to the affidavit, the police were reacting to a Secret Service agent’s information that Marx had been spotted close to the White House complex with a gun hidden on his right side. Marx pulled a firearm from his waistband as he ran away from Secret Service officers and fired at one of them, but a bystander behind the officer was shot in the leg, the affidavit says. Officers returned fire and struck Marx in his abdomen, hand and left arm, according to the filing. It says Marx spit at officers as they provided him with aid after the shooting.The teenage

bystander was not seriously injured and has been released from a hospital, ABC News reported. ABC was first to report what the suspect allegedly said after the shooting.Marx was charged in a complaint with assaulting officers with a dangerous weapon, discharging a firearm during a violent crime, and being a felon in possession of a firearm and ammunition.The shooting came just over a week after a California man tried to storm the White House Correspondents’ Association dinner while armed with guns and knives. Cole Tomas Allen has been charged in that incident with attempting to assassinate the president and firing a gun at a Secret Service officer. Around the time of Monday’s shooting, Donald Trump was holding a small business event at the White House, which was briefly locked down as authorities investigated.Online court records did not immediately list the name of a lawyer representing Marx.

Marx has used aliases, including Michael Patrick and Michael Zavici, according to the affidavit. It says Marx had a 2011 drug trafficking conviction in Florida that made it illegal for him to possess a firearm.

Argentina is racing to identify the source of the hantavirus epidemic on cruise ships



Argentina: With indications that some passengers have already returned to their home countries, Argentine officials and specialists are rushing to ascertain whether their nation is the source of a deadly hantavirus outbreak that has engulfed an Atlantic cruise ship.The World Health Organization (WHO) regularly ranks Argentina as having the greatest frequency of the uncommon, rodent-borne disease in Latin America, which is where the cruise to Antarctica left. Investigators are attempting to identify the source of contamination.101 hantavirus illnesses since June 2025 were reported by the Argentine health ministry on Tuesday, nearly twice as many as the previous year. Hantavirus pulmonary syndrome is a severe and frequently deadly lung illness caused by the Andes virus, a hantavirus that is widespread in South America. According to Argentina’s health ministry, over one-third of cases in the last year resulted in death from the illness.Passengers on the MV Hondius ship tested positive for the Andes virus, according to authorities. Three people were evacuated off the ship on Wednesday, one is in critical condition at a hospital in South Africa, and three have perished. In Switzerland, a second individual who had departed the ship earlier in the journey tested positive.Argentina announced on Wednesday that it was providing testing apparatus and genetic material from the Andes virus to assist Spain, Senegal, South Africa, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom in identifying it. People usually become infected with hantavirus through contact with infected rodents or their urine, their droppings or their saliva, and human-to-human transmission is rare. But a limited spread among close contacts has been observed in some previous outbreaks with the Andes strain.Concern has also arisen about 23 passengers who reportedly disembarked the MV Hondius on the island of Saint Helena

on 23 April, as reported by Spanish newspaper, El Pais.“There are 23 people wandering around there, and until three days ago, no one had contacted them,” a passenger, who asked to remain anonymous, reportedly told the paper in a phone interview. The cohort reportedly returned to their respective countries, including the United States. American passengers were being monitored in Georgia, California and Arizona, the New York Times reported Wednesday, although none of them had shown signs of illness.The WHO says the first death on board the cruise ship, a 70-year-old Dutch man, happened on 11 April. His body was taken off the vessel nearly two weeks later, at Saint Helena. His 69-year-old wife travelled by plane from Saint Helena to South Africa; she collapsed at a Johannesburg airport and died at a hospital on 26 April.The third passenger, a German woman, died on 2 May.Argentine officials say they’re trying to pin down where infected passengers travelled in the country before boarding the Dutch-flagged cruise liner in Ushuaia, a city in southern Argentina known as the end of the world. Once they know the itineraries, they plan to trace contacts, isolate close contacts and actively monitor to prevent further spread.Before boarding, the Dutch couple went sightseeing in Ushuaia, and travelled in Argentina, Uruguay and Chile, the Argentinian government said. The virus can incubate for between one and eight weeks, making it hard to know whether the passengers contracted the virus before leaving Argentina for Antarctica on 1 April; during a scheduled stop to a remote South Atlantic island; or onboard.Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the director general of the WHO, said earlier on X that the “WHO continues to work with the ship’s operators to closely monitor the health of passengers and crew, working with countries to support appropriate medical follow-up and evacuation where

needed.”“Monitoring and follow-up for passengers onboard and for those who have already disembarked has been initiated in collaboration with the ship’s operators and national health authorities,” he added. “At this stage, the overall public health risk remains low.”The evacuation of three passengers from the ship, with close to 150 people onboard, means it can now continue on its three-day journey to the Canary Islands after Spanish authorities gave permission for the vessel to dock. But a row has erupted, with the president of the Canary Islands expressing concern over the ship docking in Tenerife. The ship was anchored off Cape Verde while arrangements were put in place to evacuate the crew members but on Wednesday evening the ship was on its way to the Canary Islands.Those evacuated on Wednesday include a British man, Martin Anstee, 56, who was an expedition guide onboard the ship. He was removed from the vessel along with a Dutch colleague, 41, who was the ship’s doctor, and a 65-year-old German passenger, the Telegraph reported.The health emergency aboard the MV Hondius comes as local public health researchers in Argentina point to climate change accelerating the risk of the spread of hantavirus.Public health experts say that higher temperatures expand the virus’ range because, in part, as it gets warmer and ecosystems change, rodents that carry the hantavirus can thrive in more places.

People typically contract the virus from exposure to rodent droppings, urine or saliva.“Argentina has become more tropical because of climate change, and that has brought disruptions, like dengue and yellow fever, but also new tropical plants that produce seeds for mice to proliferate,” said Hugo Pizzi, a prominent Argentine infectious disease specialist. “There is no doubt that as time goes by, the hantavirus is spreading more and more.”

Farage has made millions since becoming MP through talks, cameos, and marketing

London: Nearly ten years ago, Nigel Farage, who described himself as “53, separated and skint,” bemoaned the lack of money in politics.Since then, he has shown himself to be mistaken. In fewer than two years in parliament, Farage has earned £2 million from hospitality, speeches, presentations, press stories, gold bullion promotion, and even the creation of reasonably priced cameo videos for his followers. When it comes to earning money, it appears that every £70 video matters. This is in addition to his over £100,000 yearly income as the MP for Clacton and the approximately £73,000 annual pension he will be eligible to receive from the European Union when he turns 63 next year.However, the £5 million that mega-donor Christopher Harborne gave Farage—which he claims was to ensure his security for the rest of his life—dwarfs the Reform UK leader’s own salary, as the Guardian discovered last week. Since Farage claims it was a “unconditional, non-political, personal gift,” it was not disclosed as a political donation when it was provided to him in early 2024, before to his election as an MP. Tickets, travel, and speechesThe money seems to have made it possible for Farage to travel with a sizable entourage of security guards, who accompany the MP whenever he goes out in public in his signature fleet of big black cars with tinted windows.In addition, he frequently uses helicopters as he travels the nation at a breakneck rate for his local election tour, significantly surpassing both Kemi Badenoch and Keir Starmer in his campaign appearances. Due to the size of his earnings, Harborne’s multimillion-pound gift, and his direct gifts of £12 million to Reform UK to establish a campaigning war fund, Farage leads an almost continual travel lifestyle.According to many who know Farage, he doesn’t seem to take much pleasure in leisure activities unrelated to politics or earning money. Data from the previous year revealed that, in addition to his responsibilities as an MP, he was working roughly 22 hours a week. On top of his multiple jobs and constant campaigning, Farage has found room to enjoy hospitality and trips worth more than £250,000 since entering parliament. He has made at least 10 trips to the US funded by GB News, donors and those paying for him to give speeches. During breaks in his schedule, he took up tickets to the Abu Dhabi grand prix from the Emirati state’s government worth £9,000, as well as two Derek Chisora boxing matches, and a £50,000 ticket to the World Economic Forum at Davos paid for by Iranian-Kazakh billionaire Sasan Ghandehari. Property portfolioWhen in the UK, Farage is known to split his time between London, Kent and Essex. Since his 2017 plea of poverty, his portfolio of assets has expanded to at least four proper-



ties. First, there is the house in a Kent village that has long been his base and is his former family home.Then he has two detached coastal homes on the Kent coast, bought through his company, Thorn in the Side. One of these, bought outright for £575,000 in 2023, has gained planning permission to be knocked down and redeveloped; the other was purchased for £500,000 in 2020.Farage’s register of interests also shows he has a fourth rental property in the Surrey district of Tandridge.On top of this, his partner, Laure Ferrari, was revealed by the Guardian last year to be the owner of a £885,000 house in Farage’s Clacton constituency. He previously claimed to have bought it himself, before arguing it was put in her name for security reasons, and then later saying that she had purchased it with her own money. Following questions about the source of her wealth, Ferrari declined to say where she had got the money for the house purchase when pressed by Le Monde in an interview this week.

