

In Brief

KNF Rejects Allegations in Naga Civilian Disappearance Case

Kohima, May 18: The Kuki National Front (KNF) has strongly denied allegations linking the organisation to the disappearance of six Naga civilians on May 13, describing a viral social media poster accusing the outfit as “AI-generated propaganda” and “malicious disinformation.” In a statement issued by the organisation, the KNF rejected what it called “baseless, malicious and factually void” content circulating online. The group alleged that the campaign was deliberately aimed at damaging the image of the organisation and targeting ST. Thangboi Kipgen, chairman of the United People’s Front (UPF). The organisation claimed that the viral poster was part of a coordinated smear campaign intended to provoke communal unrest during the already tense situation in Manipur. The KNF stated that it “vehemently denies any involvement whatsoever” in the alleged disappearance of the six Naga civilians.

Assam CM asks officials to remain vigilant to prevent abnormal price rise

Guwahati: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma today said the state government is taking steps to prevent abnormal or artificial increase in commodity prices. “Our government is keeping a close eye on the market and will not allow any unfair price rise. It have instructed officials in every district to keep a tab on prices of items and take stringent actions against any defaulter,” Sarma said after reviewing the price monitoring mechanism for essential commodities in the State. He asked the concerned officials to take strict steps to ensure market stability and prevent any abnormal price rise. Sarma directed the DC-led District Monitoring Committees to convene within the next 3-4 days and ensure mandatory display of retail and wholesale prices at all shops and wholesale outlets.

North East’s Eri Silk to Merge With Rajasthan’s Kota Doria

Aizawl: The Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) has taken a major step towards promoting inter-regional collaboration in India’s handloom sector by exploring the fusion of the North East’s celebrated Eri silk with Rajasthan’s iconic Kota Doria fabric to create a distinctive premium textile for domestic and international markets. As part of this initiative, Secretary, Ministry of DoNER, Sanjay Jaju, visited the Kaithoon Common Facility Centre (CFC) in Kota on May 17, along with Kota District Collector Piyush Samaria and MD, NEHDC Mara Kocho. The delegation interacted with local weavers, artisans, and fashion designers and closely observed the traditional weaving techniques that have made Kota Doria globally renowned for its lightweight texture, transparent weave, and distinctive check-pattern patterns. Discussions during the visit focused on the feasibility of integrating Eri silk — popularly known as “peace silk” due to its ethical and eco-friendly production process — with Kota Doria to develop a high-value fabric that blends luxury, comfort, durability, and heritage craftsmanship.

Himanta Biswa Sarma Assesses Guwahati Infrastructure and Drainage Plans



Guwahati, May 18: Himanta Biswa Sarma reviewed the progress of several urban development projects in Guwahati and directed departments to give priority to flood mitigation, sanitation and access to clean drinking water in the city and other urban areas of Assam. The review meeting focused on the ongoing works and future plans of the Housing and Urban Affairs Department, including projects being carried out by the Guwahati Municipal Corporation, Guwahati Metropolitan Development Authority, Guwahati Jal Board and the AMRUT mission. During the meeting, the Chief Minister said urban development should remain

citizen-centric and asked officials to focus on improving the daily lives of residents through better civic infrastructure and services. According to officials, the discussions mainly centred on key

urban challenges faced by Guwahati, especially flash floods during the monsoon season, sanitation management and the need for reliable drinking water supply across the city. Sarma directed the concerned

agencies to speed up major infrastructure projects and ensure timely implementation of works aimed at transforming Guwahati into one of the country’s leading metropolitan cities. He stressed that long-term

planning would be necessary to deal with recurring urban flooding and rapid population growth in and around the city. The meeting also reviewed plans related to the development of satellite townships in the greater Guwahati region. Officials discussed measures to reduce pressure on the main city area through planned urban expansion and improved infrastructure connectivity. Apart from Guwahati, the Chief Minister also reviewed sanitation-related projects in other towns and cities of Assam. He instructed officials to strengthen waste management systems and improve sanitation infrastructure in urban local bodies across the state.

Emphasising coordination among different agencies, Sarma said departments must work together for faster and more effective execution of projects. He also called for the involvement of skilled professionals and technical experts from the private sector to improve planning and implementation. The Chief Minister further asked officials to adopt an outcome-based approach while executing urban development schemes. He said the main goal of the government should be to improve the “Ease of Living” for people living in urban Assam through better roads, drainage systems, water supply and public facilities.

Nagaland University Study Explores Assam Tribe’s Herbal Healing Knowledge

Kohima, May 18: A Nagaland University study has documented the rich yet rapidly declining ethno-medicinal knowledge of the Sonowal Kachari tribe of Assam, highlighting its potential to transform affordable healthcare and future drug discovery.

Focusing on 39 medicinal plant species and their applications, the study systematically records traditional herbal practices that have long been passed down orally within the Sonowal Kachari tribe.

By engaging 180 elderly knowledge holders, the research captures a detailed and quantitative understanding of plant-based treatments used to manage a range of ailments.

One of the key findings of the study is the continued relevance of herbal medicine as a low-cost, accessible healthcare solution, particularly in rural and resource-constrained settings.

The research also reveals a dual reliance among the community on both traditional remedies and allopathic medicine, pointing to opportunities for integrative healthcare models that combine the strengths of both systems.

The study highlights that many of the documented plant-based remedies are already used to treat common conditions such as fever, respiratory ailments, kidney stones and skin disorders, indicating strong therapeutic relevance for primary healthcare



systems.

This reinforces the potential for developing validated, plant-derived formulations that can complement modern medicine, particularly in underserved regions where access to affordable treatment remains a challenge.

Highlighting the need for Indian academia to focus on indigenous and native healthcare solutions, Prof. Jagadish Kumar Patnaik, Vice-Chancellor, Nagaland University, said, “Nagaland University’s study documenting Sonowal Kachari herbal knowledge highlights the immense value of indigenous wisdom in advancing low-cost healthcare and future drug discovery. The research reinforces that traditional herbal medicine remains an accessible, affordable, and effective healthcare option, especially for rural and resource-limited communities. This important work not only preserves cultural heritage but also opens new pathways for sustainable medical innovation.”

The findings were published in the Journal of Ayurveda and

Integrative Medicine, a peer-reviewed journal that publishes research bridging traditional Ayurvedic knowledge with modern biomedical science.

The paper was co-authored by Pramod Chandra Dihingia, Wungsim Zimik and Prabhakar Sharma from Nagaland University and Deepika Borah from the Indian Council of Medical Research, Assam.

Elaborating on the key findings, Dr. Pramod Chandra Dihingia, assistant professor, Department of Agricultural Engineering and Technology, Nagaland University, said, “This study underscores the urgent need to conserve both indigenous knowledge and medicinal plant biodiversity. With younger generations increasingly shifting away from traditional practices, the research warns of a potential loss of valuable ethnobotanical knowledge. To address this, the team proposes a conservation framework that supports knowledge preservation while promoting sustainable use of plant resources.”

Further, Prof. Prabhakar Shar-

ma, Head, Department of Agricultural Engineering and Technology, Nagaland University, added, “Beyond documentation, the findings open new avenues for pharmacological research, with several identified plants showing promise for future drug development. By bridging traditional wisdom with scientific validation, this study contributes to national priorities in affordable healthcare, biodiversity conservation, and innovation in natural product-based therapeutics.”

The researchers note that this work lays the groundwork for further interdisciplinary studies aimed at validating medicinal properties, exploring bioactive compounds and developing community-driven conservation strategies.

The research also emphasises that systematic documentation and quantitative validation of such indigenous practices can accelerate bioprospecting and pharmacological screening of bioactive compounds, paving the way for future drug development pipelines.

By identifying species with repeated and consistent usage patterns, the study provides a scientific starting point for laboratory validation, clinical trials, and eventual integration into evidence-based medicine—while also advocating equitable benefit-sharing with indigenous communities.

KNF Rejects Allegations in Naga Civilian Disappearance Case

Kohima, May 18: The Kuki National Front (KNF) has strongly denied allegations linking the organisation to the disappearance of six Naga civilians on May 13, describing a viral social media poster accusing the outfit as “AI-generated propaganda” and “malicious disinformation.” In a statement issued by the organisation, the KNF rejected what it called “baseless, malicious and factually void” content circulating online. The group alleged that the campaign was deliberately aimed at damaging the image of the organisation and targeting ST. Thangboi Kipgen, chairman of the United People’s Front (UPF). The organisation claimed that the viral poster was part of a coordinated smear campaign intended to provoke communal unrest during the already tense situation in Manipur. The KNF stated that it “vehemently denies any involvement whatsoever” in the alleged disappearance of the six Naga civilians. The outfit also condemned the circulation of what it described as unverified and inflammatory misinformation, alleging that certain vested interests were attempting to create confusion and deepen divisions among communities through AI-generated digital content.

Appealing to the public, civil society organisations and media institutions, the KNF urged people to exercise caution and refrain from sharing or believing “fabricated social media narratives” without evidence. The organisation warned that the spread of such misinformation could further escalate tensions on the ground. Reiterating its stated commitment to peace, democratic engagement and justice, the KNF expressed hope for a peaceful resolution to the ongoing crisis in Kangpokpi and Ukhrul districts. The organisation also reaffirmed its position as a group formed to protect the interests of the Kuki-Zo people and what it described as their ancestral land. At the same time, the KNF warned that legal action could be initiated against individuals or groups allegedly responsible for creating and circulating defamatory content intended to mislead both the public and government authorities. The statement comes amid heightened tensions surrounding the disappearance of six Naga civilians and reports that fourteen Kuki-Zo individuals are allegedly being held captive by Naga groups, as conflicting claims and accusations continue to surface across social and political platforms.