Thorn in the Side, owned wholly by Farage, is the repository for much of his wealth, with earnings directed into this company. Formerly based at an accountant in Essex, it is now run out of the London office of Nick Candy, Reform UK’s honorary treasurer. Its latest accounts filed in February of this year value its assets at £3.1m – split between almost £2m in cash and £1.1m in property. It also owns a commercial fishing boat operated by one of his sons.Crypto, I’m a Celebrity ... While Farage clearly has ample money now, a turning point in his finances appears to be 2023, when he appeared on ITV’s I’m a Celebrity with a fee of a reported £1.5m. During this time, his media jobs were starting to pile up. His register of interests shows he has been getting about £50,000 a year from the Daily Telegraph for a column, and approximately £400,000 a year from GB News for his nightly show, which he started in 2021. The money from Harborne followed in 2024, and then a reported six-figure sum from the private bank Coutts in a settlement for having debanked

him over his political views – the exact sum has never been publicly disclosed. Other gigs included his promotion of gold bullion for a company called Direct Bullion that has paid him at least £400,000 since he became an MP. In an unexpected twist, the owner of that company is also involved in a listed crypto venture called Stack BTC, which unveiled Farage as a major investor in a blaze of publicity that revealed he had put in £215,000.The scale of Farage’s property assets, crypto shareholding, cash and gifts from a major donor are beyond the wildest dreams of many of his voters. But his current comfortable standard of living is perhaps not so new as his 2017 comments about being impecunious might suggest – nor is the idea of a donor funding some of his personal costs.It was in 2019 when Channel 4 News revealed that the leave campaign donor Arron Banks had been funding a £4m Chelsea townhouse for Farage, as well as a Land Rover and security costs after Brexit – dismissed at the time by the businessman as a smear. Farage was also making about €9,000 a month as a MEP plus €30,000 a month for media appearances, his disclosures for 2017 showed at the time. Speaking last year at the launch of GB News in the US, Farage identified what he thought were his greatest weaknesses. “They’re going to say that I’m a drinker.

They’re going to say that I’m a smoker. They’re going to say that I’m a gambler. They’re going to say that I’m a womaniser. The trouble is, it’s all true. So really, really, what can they hit me with?”What he missed out was the potential for criticism over the sources of his money and the transparency around his declarations, particularly since the £5m Harborne gift, and his apology earlier this year for 17 breaches of the MPs’ code of conduct after he failed to declare £380,000 of income on time. That scrutiny is only likely to increase as Farage’s party continues to lead in the polls – and he edges closer to the possibility of winning power.

A think group calls for lowering UK speed restrictions to lessen the impact of the Iran War on consumers



London: According to a research group, Britain should restrict speed limits for cars as part of a package of measures to lessen the impact of the Iran conflict on consumers.According to the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR), limiting legal speeds to 20 mph in towns and cities and 60 mph on highways would help lower fuel demand and fight skyrocketing oil costs brought on by war.In order to assist consumers, the institute recommended that ministers temporarily lower fuel duty by 10p and implement a new annual energy price maximum of £2,000. However, it cautioned that if nothing is done, inflation may reach a peak of 5.8%. William Ellis, a senior economist at the IPPR, stated, “The UK cannot afford to sit back and let another energy shock drive up inflation and damage the economy.” “Regardless of whether the government intervenes, the Iran conflict is expected to have a significant negative impact on the UK economy and public finances.”The think tank stated that reducing speeds would be “a dual win, lowering fuel demand, while safer streets support swapping short trips to walking and cycling.” Along with suggestions for more home work and carpooling, this should be paired with tips on how to drive more effec-

tively. Such a measure would probably prove controversial. Wales reduced its default speed limit to 20mph in 2023 and a BBC poll this year found that more than half of people in the country opposed it, despite a more than 10% fall in road casualties in the subsequent 18 months. The International Energy Agency has already advised its member countries, including the UK, to consider lowering road speeds and limiting when cars can drive as part of a number of Covid-style emergency measures in response to the Middle East conflict.The researchers estimated that the Treasury could lose up to £8bn a year from higher debt payments and lower tax revenues resulting from lower economic growth without a support package.

The fuel duty cut would apply until spring 2027, the institute said, while the price cap would sit above the current quarterly cap set by the energy regulator for Great Britain, Ofgem, of £1,641 but would trigger automatically if the regulator’s quarterly estimates crossed that threshold. Gas and electricity bills could hit almost £2,000 a year for average households from July. Researchers said that while the policies would cost up to £5bn a year, that was far less than Liz Truss’s response to the 2022 energy crisis, which cost about £76bn. The chancellor, Rachel Reeves, has already said any support this year will be targeted at those most in need. It would also reduce peak inflation by up to two percentage points, the researchers estimated, and potentially avert the need for the Bank of England to raise interest rates – its main weapon to fight price rises – which many analysts expect to happen later this year. Last week, the Bank kept interest rates at 3.75%, but cautioned that the UK could have to prepare for rate hikes later this year. The governor of the Bank, Andrew Bailey, stated last week that “the more difficult the scenario we’re in, the longer this problem goes on and the longer the disruption to energy supplies goes on.”

Ellis stated: “With a well-designed policy that acts to cap prices only in the most damaging scenarios, the government can act now where the Bank cannot.” In the worst case scenario, this would save roughly the same amount as it costs; but, if irreversible harm or significant increases in interest rates are prevented, this might result in financial savings.

Ten health monitoring capabilities and additional aspects to consider when selecting a smartwatch



Imagine having all your health information readily accessible with a simple click on your wrist. This is now achievable as the top smartwatches in India have evolved into indispensable devices in our everyday routines, providing numerous advantages beyond merely displaying the time. They excel in health and fitness tracking, enabling users to effortlessly keep tabs on heart rate, sleep quality, and activity levels. With functionalities such as notifications, Bluetooth calling, and customizable watch faces, these devices ensure you remain connected while on the go.

Why do smartwatches matter?

Having your health metrics easily accessible helps you make better choices about your fitness and well-being. Smartwatches let you track your heart rate, sleep quality, and activity levels, which are important for staying healthy. Choosing the right smartwatch is not just about looks; it's about features that can truly improve

your life. Here are some things to think about:

Key features to look for:

Heart rate monitoring: It is important to monitor your heart health.Sleep tracking: This helps you see how well you sleep and how to get better rest.SpO2 sensor: This device measures your blood oxygen saturation, which is increasingly important in today's world.Fitness tracking modes: Choose devices with multiple sports modes to accurately track different workouts. Battery life: A longer battery life means you won't have to charge your device as often. Water resistance: Great for swimmers and outdoor exercisers. Smart notifications: Stay in touch with calls, messages, and app notifications.

Popular smartwatches for women

Smartwatches also encourage a healthier lifestyle with activity reminders and sports modes that keep you active and help you reach your fitness goals. With rising health risks and

technological advances, having a smartwatch is important for more than just telling time. The best brands offer smartwatches that track health metrics such as heart rate, sleep quality, SpO2 levels, menstrual cycles, and more. These devices also include various sports modes to help you monitor your workouts and stay active.

1. Fastrack New Limitless X2 Smartwatch: Keep track of your heart health with the Fastrack New Limitless X2 Smartwatch. It features a 1.91-inch UltraUV HD Display, a working crown, and a high-resolution screen. The 60 Hz refresh rate provides smooth, responsive navigation. You can store your favourite contacts and send quick replies, thanks to its advanced chipset and SingleSynch Bluetooth Calling, making it one of the best smartwatches under 2000. In addition to heart monitoring, this Fastrack smartwatch allows you to check your stress levels, SpO2, and women's health with

just one tap.

Price: Under 2,000

Features: Heart monitoring, stress tracking, SpO2, Bluetooth calling.

2. Fossil Gen 6 Digital Women's Watch: The Fossil Gen 6 Digital Women's Watch features a round stainless-steel case and a silver dial. It includes a new SpO2 sensor that helps you check your blood oxygen levels and shows how well your body circulates oxygen. This smartwatch charges quickly and is water-resistant, so you can stay connected easily. It offers various activity modes to track your progress and calories burned. You'll also find a heart rate monitor, different watch faces, calendar alerts, and more.

Price: Around 18,995

Features: SpO2 sensor, quick charge, various activity modes.

3. Fastrack Phantom Smart Watch: If you want the best smartwatch under 5000, consider the Fastrack Phantom SmartWatch. It has a 1.85-inch UltraUV display with a resolution of 320*286 pixels. This smartwatch offers SingleSynch Bluetooth calling for a better calling experience. With over 100 sports modes, automatic multisport recognition, and AI, it can improve your workout performance and overall health. It also includes built-in games, an AI voice assistant, over 100 watch faces, breathing exercises, a sleep tracker, an automatic stress monitor, a heart rate monitor, and SpO2 measurement. The brand offers a 1-year manufacturer's warranty for this product.

Price: Under 5,000

Features: 100 sports modes, AI features, sleep tracker, heart rate monitor.

4. Fossil Gen 6 Display Wellness Edition Pink Smartwatch: The Fossil Gen 6 Display Wellness Edition Pink Smartwatch works with the latest version of Android or iOS. It has a multi-day extended mode that lasts 24 hours or more, helping you track your health throughout the day. You can monitor your activity goals, steps, sleep, heart rate, cardio level, blood oxygen level, and more. Its advanced sensors provide the data your health and fitness apps need.

Price: Approx 24,000

Features: Multi-day battery, advanced sensors for detailed health tracking.

SpO2 sensor that helps you check your blood oxygen levels and shows how well your body circulates oxygen. This smartwatch charges quickly and is water-resistant, so you can stay connected easily. It offers various activity modes to track your progress and calories burned. You'll also find a heart rate monitor, different watch faces, calendar alerts, and more.

Price: Around 18,995

Features: SpO2 sensor, quick charge, various activity modes.