Manipur Faces UNC Blockade Protest Over Detained Naga Civilians

Imphal, May 18: The United Naga Council (UNC) has announced an inter-district economic blockade along National Highways passing through Naga-inhabited areas of Manipur, alleging that six Naga civilians, including two pastors, continue to remain in captivity despite repeated deadlines and search operations. In a public statement, the Working Committee of the UNC stated that it had earlier submitted an ultimatum to the Government of Manipur on May 14, demanding the immediate and safe release of 20 alleged Naga hostages reportedly held by Kuki militant groups at Leilon Vaiphei village and Sapermaina Kuki village within 24 hours. According to the statement, 14 hostages were released on the morning of May 15, but the remaining six individuals, including two pastors, are still untraced. The UNC said the Manipur government had sought additional time until 2 pm on May 16 to continue search and rescue operations. The organisation stated that the deadline was later extended twice. However, the UNC alleged that despite the extensions, the remain-



ing civilians have not been rescued and accused state agencies of failing to ensure their release. “Given the situation, we are constrained to launch an Inter-District Economic Blockade along the

National Highways in the Naga areas in Manipur with immediate effect until the safe rescue and release of the Naga hostages are duly carried out,” the statement issued by the UNC Media Cell said.

The blockade is expected to impact transportation and movement of goods across several Naga-dominated districts in the state amid continuing ethnic tensions and security concerns in the region.

Assam CM asks officials to remain vigilant to prevent abnormal price rise



Guwahati, May 18: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma today said the state government is taking steps to prevent abnormal or artificial increase in commodity prices. “Our government is keeping a close eye on the market and will not allow any unfair price rise. It have instructed officials in every district to keep a tab on prices of items and take stringent actions against any defaulter,” Sarma said after reviewing the price monitoring mechanism for essential commodities in the State. He asked the concerned officials to take strict steps to ensure market stability and prevent any abnormal price rise. Sarma directed the DC-led District Monitoring Committees to convene within the next 3-4 days and ensure mandatory display of retail and wholesale prices

• Sarma instructed district officials to monitor prices of essential items and convene District Monitoring Committees within 3-4 days.

at all shops and wholesale outlets. He asked the authorities to take strict action, including cancellation of trade licences, against those who indulges in abnormal pricing. Sarma said that there should be weekly review meetings between DCs, chambers of commerce and other trade bodies and intensive field-level monitoring to detect and prevent unusual price escalation. He also ordered expeditious Aadhaar seeding of PM Ujjwala beneficiaries to eliminate duplicity in LPG cylinder distribution.

Eri silk from the Northeast will combine with Kota Doria from Rajasthan in a historic textile project

Kota, May 18: The Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) has taken a major step towards promoting inter-regional collaboration in India’s handloom sector by exploring the fusion of the North East’s celebrated Eri silk with Rajasthan’s iconic Kota Doria fabric to create a distinctive premium textile for domestic and international markets. As part of this initiative, Secretary, Ministry of DoNER, Sanjay Jaju, visited the Kanthoon Common Facility Centre (CFC) in Kota on May 17, along with Kota District Collector Piyush Samaria and MD, NEHH-DC Mara Kocho.

The delegation interacted with local weavers, artisans, and fashion designers and closely observed the traditional

weaving techniques that have made Kota Doria globally renowned for its lightweight texture, transparent weave, and distinctive check-pattern patterns. Discussions during the visit focused on the feasibility of integrating Eri silk — popularly known as “peace silk” due to its ethical and eco-friendly production process — with Kota Doria to develop a high-value fabric that blends luxury, comfort, durability, and heritage craftsmanship. Officials noted that the initiative has the potential to open new livelihood opportunities for artisans and weavers in both Rajasthan and the North Eastern states while significantly enhancing the value proposition of Indian handloom products in the global marketplace. During the visit to Kota,

the delegation, accompanied by select fashion designers and representatives of the weaving community, called on Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla at his residence and briefed him on the proposed initiative. Birla appreciated the effort and stated that Kota Doria is not merely a fabric but a symbol of the identity, culture, and craftsmanship of the Hadoti region.

He emphasized that blending it with the North East’s Eri silk would create a new benchmark in India’s textile sector by bringing together two rich and diverse handloom traditions. He further observed that such collaborations would not only preserve traditional weaving practices but also generate sustainable economic opportunities for artisans, particularly women and rural weaving communities.

NSCN-K (Niki) expresses concern over killings in Southern Nagaland, appeals for Naga unity

Kohima, May 18: National Socialist Council of Nagaland-K has expressed concern over the recent killings reported in Southern Nagaland under the United Naga Council area and appealed to Nagas across different regions to remain united during the ongoing tensions.

The organisation described the recent loss of lives as “disheartening and alarming” and said the situation required collective efforts to safeguard Naga people and their lands.

The group stated that mere condemnation of the incidents would not be enough and called on Nagas to work together during the present challenges.

According to the statement, the organisation alleged that certain external forces were attempting to weaken Naga political aspirations by turning the issue into a communal and law-



and-order matter. It urged people not to lose focus from what it described as the long-standing political objectives of the Naga movement. The statement also referred to historical tensions involving Naga and Kuki communities and appealed to both sides to carefully consider the larger impact of continued conflict and violence in the region.

Emphasising the importance of protecting land, identity and culture, the NSCN-K (Niki) said Nagas must remain committed to safeguarding their people and ancestral territories. The organisation further stated that the patience and silence shown by Naga people should not be viewed as weakness, while reiterating its position on defending Naga interests. Appealing for greater unity, the group urged Nagas from South, Central, North and East regions to set aside internal differences and collectively address the present situation.

UNC launches economic blockade in Manipur over hostage crisis

Imphal, May 18: United Naga Council has announced an inter-district economic blockade along national highways passing through Naga areas of Manipur following the expiry of its deadline for the safe rescue of six alleged hostages. In a statement, the council said the blockade would continue with immediate effect until the remaining hostages are safely rescued and released.

According to the UNC, the organisation had earlier issued an ultimatum to the Manipur government on May 14, demanding the safe release of 20 Naga civilians allegedly held hostage by “Kuki militant groups” at Leilon Vaiphei village and Sapermaina Kuki village within 24 hours. The council stated that 14 of the hostages were released on May 15. However, six others, including two pastors, were

Assam CM evaluates urban projects in Guwahati and emphasizes sanitation and flood control

Guwahati, May 18: Himanta Biswa Sarma reviewed the progress of several urban development projects in Guwahati and directed departments to give priority to flood mitigation, sanitation and access to clean drinking water in the city and other urban areas of Assam. The review meeting focused on the ongoing works and future plans of the Housing and Urban Affairs Department, including projects being carried out by the Guwahati Municipal Corporation, Guwahati Metropolitan Development Authority, Guwahati Jal Board and the AM-RUT mission.

During the meeting, the Chief Minister said urban development should remain citizen-centric and asked officials to focus on improving the daily lives of residents through better civic infrastructure and services. According to officials, the discussions main-



ly centred on key urban challenges faced by Guwahati, especially flash floods during the monsoon season, sanitation management and the need for reliable drinking water supply across the city. Sarma directed the concerned agencies to speed up major infrastructure projects and ensure

timely implementation of works aimed at transforming Guwahati into one of the country’s leading metropolitan cities.

He stressed that long-term planning would be necessary to deal with recurring urban flooding and rapid population growth in and around the city. The meeting also

reviewed plans related to the development of satellite townships in the greater Guwahati region. Officials discussed measures to reduce pressure on the main city area through planned urban expansion and improved infrastructure connectivity. Apart from Guwahati, the Chief Minister

also reviewed sanitation-related projects in other towns and cities of Assam. He instructed officials to strengthen waste management systems and improve sanitation infrastructure in urban local bodies across the state. Emphasising coordination among different agencies, Sarma said departments must work together for faster and more effective execution of projects. He also called for the involvement of skilled professionals and technical experts from the private sector to improve planning and implementation. The Chief Minister further asked officials to adopt an outcome-based approach while executing urban development schemes.

He said the main goal of the government should be to improve the “Ease of Living” for people living in urban Assam through better roads, drainage systems, water supply and public facilities.

High-powered review board of Brahmaputra Board to hold its 14th meeting in Guwahati tomorrow

Guwahati, May 18: The High-Powered Review Board (HPRB) of the Brahmaputra Board will hold its 14th meeting tomorrow (May 19, 2026) in Guwahati to review the progress of river basin management initiatives and provide strategic guidance for the future roadmap of the Board. The meeting will be chaired by the Union Minister of Jal Shakti C.R. Paatil. The Union Cabinet Minister for Ports, Shipping and Waterways, Sarbananda Sonowal, and the Minister of State for Jal Shakti, Raj Bhushan Choudhary, will attend the session. Other Union and State Ministers, senior officials from the Government of India and the North Eastern States, technical experts, and key stakeholders will also be present during the deliberations.

This meeting holds particular significance following the recent reconstitution of the HPRB, which expanded its membership to include the States of Sikkim and West Bengal.

It also comes amid the ongoing transformation of the Brahmaputra Board into a modern, knowledge-based River Basin Organization (RBO). The Board has been executing major initiatives across the North Eastern Region and West Bengal, specifically focusing on the preparation and updation of river basin masterplans, flood and erosion management, springshed rejuvenation, drainage development, digital transformation, institutional restructuring, and capacity building. The high-level review will cover the implementation

BJSM decides to demand eviction in BTR through agitation starting in June

Kokrajhar, May 18: The Bodoland Janajati Suraksha Manch (BJSM), on Sunday expressed strong resentment over what it termed as a systematic failure of the government to carry out eviction drives against illegal encroachers in reserve forests and tribal belts and blocks of BTR.

It resolved to start a democratic mass movement from the first week of June demanding eviction drives.

Speaking to The Sentinel, the President of the BJSM, DD Narzary, said that a crucial meeting of the Manch was held on Saturday wherein the organization strongly reaffirmed its uncompromising demand for immediate eviction of



all illegal encroachers from the reserve forest areas under BTC. The meeting unanimously resolved that the BJSM would submit a final ultimatum to the Council Head of the Department

(CHD), Forest, BTC, on May 18, demanding the start of eviction drives within the month of May itself, failing which they would resort to launch a strong democratic mass movement from the

first week of June across the BTR region.

The BJSM expressed deep anguish, resentment and frustration over the continued silence and inaction of the Forest Department

despite the passage of several months since the brutal killing of a local Bodo tribal contractor on January 12 and the shocking attack on Runikhata Forest Range office on April 17, during which the government properties were vandalized and arms were looted. The Manch observed that these incidents could not be treated as ordinary law-and-order problems as the nature of the attacks, organized aggression, and armed activities in the forest areas resembled extremist and Maoist-style operations, which posed a serious threat to peace, constitutional governance, and the very foundation of the BTC under the Sixth Schedule.