5. Titan Mirage Premium Fashion Smartwatch: The Titan Mirage Premium Fashion Smartwatch features a 1.96-inch AMOLED display with 800-nit brightness. It has a stylish leather-and-metal body, comes with an extra silicone strap, a functional crown, and a split-screen with passcode protection. Its health features can help you track stress, mood, heart rate, sleep quality, and SpO2 levels. The smartwatch offers over 100 watch faces, music and camera control, weather updates, and smart notifications.

Price: Around 8,000

Features: AMOLED display, SpO2 tracking, stylish design.

6. Fastrack Limitless FS2 Pro Smartwatch: The Fastrack Limitless FS2 Pro Smartwatch features a 1.96-inch curved Super AMOLED display and a useful crown. It features the SingleSynch Bluetooth calling system, which lets you save your favourite contacts and respond quickly. The smartwatch also supports NitroFast charging. It includes over 110 sports modes, more than 200 watch faces, built-in games, and an AI voice assistant. Additionally, it offers health monitoring, an automatic stress monitor, sleep tracking, and women's health features.

Price: Near 3,500

Features: NitroFast charging, 110 sports modes, AI voice assistant.

7. Titan Crest Premium Leather Strap Smartwatch: The Titan Crest Premium Leather Strap Smartwatch allows you to make Bluetooth calls easily. It has a 1.43-inch AMOLED display with an always-on feature and a high resolution of 466x466 pixels. This smartwatch includes a stress monitor, heart rate monitor, SpO2 monitor, and a sleep monitor with REM tracking. With a 7-day battery life, it can help you track your workouts and improve your health.

Price: Approximately ₹7,999

Features: Bluetooth calling, heart rate, and SpO2 tracking.

8. Titan Smart 3 Premium Smart Watch: The Titan Smart 3 Premium Smart Watch features a 1.96-inch super AMOLED display that delivers a clear, sharp view. With its Bluetooth calling feature, you can save your favourite contacts and respond quickly. This smartwatch includes over 110 sports modes, more than 200 watch faces, built-in games, an AI voice assistant, and more features you can access with a single tap. It can also help you monitor your heart rate, sleep quality, blood oxygen levels, and women's health.

Price: Under 10,000

Features: Comprehensive fitness tracking and accessories.

9. Maxima Max Pro X4+ Rugged Bluetooth Calling Smartwatch: The Maxima Max Pro X4+ Rugged Bluetooth Calling Smartwatch features a clear 360x360-pixel always-on display. It features a 1.32-inch round screen and shines at 600 nits. You can make calls using Bluetooth, and it runs on a powerful Realtek processor for smooth operation and connectivity. The smartwatch offers over 150 watch faces and includes tools for tracking sleep, steps, breathing exercises, blood oxygen levels, and heart rate.

Price: Around 4,999

Features: Built-in GPS, Alexa support, and long battery life.

10. VibeZ by Lifelong Jewel Premium Luxury Smartwatch for Women: The VibeZ by Lifelong Jewel is a premium luxury smartwatch designed for women. It helps you track daily activities and monitor your exercise. With a 1.32-inch HD display and 360x360 resolution, this smartwatch tracks your heart rate, SpO2, body temperature, sleep, and steps. It also connects to your mobile phone via Bluetooth, allowing you to make calls and receive notifications.

Price: Approximately 5,999

Features: 14 sports modes, SpO2 monitor, customizable watch faces.

Sania commemorates Eid with elegance



Indian tennis legend Sania Mirza has consistently been a formidable presence in the fashion world, just as she has been on the tennis court. She has remained faithful to her hallmark elegance, choosing an ethnic outfit that harmoniously blends traditional artistry with a contemporary, light aesthetic.

Dressed in a creation by Pakistani fashion designer Sania Maskatiya, the look

was a masterclass in 'effortless elegance'. The designer took to Instagram to showcase the tennis legend's Eid look, describing the outfit as a 'soft kind of statement'. "Sania Mirza makes elegance look effortless. A soft kind of statement for Eid."

Sania Mirza's sophisticated Eid look

The ensemble is a sophisticated, sand-hued organza suit with a translucent, ethereal vibe. The long,

flowing kurta features a soft, neutral base that allows the vibrant blue floral embroidery to take centre stage. These intricate botanical motifs, reminiscent of classic porcelain patterns, bloom across the silhouette in shades of cobalt and cerulean. The kurta is designed with a relaxed, straight silhouette and scalloped edging that adds a feminine touch to the hem and sleeves. A coordinat-

ing sheer organza dupatta echoes the kurta's delicate embroidery, providing a layered, romantic feel. To ground the sheer elements, the look is paired with pure raw silk trousers that maintain the outfit's regal poise.

How much does Sania Mirza's outfit cost?

While Sania has recently been spotted in heavier, royal-inspired anarkalis for other festive events, her latest Eid look marks a shift toward a lighter, more breathable luxury that is perfect for the summer heat while remaining undeniably sophisticated. For those looking to replicate this high-end festive style, the set is available on Sania Maskatiya's official website, priced at \$373 (approximately ₹35,849).

Accessories and styling

Sania elevated her simple and elegant Eid look with bold accessories. She wore a layered blue beaded necklace that complemented the embroidery perfectly, adding a pop of colour. Protecting her eyes from the May sun, she donned a pair of statement sunglasses and rounded off the ethnic ensemble with studded cage sandals in a matching nude tone. Her hair was kept simple — flowing and natural — allowing the high-fashion, luxe outfit to do the talking.

Classic Indian fragrances that are creating a stir in the perfume industry

India boasts a rich and aromatic history with perfumes, intricately intertwined with its culture, spirituality, and the natural world. For centuries, Indian artisans have created distinctive fragrances from flowers, woods, herbs, spices, and natural oils. Even today, these aromas serve as a source of inspiration for contemporary perfumes globally, owing to their richness, complexity, and authenticity.

One of the most famous traditional Indian perfumes is attar or ittar. Attars are natural perfumes made by distilling flowers, herbs, and spices into sandalwood oil. Unlike alcohol-based perfumes, attars are gentle on the skin and have a long-lasting aroma.

Best traditional Indian scents

Here are some of the traditional scents and their distilled versions for you. These fragrances with Indian scents have been curated based on user reviews and ratings on Amazon India.

Jasmine or Chameli

Jasmine or chameli is one of the most loved flowers in traditional perfumes. It has a very soft, sweet and calming fragrance. Jasmine attar is often used in Indian and Middle Eastern perfumery because it gives a natural floral touch that feels elegant and timeless. This romantic scent becomes deeper as it stays on the skin, making it suitable for both day and evening use. Its gentle aroma blends well with many other natural perfume ingredients. Rose or Gulaab

Rose has been an important part of traditional perfumes for centuries. Its fragrance is fresh, floral, soft,



and slightly sweet, giving a feeling of beauty and comfort. Rose attar is highly valued in Indian and Arabic perfumery because of its rich and natural aroma. The scent of rose can feel both calming and luxurious at the same time. The fragrance stays close to the skin and develops slowly, creating a smooth and graceful effect, making it a timeless choice in natural perfumery. Tuberose or Rajnigandha

Tuberose or Rajnigandha is known for its strong, creamy, and deeply floral fragrance. In traditional perfumes, it adds richness and warmth that make the scent feel luxurious and memorable. The fragrance opens with a sweet floral note and slowly becomes soft and slightly spicy on the skin. Many people associate tuberose with evening wear and festive occasions because of its intense presence.

Sandalwood or Chandan

Sandalwood is one of the oldest and most respected ingredients in traditional perfumes. Its fragrance is warm, creamy, woody, and smooth, creating a calming and peaceful feeling. Sandalwood attar is widely used

in Indian perfumery and spiritual practices because of its soothing nature. The scent is gentle yet long-lasting, making it a strong base for many natural perfumes. It blends beautifully with floral notes like rose and jasmine, adding depth and softness to the fragrance.

Vetiver or Khus khus

Vetiver is a traditional perfume ingredient known for its earthy, green, and cooling fragrance. Extracted from the roots of the vetiver plant, it has been used for centuries in Indian attars and natural perfumes. The scent feels fresh, woody, and slightly smoky, making it especially popular in warm weather. Vetiver attar gives a calm and grounding effect that many people find relaxing. The fragrance develops slowly on the skin and blends well with sandalwood, rose, and spices. Vetiver perfumes are valued for their natural freshness and simple yet elegant character.

Petrichor oil or Mitti Attar

petrichor oil or Mitti Attar is a unique traditional perfume that captures the smell of the earth after the first rain. It is one of the most special attars in Indian perfumery because of its natural and comforting aroma. The fragrance is warm, earthy, soft, and slightly smoky, reminding many people of wet soil and fresh monsoon air. Mitti Attar is traditionally prepared by distilling baked clay into sandalwood oil, creating a scent that feels deeply connected to nature. It has a calming and nostalgic quality that makes it different from floral perfumes.

ENTERTAINMENT

Imtiaz Ali breaks his own rule, teams up again with Ranbir Kapoor & Diljit Dosanjh

Mumbai: Imtiaz Ali, a filmmaker celebrated for crafting some of Hindi cinema’s most loved romantic films, once followed a very firm personal rule during his creative process: never work with the same actor twice. However, ahead of the release of his upcoming Partition-era romantic drama Main Vaapas Aaunga, the director has openly shared how his perspective on casting has completely evolved over the years.

Speaking to Hindustan Times, Imtiaz shed light on his earlier mindset. Imtiaz made his directorial debut with Socha Na Tha in 2005 and followed it up with a string of celebrated films like Jab We Met (2007), Love Aaj Kal (2009), Rockstar (2011), and Highway (2014). Throughout this impressive and successful run, he deliberately chose not to cast the same actors again. This decision was driven entirely by a fear of creative repetition. Explaining his initial stance, Imtiaz said, "Initially, I used to think I should never go back and work with the same actor again. I thought I would have a hangover from the previous film." However, that rigid rule changed when he wrote Tamasha (2015), where he chose to reunite with both Ranbir Kapoor and Deepika Padukone. To his surprise, the creative hangover he feared never showed up. Talking about that realiza-



tion, he added, "There was none, with Diljit or even with Ranbir or Deepika." Drawing a parallel between his experiences, Imtiaz pointed out how Ranbir played two completely contrasting characters under his direction in Rockstar and Tamasha. He mentioned, "With Ranbir, it was a different guy (in Tamasha). Here too, Nirvair (Diljit’s character) is a completely different person from Chamkila. This role wouldn’t be possible in this way if he weren’t playing it." Diljit Dosanjh, who previously collaborated with Imtiaz in the widely acclaimed film Amar Singh Chamkila, is now returning as the lead actor in Main Vaapas Aaunga. For the director, choosing Diljit for the new project was a straightforward decision based purely on the text.

Revealing his approach to casting, Imtiaz explained, "I always write first, and then see which actor suits this part. With Diljit, I realised he is the most suited for this part. Why should I have the notion of not working with the same actor back-to-back if he is the best actor for this film?" Set against the intense backdrop of the Partition, Main Vaapas Aaunga is a romantic drama that stars Diljit Dosanjh alongside an ensemble cast including Vedang Raina, Sharvari, and Naseeruddin Shah. The film will release in cinemas on June 12.

Exclusive: Emma Greenblatt on barbie’s impact, self-worth, and Emma stone inspiration

Agency: At the 2026 Cannes Film Festival, Ariana Greenblatt is soaking in the glamour, gratitude and global camaraderie that comes with representing L’Oréal Paris. In an exclusive conversation with Filmfare, the young actor reflects on evolving ideas of self-worth, the emotional impact of Barbie and why Greta Gerwig managed to make audiences laugh, cry and introspect all at once. She also speaks about women feeling increasingly empowered in cinema, her admiration for Emma Stone, and the skincare habits keeping her grounded amid the Cannes chaos.

I love this family so much. It is one of the main reasons



I love working with L’Oréal so deeply. Everybody is so excited and everyone cheers each other on. It is just a beautiful family to be surrounded by. Everybody looks amazing and it feels like a family reunion. It is incredible that I get to come here and see the beautiful place that Cannes is and take it all in. I am grateful and happy to be with everyone. Self-worth is something that constantly evolves, especially for me at my age. I am discovering

new things about myself every day and figuring out what self-worth even means to me. Over the years, it has become about being confident in what I love to do and not doubting that. It is also about learning more about myself and being surrounded by people who feel true and genuine, people who genuinely make me happy, love me for who I am and whom I love for who they are. Spending time with people who fill your life with joy, confidence, happiness and love is the ultimate guide to self-worth. Then you don’t feel like you are trying to impress anybody or be someone else, which only sets the process back.

I was working on it for a

few weeks and I was really excited about it. It was such a special look, I was ready to wear it, step out there and hopefully I did justice to the entire ensemble. It depends. I have been really into skin care recently and trying to take better care of my skin. It has become a fun habit at this point. Having a good morning and nighttime routine is really important. It gives you that time for yourself to unwind. Moreover, being diligent with my skin care has been helpful and has allowed me to take time for myself. Also, drinking water is so important. I have to remind myself to do that every ten minutes. I also wash my face a lot.

Priyanka Chopra’s daughter Malti Marie steals the show as drummer in Nick Jonas’ rehearsal pics

Agency: Pop icon and singer Nick Jonas recently delighted fans after sharing adorable pictures of his daughter Malti Marie from the technical rehearsals of his show.

The singer gave a sweet glimpse into his family moments as little Malti appeared to be enjoying herself around the musical setup backstage. In the pictures shared by Nick on his social media account, little Malti Marie can be seen exploring the rehearsal area while trying her hand at the drums with Nick standing beside her. One of the photos captured the little girl seated near the drum set, and another showed her spending time backstage with her father during the preparations for Nick’s performance.

In another picture, she was seen holding the microphone and also wearing a headgear as if listening to music. Nick Jonas accompanied the pictures with a heartfelt caption that read: "What happens in Vegas." For the uninitiated, Nick and his global icon wife, Priyanka Chopra,



welcomed Malti Marie, their first child via surrogacy, in 2022. The couple has often taken to their respective social media accounts to share sweet glimpses of their daughter. Nick Jonas had earlier opened up about Malti, who needed to be resuscitated shortly after she was born.

On his appearance on the On Purpose podcast, he had said, "She came to the world under, sort of, very intense circumstances. We were expecting her to arrive in April of the year she was born, and we got a call that it’s going to be sooner." He added, "We basically, you know, went into action, and

she was born via surrogate. We got to the hospital, and she came out. She was 1 pound, 11 ounces and purple basically." Reportedly, Malti, upon birth, spent nearly 100 days in a neonatal intensive care unit, and Nick said that the situation felt perilous at one point in time. Talking about it, he shared, "These angels at the NICU, kind of, resuscitated her in that moment and got her taken care of really quickly and intubated (her) and everything else. Because it was COVID times, my wife and I would basically do 12-hour shifts at the hospital for three and a half months. I could still, sort of, smell it."

Emma Myers names 3 idiots, Baahubali as her favourite Indian films

Agency: Aamir Khan and Prabhas are among the biggest superstars in Indian cinema, enjoying an immense fan following not just across the country but globally as well. Over the years, both actors have delivered several blockbuster films that have left a lasting impact on audiences. While Aamir is celebrated for his versatile performances and content-driven cinema, Prabhas has carved a niche for himself with his larger-than-life screen presence and pan-India appeal. Recently, Emma Myers, who played the role of Enid Sinclair in the Netflix series Wednesday, revealed that 3 Idiots and Baahubali are her favourite films.

Emma Myers enjoys a massive fan following in India, especially among the younger audience who admire her charming screen presence and relatable personality. The actress gained immense popularity after her performance in Wednesday, and since then, her fan-



base in the country has only continued to grow. Recently, she revealed that she is a huge Bollywood fan. While speaking to Hits Radio, she said, "I love Bollywood films. I think they are super fun. One of my favourite films ever is 3 Idiots. I show it to people all the time. It is 4 hours long but you have the best time of your life. There is also a two part saga called Baahubali, which I love." This isn’t the first time that international celebs have heaped praise on Indian actors. Earlier, Jackie Chan too spoke about Aamir and called himself his fan. He said, "I watch very few Bollywood movies, but I loved 3 Idiots (2009). It was a huge success in Hong Kong. I became an Aamir Khan fan overnight. I think he is a terrific actor."

Jr NTR honors grandfather NTR on 103rd birth anniversary with heartfelt tribute

Hyderabad: Actor Jr NTR on Thursday visited the NTR Ghat in Hyderabad to pay tribute to his grandfather, legendary actor and former Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao (NTR), on his 103rd birth anniversary.

Late NTR’s wife, Lakshmi Parvathi and daughter Dagubati Purandeswari also paid their respect at NTR Ghat in Hyderabad. "Today, Telugu people across

the world worship him with immense respect. In his memory, many people take part in food distribution and blood donation drives. That is how a person’s life should be, even after death, only a few continue to live on in the hearts of people. Among such great personalities, NTR garu holds the foremost place. I do not know how many lifetimes’ worth of blessings I must have received to become his wife." Revanth Reddy has

installed a statue here, and I thank him from the bottom of my heart for this gesture. Whenever I think of Telugu soil, Telugu people, Telugu pride, and Telugu identity, the first name that comes to my mind is NTR." Lakshmi Parvathi said while speaking to the media.

Dagubati Purandeswari also shared, "Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao belongs to the people and is immortal in their hearts. Even today, lakhs of Telugu people

celebrate his Jayanthi as if he were a part of their family, their prosperity, and their home," adding, "I truly believe that Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao will forever remain an immortal presence in our hearts. Wherever he may be, I believe his blessings will always be with the Telugu people and their families." Actor and grandson of late NTR, Nandamuri Chaitanya Krishna, also paid his respects at NTR Ghat.



Ranveer Singh’s pralay on track, august shoot confirmed despite Don 3 buzz

Mumbai: Amid the controversy surrounding Ranveer Singh’s exit from Don 3, it has now been reported that his upcoming movie, Pralay, is not getting delayed. If a report by Bombay Times is to be believed, Singh will begin shooting for Jai Mehta’s directorial in August this year.

An insider informed the entertainment portal that Ranveer Singh’s Pralay remains unaffected despite the recent non-cooperation directive issued by the Federation of Western India Cine Employees (FWICE). Calling the FWICE ban ‘unlawful’, the source stated, "Everything is in order and running as planned. FWICE’s unlawful directive has had no impact on the film whatsoever. Pralay will go on floors in August." However, it should be noted that the makers of the film have not issued any statement as of now regarding the



film’s shoot schedule. Pralay is a post-apocalyptic zombie thriller. Set in a post-apocalyptic Mumbai, Pralay will reportedly use AI-driven visuals to depict a crumbling, decayed version of the city. The project will be directed by Jai Mehta, son of filmmaker Hansal Mehta, marking

his theatrical directorial debut. Jai previously co-directed Scam 1992: The Harshad Mehta Story and Lootere, and is known for his realistic storytelling style.