Meghalaya will host the Northeast Infrastructure Summit to increase connectivity and investment

Shillong, May 18: Meghalaya will host the North East India Infrastructure Summit and Exhibition (NEIINFRA) on June 11 and 12, bringing together policymakers, investors, financial institutions and industry leaders to discuss infrastructure expansion, regional connectivity and investment opportunities across the Northeast.

Announcing the summit at an event in Shillong, Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad Sangma said the state’s economy has doubled over the past five years,

while capital investment has increased fourfold since 2018.

Sangma said sustained economic growth over the last three to four years has strengthened investor confidence in Meghalaya, which he described as one of the country’s fastest-growing economies. He also pointed to the state government’s industrial promotion policy, saying it offers major incentives aimed at attracting private investment.

The chief minister highlighted the state’s growing entrepreneurship and technology sectors,



● Sanjay Jaju, Secretary at the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region, expressed support for infrastructure-led growth and praised Meghalaya’s development efforts.

opment in the state.

The summit is expected to focus on transport networks, urban infrastructure, digital connectivity and investment partnerships, as northeastern states seek to position the region as an emerging economic and trade hub.

Four Dead After Stone-Laden Truck Overturns in Tripura

Agartala, May 18: A stone-laden truck overturned nearly one kilometre before the CRPF camp in Dhalai district on Sunday, killing four persons on the spot and seriously injuring four others.

The deceased have been identified as Rabindrajoy Tripura, aged 48, and Mujida Tripura, aged 58, both residents of Naiham Roaja Para.

The other two deceased are Bakhak Joy Tripura, aged 40, and Narojoy Tripura, aged 27, residents of Rajmoni Roaja Para in Gobindabari.

According to reports, the truck was travelling from Chawmanu to the Biju Border Out Post carrying stone chips for ongoing infrastructure work near the international border.

Sources said the accident occurred when the vehicle attempted to climb a steep stretch of road that was reportedly in a deplorable condition.

Soon after the incident, local residents and the administration launched rescue



operations and shifted the injured to nearby hospitals.

The critically injured persons were referred to Dhalai District Hospital for advanced treatment.

According to reports, most of the injured were travelling inside the truck cabin at the time of the accident.

Police have registered a case and initiated an investigation into the incident.

BJP MLA Questions Mosque Loudspeaker Use in Assam

Guwahati, May 18: Digan-ta Kalita has raised concerns over the use of loudspeakers for Azaan in areas surrounding the Assam Legislative Assembly, stating that while he has no objection to the religious practice itself, he questions the need for amplifiers.

Speaking to reporters, the BJP legislator said he has been residing near the Assembly premises for the last five years and hears the Azaan being recited five times daily.

“I have no objection to the Azaan itself. Muslims are free to perform the Azaan five times a day, just as Hindus also follow their own religious practices. But why must it be done through loudspeakers? Where is it written that the Azaan has to be recited using loudspeakers?” Kalita said.

He further stated that he is examining the issue from a legal perspective and plans to consult legal experts to determine whether there are any specific court rulings regarding the use of loudspeakers for religious purposes. Kalita’s remarks are expected to trigger political debate in Assam, where discussions over religious practices and noise regulations have surfaced periodically in public and political discourse.

Dimapur Airport expansion moves ahead

Dimapur, May 18: The long-pending Phase-I expansion of Dimapur Airport is set to progress following the handover of nearly 18.8 acres of land by the Assam Rifles Training Centre and School (ARTC&S). The Airports Authority of India (AAI) has already initiated preliminary steps for the development project. Speaking over the phone, Dimapur Airport director Moa Pongen confirmed that the process has formally

begun and details of the newly acquired land have been submitted to the AAI headquarters in New Delhi for further planning and execution. He informed that a team from the AAI headquarters is expected to visit Dimapur soon to conduct detailed surveys and technical assessments of the acquired land. “AAI will plan everything accordingly once the survey is completed,” Pongen said, adding that groundwork activi-

ties are likely to begin after the technical evaluation process is completed. According to him, around 18.08 acres of land, based on the current demarcation, have been earmarked for major infrastructure development under Phase-I. The proposed expansion project includes the construction of a New Integrated Terminal Building (NITB), parking facilities for vehicles and additional parking bays for aircraft.

The expansion is expected to significantly improve the airport’s operational capacity and prepare it for future growth in passenger traffic and aircraft movement. On the possibility of increased flights and direct connectivity to more destinations, Pongen expressed optimism, saying that rising passenger traffic and ongoing infrastructure development could improve prospects for more aircraft operations in the future.