The film is being co-produced by Hansal Mehta and Sameer Nair’s Applause Entertainment, adding further

weight to what is shaping up to be one of the more unconventional Hindi films in development. Ranveer Singh, who quit Don 3 previously, has been banned from the film industry by FWICE. The film body issued a non-cooperation directive against Ranveer Singh on May 25. The fed-

eration claimed that the actor did not respond to multiple requests to appear in person and explain his side of the story. Excel Entertainment, which is backing Don 3, has also demanded Rs 45 crore from Ranveer Singh as compensation for pre-production expenses incurred before his exit.

Following the ban, Singh’s spokesperson also issued a statement and said that the actor does not wish to add to the speculation around the matter and believes such professional disagreements are best handled privately. "Throughout the recent developments surrounding Don 3, he has consciously chosen to maintain silence, believing that professional discussions and personal equations are best handled with dignity, maturity and mutual respect," a part of the statement read.

Shamita Shetty slams age-shaming trolls: “shaadi karke kya ukhaad liya”

Mumbai: Shamita Shetty has issued a sharp response to social media users who targeted her with comments about her age and marital status. Known for her roles in films like Mohabbatein, Zeher, and Cash, she took to her Instagram Stories to address the criticism directly after a user mocked her appearance and questioned why she remained unmarried.

The controversy began when a social media user posted comments on Shamita’s account, writing, "Apki age ho gayi hai pehle wali baat nahi rahi (You have grown old now; you are not the same as before)." Responding to the remarks about her changing appearance, Shamita wrote, "Yes, I will look different. Things change with time; it’s the natural way of life. Nothing stays forever, including physical appearance! BUT for my age, I’m healthy, fit, and happy with a grateful heart for all that the almighty has given me... and that’s all that matters



to me." The troll further commented on her personal life, writing, "Agar shaadi time par kar leti to aapke bache aaj bade ho gaye hote (If you had gotten married on time, your children would have grown up by now)." Shamita did not hold back in her reply to this comment. She replied, "Toh? Yes, you stated the obvious... so? Aapne shaadi karke kya ukhaad liya hai bhai (What miracle you have cracked after getting married)?"

Shamita also addressed the underlying negativity directed

Pankaj Bhadouria reveals cancer battle



Mumbai: Celebrity chef and ‘MasterChef India’ winner Pankaj Bhadouria has revealed that she has been diagnosed with breast cancer. Taking to her social media account, on May 28, Pankaj shared a picture of herself from the hospital where she was seen lying on a hospital bed dressed in a patient gown with medical wires attached to her.

In another story shared on her social media account, Pankaj posted a video from the hospital as she underwent multiple medical tests. In the clip, she was seen sitting in a hospital robe with a medical cannula attached to her hand. The text on the video read, "Going for tests and more tests....not a happy place to be." She also shared a video of herself talking about the diagnosis and her current condition. "I just wanted to share with you all that I have been diagnosed with breast cancer. Since all of you are like an extended family to me, I wanted to share this with you personally. Right now, I truly need your prayers and support. As they say, prayers work miracles. So please keep me in your prayers," said Pankaj. For the uninitiated, Pankaj Bhadouria rose to fame after winning the first season of ‘MasterChef India’ in 2010, becoming the country’s first-ever MasterChef winner. Before entering the culinary world, Pankaj worked as an English teacher and reportedly left her 16-year-long teaching career to participate in the cooking reality show. Following her big win, she went on to become one of India’s most popular celebrity chefs and television hosts. She hosted several cooking-based shows including ‘Chef Pankaj Ka Zayka’, ‘Kifayati Kitchen’, ‘3 Course with Pankaj’, and ‘Rasoi Se – Pankaj Bhadouria Ke Saath’. Apart from television, Pankaj has built a strong digital presence through her YouTube channel and social media platforms where she regularly shares cooking recipes, kitchen tips, and food-related content with millions of followers.

Sol Campbell: ‘PSG are favourites but sometimes you need a little luck’

“They’ve got a wonderful group of players and a great manager in Mikel Arteta but having come so close three times on the bounce I felt these guys needed it,” Sol Campbell says of Arsenal winning the Premier League for the first time in 22 years since, in 2004, he was the cornerstone of their defence for the Invincibles. His team remained unbeaten throughout that historic league season, but the pressure on his successors has been immense. “The wait has been so heavy and it was all pent up, building year after year, always coming so close but never getting over the line,” he says. “That’s why you saw such an outpouring of joy and togetherness. It’s been incredible because we’ve been waiting such a long time.” Arsenal will now try to win the Champions League for the first time when they face the glittering might of Paris Saint-Germain on Saturday in Budapest. The last time they came this close was 20 years ago this month when, after being reduced to 10 men by the early dismissal of their goalkeeper, Jens Lehmann, Campbell scored the opening goal against Barcelona. Arsenal held their lead until the 76th minute and Samuel Eto’o’s equaliser was followed soon after by the Barcelona winner.

But, first, Campbell pauses to consider the calamity that might have ensued had Arsenal not won the league. “They had a fantastic transfer window [last summer] and bought some really top players. But if they hadn’t won the league then those vultures from other big clubs would have been circling and looking to pick off some of our best players.” This could have been a really difficult summer for Arsenal. Players go off to the World Cup and they can get itchy feet while they’re away. They’re looking at other players who won things and they’ve got [international] teammates saying: ‘Our club are looking at you.’

“I’ve seen some of the biggest deals happen at the World Cup when you’re away with players from other clubs for six weeks. That could have been a big problem for Arsenal – but not now. Everyone’s solid, everyone’s stable, everyone’s happy.” How can Arsenal, even with their resolute defence and set-piece prowess, contain and then overcome the shimmering menace of PSG’s attackers? “There’s going to be times when you have to do one-on-ones,” Campbell says. “You can’t double up. You start doubling up on PSG and one or two of their players become a bit free, that creates a problem. You need some really good guys who can survive a one-on-one attack. If you keep on doubling up that creates space for PSG to

attack and that’s what they want.”

Campbell leans forward to convey an even simpler message to Arsenal’s players. “You need to strike while the iron’s hot. You don’t know when you’re going to have that same beautiful run to the final. We’ve got an incredible defence, they’ve got incredible forwards, but after winning the league there is slightly less pressure on Arsenal. It’s still not going to be easy.” What does his gut tell him when he considers the most likely outcome? “It would be incredible if we can get a 3-2 win,” he says, which is a slightly surprising scoreline from a once magnificent defender. “But we’ve got to find a way to quieten down their front line. They are very good when they find space.”

Campbell reiterates that PSG are capable of great discipline and teamwork. “They lost their concentration against Bayern when they were 5-2 up [in the first leg of an unforgettable semi-final]. But when they went to Munich, and played defensively, that showed me they are a complete team. PSG are favourites, but sometimes you just need a little luck. “When I played against Barcelona we had our chances to take the game away from them, even with 10 men. We just needed one more goal and that would have killed them off.”

If Arsenal defy expectations and add the Champions League trophy they will seal the most successful season in the club’s history. But when I ask Campbell to pick a combined fantasy team from his Invincibles and the current squad he can find room for only two contemporary players. He chooses Jurriën Timber ahead of Lauren at right-back and William Saliba replaces Kolo Touré alongside Campbell in central defence. He opts for Lehmann instead of David Raya in goal, and Freddie Ljungberg ahead of Bukayo Saka.

When I press him on Declan Rice, who can’t replace Gilberto Silva alongside Patrick Vieira in central midfield, Campbell smiles: “Declan could squeeze in if it’s a different formation.” I remind the 51-year-old that 2006 was the year he dragged himself out of a personal crisis. At his lowest point, that February, he refused to go out for the second half against West Ham at Highbury because he felt close to a psychological collapse. Campbell retreated to Belgium to try to piece himself back together. “People forget that,” Campbell says. “They don’t realise how difficult that period was for me. I had injuries and I was struggling with losing my place for England and at Arsenal. So to turn it around and play in an unbelievable final showed my character. There was such pressure to



recalibrate myself, but I played the semi-final and did incredibly well. Sometimes I don’t get credit for what I went through to play a final at the pinnacle of European football.” Campbell describes his goal in the final as one of the sweetest moments of his career. “For sure, because with England I got two legitimate goals taken away from me at the [1998] World Cup and then at the [2004] Euros. If we’d had VAR back then the referee would have found it really hard to wriggle out of it, especially against Argentina. “It was ridiculous. Same for the next one against Portugal. Come on. They’ve taken two goals away from me. One would have put us into the semi-finals of the Euros and the other could have put us into a World Cup quarter-final.” So it’s safe to assume that Campbell is a fan of video assistant referees? “Yes,” he says with a smile. “VAR for around the box is great. If you have to go to two or three spaces back then I don’t think so. It should just be used for both boxes.”

A defining image of the domestic season was the agonising wait for VAR to decide whether Arsenal had conceded an injury-time equaliser against West Ham in their third-last match. The decision went their way, but what does Campbell, who was such a physically commanding presence, think of all the grappling that is now allowed at most corners? “We had blocking in my time, but if it was too blatant then it would be [penalised].

As long you’re not touching the keeper, it’s OK. But the trouble is there’s too much going on. In the West Ham game the ref went back to the foul on the goalkeeper. But in that whole sequence you could have had a couple of penalties and a couple of free-kicks either way.” That result had seismic consequences for West Ham and Spurs, their relegation rivals. Campbell has been vilified by Spurs fans for years because, after he had been one of their most inspirational players for so long, he left them for Arsenal, in 2001. How did he feel while watching Spurs come so close to being relegated? “I started [in youth football] at West Ham. So they’re both proper London clubs and it’s not nice whenever any of them go down. It would have hurt Tottenham even more as they’re a huge club with a huge stadium. The Premier League is a better proposition for people around the world watching Tottenham in there. But they have now had two [relegation-haunted seasons] on the run. They have to realise they were extremely lucky. If West Ham had got a result at Newcastle and a draw at home against Arsenal it would have been touch and go.” Campbell played six major tournaments in a row for England – including the World Cups in 1998, 2002 and 2006. He was at his peak in 2002 when he made Fifa’s team of the tournament. What are his perceptions of Thomas Tuchel? “He’s made some interesting cuts to the

final squad. That’s what England wanted – a manager ready to wield the axe. Whether you agree with the axings is different.

“I feel you’ve got to have someone a little bit outside the box. If you can handle one or two mavericks, I like that. I grew up with that – look at how Terry Venables could handle Paul Gascoigne and get the best out of him. I always like a mix. I like good solid players, but I like mavericks, match-winners who can come on for 10 minutes and do it. We need to remember that this is a cup competition.” How will England do this summer? “I think we’ll hit the semi-finals.” Campbell is committed to his intriguing new Legends Corner documentary series, which began with him interviewing Spike Lee in front of the Brooklyn Invincibles, Arsenal’s New York fanclub, as they all watched the north London derby in February. It is a striking choice of a launch because, as Campbell says: “I love football, but I also love architecture. I love film. I love music. I want to give the audience a different take on things.” But I also want to go in-depth with people I’ve played against or followed from afar. It’s more location-based so it gives colour and depth. I’ve done a really in-depth one with Andy Cole about all he has gone through and that will be seen next. The budget’s a little bit bigger so I’ve interviewed Dwight Yorke at his home in Tobago and the next one I’m doing is with Christian Vieri in Italy. But he’s also an Aussie and loves cricket.”

Campbell identifies three dream targets for “honest conversations about rivalry and pressure” in his Legends Corner. “I want to go to Argentina to interview [Gabriel] Batistuta. There’s lots I want to talk about – starting with the 1998 World Cup when there was a political thing going on. I want to find out why they were jumping around so much on the coach after they beat us. [He laughs.] I know you’re happy that you beat us, but why did you do that? What about my goal which got disallowed? What does he think of that?” I also want to talk to Luis Figo. I played against him and Portugal and I’d like to give that international flavour. Also, Figo went from Barcelona to [Real] Madrid and I’ve gone from Tottenham to Arsenal. So, hey, we’re kinda the same. And I’d love to sit down next season with Dennis Bergkamp. “Those three guys are on my list and then I want to do an African tour with some players. I want to create a community that gives a different flavour to football, and a different voice. I’m now putting all my energies into things that I like.”

Twist in Nikki Bhati ‘dowry’ murder case after 9 months, family settles with in-laws

Lucknow: Nine months after 28-year-old Greater Noida resident Nikki Bhati died of severe burn injuries in her house, her family has reached a settlement with her in-laws, who are accused of setting her on fire for dowry, the woman’s father said on Wednesday. This came as the Uttar Pradesh government counsel said Nikki’s sister, Kanchan – who was married into the same family and is the prime witness in her sister’s murder – turned hostile before a local court in Noida about 20 days ago. The next hearing is scheduled on June 10.

Kanchan, who was living with her parents in Roopvas village, will move in with her husband in a new house in Dadri, said Singh. “There will be no interference from her in-laws in Kanchan’s married life,” he said. The settlement marks a sensational twist in a case that rocked the National Capital Region (NCR). Bhati died in Delhi’s Safdarjung Hospital on August 21 last year, allegedly after her husband Vipin Bhati and his mother Daya Bhati poured an inflammable liquid on her and set her ablaze in their Greater



Noida house, according to Kanchan’s police complaint. Kanchan also alleged that her husband Rohit Bhati and father-in-law Satveer watched on, adding that they beat her when she attempted to step in.

However, Kanchan, in her latest statement, has told the court that nobody was in the house when the incident took place. Noida police filed an FIR on August 22 and investigations revealed that Vipin and the in-laws were against Nikki’s plan to reopen a salon she used to run. They were also

reportedly angered by her social media activity, especially on Instagram, which she used to promote the salon.

Police filed a case under sections 103 (murder), 115(2) (voluntarily causing hurt), and 61(2) (criminal conspiracy) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) against Vipin, Rohit, Satveer, and Daya at the Kasna police station. Vipin was arrested after a gunfight on August 24. His mother was arrested the same evening. Satveer and Rohit were held the next day. Investigators on November 20 filed a 173-page chargesheet, accusing all four of murder.

A government counsel involved in the case said Kanchan “turned hostile a few weeks ago.” “Kanchan told the court that no one was inside the house when the incident took place. Nikki’s husband Vipin, father-in-law, mother-in-law, and sister-in-law were outside. So far, only her statement has been recorded,” said the counsel, who asked not to be named.

“We will continue to fight the case, but when the prime victim turns hostile, it weakens the case,” the counsel added.

Rohit was granted bail on January 7 this year, followed by Satveer on January 28, and Daya on February 13. Vipin remains jailed in Luksar prison. Vipin’s advocate, Amit Bhati, confirmed that Kanchan recorded her statement before the court. “We are fighting the case on merit. Based on the evidence, we will file a bail application for Vipin in the high court within a week,” he said. A police officer involved in the investigation said they were not informed about the settlement. “They (Nikki’s family) did not provide anything in writing to the police regarding their compromise. We filed a chargesheet based on their allegations, and now the case is between the court and the families,” said the officer, who asked not to be named.

Police also said in their 173-page chargesheet, accessed by HT, that after scanning CCTV footage during the investigation, police also found that father-in-law Satveer and mother-in-law Daya were not at home at the time of the incident. They further found that Rohit’s mobile location was near the Sirsa toll plaza.

‘I took a deep breath’: Oliver Glasner emotional after perfect Crystal Palace send-off

Oliver Glasner paid tribute to Crystal Palace’s players as he signed off as manager by winning the Conference League and insisted he has no regrets about his decision to depart despite making history in south London.

Jean-Philippe Mateta’s goal in the second half means Glasner has now won three trophies in the space of 12 months after last year’s triumphs in the FA Cup and Community Shield. There were wild celebrations in Leipzig as the Austrian performed a full length slide on the pitch, while thousands of supporters who were watching the game on a big screen at Selhurst Park invaded the pitch. “I took a deep breath with the final whistle,” admitted an emotional Glasner, who said he was no “David Copperfield” when he was appointed to replace Roy Hodgson in February 2024.

“I just supported this group of players – I could be the best magician but without the players it wouldn’t work, The players deserve all the credit because they have to trust me and work very hard. They will all tell you I’m very demanding. But they know I want the best for everyone. As soon as everyone understood that we created a fantastic spirit and the supporters now have what they deserve with a spot in the Europa League.”

But asked whether he may reconsider his decisions to depart, he added: “No. I remem-



ber you asked me once, it was at the academy, when the fans prepared the banner, when we were struggling a little bit. And now it’s the same. I see myself as a servant for the players, as a servant for the club and then somebody who gives the direction. I told the players today in the meeting when we were in the hotel, because I got many messages from fans where they said: ‘Thank you for the best day of my life,’ and I really appreciate it. And I told the players exactly the same. So I have to say thank you to the players, I have to say thank you to the supporters, because it’s the same.”

Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah likely to resign today, say Congress MLAs

Bengaluru: Karnataka chief minister Siddaramaiah will announce on Thursday whether he has decided to step down from the top job after a breakfast meeting at his official residence with his deputy and challenger DK Shivakumar and other cabinet colleagues, with two party lawmakers indicating that the 77-year-old veteran was set to resign. People aware of the matter said Siddaramaiah was likely to meet governor Thawarchand Gehlot in the afternoon after the breakfast meeting, which might be attended by the party leadership. The leaders cited above also said that several formulas were being discussed if Siddaramaiah chose to step aside, including one where multiple deputy CMs are appointed.

“I will speak tomorrow,” the CM said, after paying floral tributes to former prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru on his death anniversary.

Congress lawmaker Ashok K Pattan said that the “CM might resign after 3pm on Thursday”. “He has already taken an appointment with the governor. About the next CM, the high command will decide,” Pattan told reporters. “Yes, there is a 100 per cent possibility,” he told reporters when asked whether Shi-

vakumar was likely to become the CM. Senior lawmaker RV Deshpande said the CM might resign on Thursday or the day after. “I was with the CM. He said, ‘I have decided to resign.’ I did not question him about why he was resigning. We tried to persuade him, saying, ‘Why don’t you continue?’” Deshpande said.

“We said the decision was a surprise to us, but he said, ‘No, I have decided to resign.’ The MLAs who were there wanted him to continue, but he said he had given his word to the high command and would respect it,” he added. The developments came after marathon meetings on Tuesday between the party leadership, Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar, with people aware of the matter saying the high command pushed the former to step aside. Officially, the party said discussions were on the upcoming Rajya Sabha elections and polls in the Karnataka legislative council. But the people cited above said party chief Mallikarjun Kharge told Siddaramaiah that the latter needed to step down and make way for a new leadership.