Hostage Crisis Sparks Fresh Shutdown in Manipur

● *Protestors marched through Kangpokpi, culminating in a gathering at Brigadier M. Thomas Ground, where KIM’s Information Secretary Janghaolun Haokip addressed the crowd.*

Imphal, May 18: The Kuki Inpi Manipur (KIM), the apex body representing the Kuki tribes, has extended the ongoing total shutdown across Kuki-Zo areas by another 48 hours, increasing pressure on the Government to secure the safe release of the remaining Kuki-Zo hostages allegedly being held captive in Senapati district. The decision was announced after a massive protest demonstration at the Kangpokpi district headquarters on Sunday, where thousands of Kuki-Zo men, women, youths and elders joined a coordinated march demanding the immediate and unconditional release of 14 civilians and justice for the killing of three Kuki-Zo church leaders. The protest rally began from Nute Kailhang and passed through Kangpokpi town before reaching the of-

fice of the Superintendent of Police. Demonstrators carried placards and raised slogans demanding the release of the captives and implementation of the Charter of Demands submitted to the Government. The mobilisation was organised under the leadership of Kuki Inpi Manipur and was supported by several Kuki-Zo civil society organisations. Following the march, protestors gathered at Brigadier M. Thomas Ground, where KIM Information Secretary Janghaolun Haokip addressed the gathering and said the democratic agitation would continue until justice is ensured. The shutdown severely affected normal life in Kangpokpi district, with shops and commercial establishments remaining shut, highways largely deserted and public activities coming to a halt. Later in the day, Kuki-Zo civil society organisations held a closed-door meeting at the office of the Committee on Tribal Unity (CoTU), where they decided to extend the shutdown by another 48 hours due to the continued

captivity of the remaining hostages. Addressing the media after the meeting, Haokip reiterated that the primary demands of the agitation are the immediate, safe and unconditional release of all remaining hostages and urgent action on the Charter of Demands already submitted to the Government. He said four days had passed since the killing of the three Kuki-Zo religious leaders and described the incident as a tragedy that had deepened public grief and fears of further violence in the region. Haokip acknowledged the Government’s efforts in facilitating the release of several detainees from both the Kuki-Zo and Naga communities over the past two days. However, he said the continued detention of others remained a serious humanitarian concern. Describing the partial release of detainees as a positive step, he appealed to authorities to intensify efforts to ensure the immediate and safe release of all remaining captives. He also warned that failure to in-

tervene decisively could worsen tensions and destabilise the already fragile situation in the region. Calling for restraint, Haokip appealed to community leaders, civil society groups and Government authorities to work towards de-escalation and initiate meaningful dialogue to prevent further violence. He cautioned that attempts by vested interests to inflame ethnic divisions could trigger wider unrest between communities. Haokip further stated that the Kuki-Zo community would continue democratic protests and mourning programmes until the Charter of Demands is fulfilled, while maintaining its call for justice, security and accountability. With the shutdown extended and public mobilisation continuing to grow, the agitation in Kangpokpi has emerged as one of the most significant protest movements in the region in recent months, reflecting growing public anger and concern over the hostage crisis and recent killings.

Search Operations Underway to Locate Hostages in Manipur



Imphal, May 18: Security forces continued combing and search operations in Manipur’s Kangpokpi district as part of the ongoing efforts to trace and rescue persons still held hostage by armed groups in the state.

Area domination exercises and search operations are also being carried out in different parts of the hill district to rescue all missing persons and arrest those responsible for holding hostages.

According to reports, 31 of around 38 persons belonging to the Kuki and Naga communities, who were held hostage by armed groups in Kangpokpi and Senapati districts have been released till May 15.

They were taken to undisclosed locations after suspected militants shot dead three church leaders and injured four others in Kangpokpi on May 13, while a civilian was gunned down and his wife was wounded in Noney district.

“In continuation of the operations to rescue the missing persons, combing and search operations were carried out by security forces in the hill ranges to the north west of Leilon Vaiphei and Kharam Vaiphei villages in Kangpokpi district,” a police statement said.

According to official sources, search operations were conducted in the hill ranges located to the northwest of Leilon Vaiphei and Kharam Vaiphei villages in Kangpokpi district. Authorities stated that the operations are continuing.

Meanwhile, security forces on May 17 arrested an active cadre of the proscribed militant outfit PREPAK during a separate operation in Imphal East district.

The arrested individual was identified as Laishram Jivan Singh (38), a resident of Langmeidong. He was apprehended from Khabam Lamkhai Makha Leikai under Heingang Police Station limits in Imphal East district. Further investigation is underway.

NCRB Data Highlights Low Conviction Rate in Meghalaya Crime Cases

Shillong, May 18: Data revealed by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) for Meghalaya for the year 2024 has raised concerns over the state’s low charge-sheeting and conviction rates despite thousands of cases being registered during the year.

According to the NCRB, Meghalaya registered 3,986 IPC/BNS cases and 753 cases under Special and Local Laws (SLL) in 2024.

The state recorded a crime rate of 117.7 per lakh population, lower than Assam and several other northeastern states. However, only a small proportion of registered cases resulted in convictions.

During 2024, only 466 accused persons were convicted in IPC/BNS and SLL cases combined, while 1,007 accused were acquitted and another 438 discharged.

The NCRB data also brought to the fore that Meghalaya’s

charge-sheeting rate stood at 30.6 per cent during the year, indicating that police filed charge-sheets in less than one-third of registered cases.

The figures also indicate a significant gap between case registration, investigation and conviction.

The statistics further showed a rise in cybercrime and property-related offences in the state. Meghalaya recorded 216 cybercrime cases during 2024, while property offences crossed 1,600 cases.

Concerns have been raised over crimes involving vulnerable groups. Meghalaya recorded 84 murder cases involving 90 victims during the year, while crimes against children rose for the third consecutive year to 556 cases.

Trial disposal figures also reflected a higher number of acquittals than convictions during 2024, with acquittals outnumbering convictions by more than two to one.

North East’s Eri Silk to Merge With Rajasthan’s Kota Doria in Landmark Textile Initiative

Aizawl, May 18: The Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) has taken a major step towards promoting inter-regional collaboration in India’s handloom sector by exploring the fusion of the North East’s celebrated Eri silk with Rajasthan’s iconic Kota Doria fabric to create a distinctive premium textile for domestic and international markets. As part of this initiative, Secretary, Ministry of DoNER, Sanjay Jaju, visited the Kaithoon Common Facility Centre (CFC) in Kota on May 17, along with Kota District Collector Piyush Samaria and MD, NEHHDC Mara Kocho. The delegation interacted with local weavers, artisans, and fashion designers and closely observed the traditional weaving techniques that have made Kota Doria globally renowned for its lightweight texture, transparent weave, and distinctive check-pattern patterns. Discussions during the visit

focused on the feasibility of integrating Eri silk — popularly known as “peace silk” due to its ethical and eco-friendly production process — with Kota Doria to develop a high-value fabric that blends luxury, comfort, durability, and heritage craftsmanship. Officials noted that the initiative has the potential to open new livelihood opportunities for artisans and weavers in both Rajasthan and the North Eastern states while significantly enhancing the value proposition of Indian handloom products in the global marketplace. During the visit to Kota, the delegation, accompanied by select fashion designers and representatives of the weaving community, called on Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla at his residence and briefed him on the proposed initiative. Birla appreciated the effort and stated that Kota Doria is not merely a fabric but a symbol of the identity, culture, and craftsmanship of the Had-

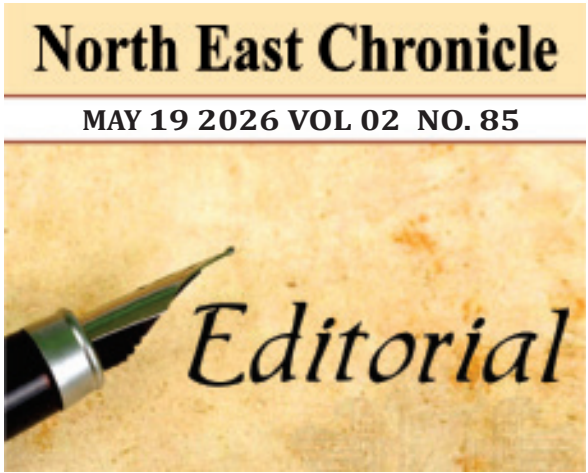
oti region. He emphasized that blending it with the North East’s Eri silk would create a new benchmark in India’s textile sector by bringing together two rich and diverse handloom traditions. He further observed that such collaborations would not only preserve traditional weaving practices but also generate sustainable economic opportunities for artisans, particularly women and rural weaving communities.

The DoNER Secretary stated that the initiative is envisioned as a model of collaborative textile innovation that integrates regional strengths to create globally competitive products rooted in Indian heritage. He added that the proposed fabric would be positioned as a premium product catering to high-end domestic and international buyers seeking sustainable, handcrafted, and culturally rich textiles. To institutionalize the collaboration, preparations are underway for signing a memorandum of

understanding (MoU) between the North Eastern Handicrafts and Handlooms Development Corporation (NEHHDC) and the District Industries Centre (DIC), Government of Rajasthan. The proposed MoU will facilitate cooperation in areas such as joint product and design development, skill enhancement and artisan training, technology support, branding, and market linkage initiatives. The collaboration is aligned with Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s transformative 5F Vision — Farm to Fibre, Fibre to Fabric, Fabric to Fashion, Fashion to Foreign — and the Make in India mission, showcasing how India’s diverse regional textile traditions can be integrated to create globally competitive handloom products while advancing the vision of “Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat” through cultural integration and economic empowerment of weavers and artisans across regions.

NSCN-IM alleges attacks on Naga villages

Kohima, May 18: The National Socialist Council of Nagalim (Isak-Muivah) (NSCN-IM) has alleged that Naga villages and civilians are facing repeated attacks amid the ongoing ethnic conflict in Manipur. The organisation accused Indian security forces of colluding with what it termed “Kuki narco-terrorists” and failing to protect Naga-inhabited areas. The allegations were made by NSCN-IM chairman Q. Tuccu while addressing the 75th Naga Plebiscite Day commemorative programme held at Hebron on May 16. During his speech, Tuccu alleged that Indian security forces were dismantling Naga defensive bunkers, killing Naga civilians and burning houses while allegedly providing logistical support to Kuki militants operating in Naga areas. Referring to recent violence in Manipur, he specifically mentioned alleged attacks on the Tangkhul Naga villages of Namlee, Wanglee and Choro, which he claimed were carried out by “Myanmar-based Kuki terrorists.” Tuccu questioned how armed groups from across the border were able to attack Naga villages and accused Indian security agencies of allowing such incidents to happen. The NSCN-IM further alleged that the Government of India was using Kuki armed groups as “proxy forces” against the Nagas, calling it a violation of ceasefire ground rules and indigenous rights protections. The statement comes amid heightened tensions following recent incidents of violence in Manipur, including attacks in several hill districts and the killing of church leaders. The NSCN-IM warned that attempts to encroach on what it described as “Naga ancestral lands” would be resisted. During the programme, Tuccu also reiterated the Naga political demand for recognition of Naga sovereignty and criticised the Government of India over delays in implementing the 2015 Framework Agreement signed between the Centre and the NSCN-IM. Commemorating the 75th anniversary of the 1951 Naga Plebiscite, he claimed that the plebiscite reflected the Naga people’s aspiration for self-determination and independence. He also urged Nagas to remain united and vigilant amid the current political and security situation. Meanwhile, the Thadou Inpi Manipur (TIM) has strongly objected to the identification of three slain church leaders as “Kuki,” asserting that the victims belonged to the Thadou community.