However, the 77-year-old leader refused to acquiesce immediately and instead asked for two days to decide. The people cited above also said that Sid-

daramaiah was reluctant to hand over duties to Shivakumar but was told by Kharge that the choice of successor was not his.

Tuesday that Siddaramaiah might be presented with a formula where he steps aside in return for a Rajya Sabha seat and a possible cabinet position for his son Yathindra — a member of the state legislative council — in return. Four Rajya Sabha seats, including that of Kharge, are going to the polls from Karnataka in June, and the Congress is expected to win three of them.

Party general secretary organisation KC Venugopal and general secretary in charge of Karnataka Randeep Surjewala reached Bengaluru on Wednesday afternoon and are likely to be present at the breakfast meeting. At the Bengaluru airport, Surjewala said the decision to hold a Congress legislative party meeting had not been taken and refuted claims of a leadership change in Karnataka. Party leaders, however, said the CLP meeting was expected on Friday and swearing-in likely over the weekend.

“...Currently no meeting of the legislature party has been called by the Congress. No other decision has yet been taken. As things evolve, we will inform

you...I want to assure every brother and sister of Karnataka (and) every single Kannadiga that the only decision we will take will be in the interest of the people of Karnataka,” said Surjewala. Surjewala lauded both Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar for their contributions and said, “Whatever decision the party will take in the days to come I shall inform you...The only decision Mallikarjun Kharge ji and Rahul Gandhi ji will take will only be in favour of Karnataka, not in favour of individuals.”

After the Congress won its biggest victory in a generation in Karnataka in 2023, the government has been mired in tensions over the top post. Siddaramaiah, a two-time chief minister who built a grassroots coalition of backwards, Dalits and Muslims that propelled the Congress a rare victory against the Bharatiya Janata Party, had agreed to a power swap halfway through the five-year tenure but has till now blocked Shivakumar, the party’s main troubleshooter and poll financier, said the people cited above. Now, with about two years to go for the next assembly elections and the government in doldrums, the Congress is hoping to set its house in order.

According to party leaders aware of

developments, a proposal to create four deputy chief minister posts was floated during the party’s leadership negotiations with the CM. “The CM has sought multiple deputy chief minister positions for leaders aligned with him as part of a broader transition arrangement being discussed with the Congress high command. Representation and internal balance are now a major part of the negotiations,” a senior Congress leader said on condition of anonymity.

Siddaramaiah’s loyalists however, pointed out that he was the only backward caste CM of the Congress. “Rahul Gandhi wants to establish himself as a champion of OBC and Dalits. But what message would he be giving by removing the lone OBC CM?” a former Rajya Sabha member said.

Late evening, Surjewala went to meet Siddaramaiah at the latter’s residence. Karnataka CM’s legal adviser AS Ponanna admitted that some changes are going to take place. “...What transpires, how it transpires, what is going to happen, what is the nature of the change, we have to wait and watch.”

Party leaders also said the decision on the composition of the cabinet will be taken after consulting senior leaders in

Bengaluru. “We expected many leaders close to Siddaramaiah to be part of the cabinet,” a senior party leader said.

Leaders involved in the talks are attempting to secure his support before carrying out any transition. “There is caution within the party about how the transition is handled,” another Congress functionary said, requesting anonymity. “Nobody wants a situation where one section feels ignored after the change.” Shivakumar, who has long been viewed as a contender for the chief minister’s post, has remained publicly restrained during the latest round of developments.

Several leaders – including MB Patil, Eshwar Khandre, G Parameswara, Tanveer Sait, HC Mahadevappa and Priyank Kharge – are being discussed as possible cabinet nominees, said the people cited above. “One of the priorities is ensuring that all major communities see themselves represented in the new arrangement,” a party leader familiar with the discussions said. Along with the government, changes are also expected in the Karnataka Congress with the nomination of a new state unit chief in place of Shivakumar, who holds dual charge of deputy CM and Karnataka Congress president.

Hailey Baptiste Suffers Horrific French Open Knee Injury Requiring Wheelchair Assist

New Delhi: Hailey Baptiste saw her French Open campaign come to a heart-breaking end after suffering a serious injury during her second-round match in Paris. The American, competing as a seeded player at Roland Garros for the first time in her career, had entered the tournament with momentum after an impressive opening-round victory over two-time Grand Slam champion Barbora Krejcikova. Facing qualifier Wang Xinyu in the second round, Baptiste was trailing 4-5 in the first set when disaster struck.

During a deuce point on Wang's serve, the 24-year-old chased down a return behind the baseline before losing her footing and collapsing awkwardly onto the clay. Baptiste immediately clutched her left knee in visible agony, prompting



concern from both the chair umpire and her father, who rushed courtside as it quickly became clear the injury was severe. Medical personnel soon arrived to assess the situation, and after a brief examination, Baptiste was unable to continue.

She left the court in tears while being helped into a wheelchair. Although no official medical update had been released immediately

after the match, the nature of the fall raised fears of a potentially major knee injury. The setback comes at a cruel time for Baptiste, who had been enjoying the best stretch of her professional career. Just weeks earlier, she had produced the biggest win of her career by defeating world No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka on her way to a maiden WTA 1000 semi-final appearance in Madrid.

That breakthrough run also lifted her to a career-high ranking of No. 25 earlier this month. Now, the rising American could be facing a lengthy recovery period, with concerns already growing that surgery may be required.

Hailey Baptiste's French Open run ended abruptly due to a severe knee injury during her second-round match against Wang Xinyu. After an impressive first round win over Barbora Krejcikova and reaching a career-high ranking of No. 25, Baptiste collapsed chasing a ball, clutching her left knee and unable to continue, leaving the court in tears. The injury threatens a lengthy recovery and possible surgery, halting her rising career momentum just weeks after a breakthrough semifinal in Madrid.

Vaibhav Sooryavanshi Earns Chris Gayle Six Machine Tag After Shattering IPL Record

New Delhi: Universe boss Chris Gayle has handed Indian teenager Vaibhav Sooryavanshi the ultimate seal of approval after the Rajasthan Royals opener shattered his iconic IPL six-hitting record in sensational fashion during the Eliminator against Sunrisers Hyderabad. Gayle, one of the greatest power-hitters in T20 history, hailed the 15-year-old as cricket's "new six machine" after Sooryavanshi produced a breathtaking 97 off just 29 balls in Mullanpur on Wednesday.

The RR youngster smashed 12 towering sixes and five fours at an astonishing strike rate of 334.48, leaving the cricket world stunned. "What a phenomenal player Vaibhav is. Great entertainment young man! New Six machine," Gayle wrote on social media after the match.



Sooryavanshi's assault not only powered Rajasthan Royals to a massive 243 for 8, but also saw him rewrite IPL history. His 12 sixes against Sunrisers Hyderabad took his tally to 65 maximums in IPL 2026, the most by any batter in a single IPL season and also the highest in any T20 tournament. In the process, he eclipsed Gayle's long-standing record of 59 sixes set during his leg-

endary 2012 IPL campaign with Royal Challengers Bengaluru. What made the feat even more remarkable was the pace at which the teenager achieved it. Gayle had taken 456 deliveries to reach his tally, while Sooryavanshi needed only 266 balls. The 15-year-old came agonisingly close to another historic feat as well. He fell just three runs short of what would have been the fastest

century in IPL history, but Sooryavanshi later admitted he had no idea about the milestone during his explosive innings. "I got to know after the game," he said at the post-match presentation when asked about narrowly missing the record. "My focus was on hitting a six. I will score centuries in future but the focus was on getting maximum runs for the team. I just work on my plan and if there are any shortcomings, I just try to work on that."

Sooryavanshi also spoke about the fearless approach that has made him the breakout star of IPL 2026. "I try to just analyse how to face the bowlers, judge the length of the boundaries. When I am showing good intent, the bowler is under pressure," he said. "We have won so we will celebrate and try and do well in the next game."

Jannik Sinner And Aryna Sabalenka Eye More Dominance In French Open Day Five



New Delhi: Day 5 of the French Open 2026 brings a packed order of play across Roland Garros, featuring top seeds, big-name clashes, and Indian participation in doubles and mixed doubles. On Court Philippe-Chatrier, World No.1 Jannik Sinner faces Juan Manuel Cerundolo in his second-round match after a dominant opening win over Clement Tabur. In the women's draw, Aryna Sabalenka continues her campaign after a confident straight-sets opening-round victory and now meets France's Elsa Jacquemot. Ann Li plays Diane Parry, while Arthur Rinderknech meets Matteo Berrettini in a late night match. Court Suzanne-Lenglen features Coco Gauff against Mayar Sherif, Amanda Anis-

imova versus Julia Grabher, Zizou Bergs against Ben Shelton, and Adolfo Daniel Vallejo facing Mose Kouame.

On Court Simonne-Mathieu, Naomi Osaka plays Donna Vekic, Francisco Cerundolo meets Hugo Gaston, Felix Auger-Aliassime takes on Roman Andres Burruchaga, and Victoria Mboko faces Katerina Siniakova. Indian interest continues in doubles action. Anirudh Chandrasekar partners Takeru Yuzuki in men's doubles against Jakob Paul and Marcus Willis on Court 2. In mixed doubles on Court 5, Yuki Bhambri teams up with Alexandra Panova against Lyudmyla Kichenok and David Pel. Bhambri, coming off a strong men's doubles opening-round win, will

look to carry his momentum forward. Day 5 of the 2026 French Open at Roland Garros features key singles matches including World No.1 Jannik Sinner vs Juan Manuel Cerundolo and Aryna Sabalenka vs Frances Elsa Jacquemot. Other notable players like Naomi Osaka, Coco Gauff, and Matteo Berrettini are in action. Indian players Anirudh Chandrasekar and Yuki Bhambri compete in men's and mixed doubles respectively, continuing India's presence in the tournament. Matches are spread across Philippe-Chatrier, Suzanne-Lenglen, and Simonne-Mathieu courts with high-profile contests throughout the day. Former World No. 6 Prannoy gave a strong comeback after dropping the opening game. Despite Christie holding a 7-3 advantage in their previous meetings, the Indian took control of the second game from 2-all and never allowed the Indonesian to outplay him, comfortably closing it 21-12. The decider turned into a tense contest. While Jonatan held the advantage through the early exchanges, momentum shifted towards Prannoy in the closing stages. Trailing 16-18, the Indian scored five consecutive points to seal the victory 21-18. Prannoy will next face Singapore's Loh Kean Yew in the Round of 16.

Gurindervir Is Strong Like An Ox But Needs Key Improvements Says Hillier

Chandigarh: Overcoming mental trauma from facing taunts over his appearance in his childhood to becoming India's fastest sprinter, the journey of Punjab athlete Gurindervir Singh has been one of perseverance. Gurindervir recently broke the 100m national record with a run of 10.09 seconds. "The mental trauma is something I did face in my childhood. It just came back and I cried, was not able to hold it in. However, my coach helped me. I had to undergo some psychology sessions with experts.

The incident happened last year, but now I am back," said Gurindervir, who used to admire Yohan Blake in his childhood, and dreamt of having the same physique as he grew up. "Over the years, I have made myself strong, not only in terms of on-field performances, but improv-



ing my mental strength as well. Now, I feel like being a mature person and able to handle the pressure," added the sprinter. However, his passion for making it big in athletics got a major push after he joined Reliance Foundation. "When he first joined, around 18 months ago, I wasn't happy with the way he was running," said Reliance Foundation's Athletics Director James Hillier. "He had good reactive qualities, but his tendons needed improvement. He

was muscling his way on the track, but the acceleration was not helping him towards the end. We worked a lot to unlock his tendons and managed his muscles as he was carrying much weight and was probably strong as an ox. However, the power was ineffective. We worked on improving quality and it was a gradual process, as biomechanical adjustments were needed," he added. Gurindervir said that "the work is still in progress". "We worked step-by-step,

we improved the first 30m, then 60m, then the finish. I am learning how to take care of diet, dynamics, muscle after coming here. I am not boasting or announcing some new timing or announcing any plans, but I just want to improve and work hard with each passing day," he said.

The moment the coach blew the whistle at Surjit Hockey Stadium in Burlington Park, 12-year-old Naunidh Singh sprinted across the turf with determination in his eyes. Hailing from Mithapur village, the young boy was perhaps among the youngest participants at the Khelo India State Centre of Excellence trials held in Jalandhar on Saturday. Naunidh, the son of a tailor, gave his best during the trials, carrying a dream close to his heart, to become a hockey player like Indian international star player Mandeep Singh, Mithapur.

Ashwin Sends Message To Parents To Protect RR Star Vaibhav Sooryavanshi From Evil Eye



New Delhi: Vaibhav Sooryavanshi's breathtaking IPL 2026 Eliminator knock against Sunrisers Hyderabad has now earned praise from Ravichandran Ashwin, with the former India spinner left stunned by the Rajasthan Royals teenager's mental maturity at just 15 years of age. Ashwin even joked that Sooryavanshi's ability to protect the youngster from the "evil eye" after his remarkable rise this season. Speaking on his YouTube channel after Rajasthan Royals' win over SRH, Ashwin said the teenager's ability to improve and adapt within a single IPL season was what impressed him the most. "I don't wanna play 15 years old boy card but tell me how many matches did he play at age of 15 to get this level of mental maturity?" Ashwin said. "If you remember his uppercut over third man for six, the same ball at the start of the season he was trying to

play straight and it was getting top edged. Inside a season he made such changes at age of just 15."

Ashwin then went on to shower even bigger praise on the RR prodigy. "He is not a normal player. His mom and dad need to do whatever it takes to remove bad evil eye from him," Ashwin added. "This boy in the post-match interview was saying that hundred will come later, I tried to win the match for my team tonight. The way he bats, he doesn't care about hundreds because he knows he will get them here and there." Ashwin also highlighted how Sooryavanshi answered questions surrounding pressure handling during the playoffs. "There was a question on him, how he was going to play under pressure, and he was incredible," Ashwin said. SRH entered the Eliminator with one of the better bowling attacks of IPL 2026, but

Vaibhav Sooryavanshi turned the night into a boundary-hitting exhibition in Mullanpur. Pat Cummins kept rotating his bowlers and constantly adjusted the field as the innings slipped away. Pace off, hard lengths, yorkers into the blockhole and short balls into the body were all tried against the 15-year-old. Nothing really slowed him down for long. Sooryavanshi raced to 50 in just 16 balls and never allowed SRH to settle after that. He eventually smashed 97 off only 29 deliveries, striking at 334.48 with 12 sixes and five fours, while leaving the fastest century in IPL history only three runs away. The scary part for SRH was how quickly he adapted through the innings. Early on, he targeted anything full straight down the ground. When the bowlers dragged the length shorter, he started accessing the square boundaries with upper-cuts and pulls.

Rajasthan Giveth And Royals Taketh Away In Dramatic IPL Play Of The Day

Mullanpur: In the early days of the Indian Premier League 2026, when SunRisers Hyderabad were struggling for form, it was an unassuming game against Rajasthan Royals that provided them important belief. Riyan Parag's Rajasthan, fresh off a leadership change this year, were on fire, having won four back-to-back games in the tournament. When the Men in Pink travelled to Hyderabad, the match was expected to be a mere formality. Rajasthan were expected to flex their batting muscles, considering how poor SRH had been till that point. However, the script did not quite go according to plan. Two uncapped Indian bowlers, Praful Hinge and Sakib Husain, tore through the RR batting line-up, bagging four wickets each and starting a new bowling revolution in the side.

That match gave SRH the confidence to bench the high-paying Jayadev Unadkat and Harshal Patel for the rest of the season, and instead bank on two young stars to deliver the goods for the remainder of their campaign. Later in the season, SRH met Rajasthan again, this time in Jaipur, and the competition was a little more balanced. Vai-

bhav Sooryavanshi took on Praful Hinge, the hero of the previous fixture, and deposited him for four sixes in the very first over. Vaibhav would go on to score a hundred in that game, only to be trumped later in the chase by Ishan Kishan. These two games formed the foundation of SRH's season this year, showcasing just how destructive their Indian core of batting and bowling could be. When SRH met Rajasthan for the third time in the tournament, they had a staggering 6-0 record coming into the game. Since 2024, RR had not beaten SRH in a single match. However, all of that flew out of the window when the 15-year-old Vaibhav Sooryavanshi decided that Rajasthan were not going to lose another game against SRH on his watch. On Wednesday, Sooryavanshi pummelled the SRH pacers to score 97 runs in just 29 balls. En route to those 97 runs, he broke Chris Gayle's record for the most sixes in a single IPL season and David Warner's record for the most runs scored in the powerplay. It is not that SRH were oblivious to what Sooryavanshi was capable of doing. It is not that they did not have plans against the batter either. Pat Cummins handed himself



the ball in the powerplay, something that he has rarely done this season. Cummins bowled a couple of yorkers, trying to go under Vaibhav's batswing, a move that seemed to work, briefly at least. Having failed to dismiss Sooryavanshi in the first five balls of the over, Cummins took a gamble. He went around the wicket and hurled a 140-kph rocket targeting the top of off stump. The delivery was a brilliant one, and would have crashed into the stumps had it been left alone. But it was not left alone. In fact, it was not defended at all.

Vaibhav decided to unleash the full swing of his bat and hit Cummins so hard that the ball sailed over the bowler's head. In that mo-

ment, the floodgates were suddenly opened. From there, Sooryavanshi went on a spree of big hits, and whatever SRH tried from that point onwards, the short balls, the slower deliveries, the cutters, absolutely nothing worked. SRH perhaps missed a trick by not bowling Nitish Reddy in the powerplay, or by not introducing spin earlier into the attack. But in the kind of mood that Vaibhav Sooryavanshi was in, nobody would have been spared on the night. The wicket eventually came, and agonisingly so, when Vaibhav top-edged a short ball from Praful Hinge to third man. Vaibhav froze at the crease when the catch was completed, cursing himself for not finishing a

century that was deservedly his. It was a century that could have made him the joint-fastest hundred-maker in the history of the IPL. But it is what it is. Vaibhav had a wry smile at the end of the game as he collected the Player of the Match award, and later stated that just before the wicket ball, he should not have looked at the fielder stationed at third man. In noticing the fielder, he ended up telegraphing his shot towards that region, bringing an end to what could have been one of the standout centuries in Indian Premier League history. Vaibhav's innings did not end the misery for SRH. Coming out to bat, SRH fell apart against the one out-and-out Jofra Archer.