The Importance of Road Etiquette

Road safety depends not only on infrastructure and laws but also on everyday behaviour. Lack of lane discipline, unnecessary honking, reckless overtaking, and disregard for pedestrians contribute significantly to traffic chaos. Poor road etiquette increases stress, delays, and accident risks for everyone. Even well-de-

signed roads become unsafe when basic discipline is ignored. Awareness campaigns exist, but behavioural change remains limited without consistent enforcement and public responsibility. Respect on roads reflects respect for public life itself. Safer roads require both better systems and more responsible citizens.

Plaid Cymru has developed an inclusive nationalism

This month, Rhun ap Iorwerth, the leader of Plaid Cymru, created political history by winning the Senedd. Wales now has a progressive majority independent of Labour for the first time in its history. According to polls, Reform UK and Plaid were tied. Some of my Welsh friends were in a panic in the lead-up to the election. The fact that Reform came in second pleased them. I never thought Reform’s essentially English ethno-nationalism would be successful in Wales. The party appeared to believe that they could use the same strategies as the one next door. However, Reform UK lacks a narrative on what it means to be Welsh, in contrast to Plaid. An incident that occurred around the time of the Brexit referendum was brought to memory by Plaid’s triumph. A racist allegedly instructed a Muslim woman on a rail replacement bus from Cardiff to Newport to “speak English” a few days before the election, but another passenger pointed out that she was actually speaking Welsh. Some people at the time found it hard to believe that such overlapping identities could exist. However, as they did in

the Caerphilly byelection last year, voters in the May elections made a clear statement against the kind of politics that requires a stranger on a bus to “speak English.” Despite being a “nationalist” party, Plaid Cymru stands for an inclusive and varied Wales that is advancing its own sense of national identity in opposition to a growing wave of right-wing populism. To participate in the initiative, you are not required to speak Welsh. Even in places like Ebbw Vale where there have historically been few Welsh speakers, Plaid prevailed. This wasn’t always the case. Plaid used to stand for more of what is known as classic nationalism, which was based on a very narrow definition of Welshness and stemmed from attempts by English colonists to eliminate the language and culture. Although it didn’t always apply to the entire nation, that history is significant to many of us, especially the effect of second houses on small rural Welsh towns, which continues to worsen the housing issue. I was occasionally made to feel that I wasn’t “Welsh enough” because I wasn’t born in Gwynedd, where Welsh is frequent-

ly spoken. This is true even though I speak Welsh fluently, sing Welsh lullabies to my son, have ancestors who perished in the quarries that towered over my boyhood home, and have a name that is directly from the Mabinogion (12th-century Welsh prose tales).Some Wales residents believed that Plaid was a party that favored white native Welsh speakers. The party has spent the last ten years trying to overcome this image and adopt a more expansive civic nationalism that encompasses the struggle for social justice and self-determination for all Welsh citizens. In a 2015 interview, then-leader Leanne Wood stated, “I’ve been really clear about our project being a civic-based project for everybody who lives in Wales.” From a political standpoint, nationality, identity, and other similar issues don’t really matter, but everyone has a stake if they reside here. I believe that Wood, a socialist who studied Welsh as an adult, saw that Wales needed to present a new narrative about its national identity, one in which being Welsh isn’t about having two white Welsh parents or being able to pronounce every

word flawlessly. There are plenty of other perspectives on Welshness. In a fantastic film, journalist Seren Jones dispels some of the myths she frequently comes across about Wales and highlights that Cardiff has one of the oldest Black British populations in the United Kingdom. She argues for this alternate understanding of Welsh identity while releasing a wonderful torrent of “Wenglish,” the kind that could have once made a Plaid old guy blush. Even if you don’t use the language on a daily basis, the majority of Welsh people will have had some exposure to it. There is a push to encourage more students, and I anticipate that this is contributing to the opposition to reform. Speaking multiple languages has been linked to more accepting attitudes toward immigration. In contrast, Reform’s narrative is more akin to traditional nationalism, which is xenophobic, triumphalist, and constantly on the lookout for any outside danger. Its identity is derived from exclusion. Yulia Bond, a Caerphilly-based Ukrainian refugee, said last year that “Reform UK tried to create panic and hate with tactics used

not only in the UK, but by far-right political parties all over Europe and across the world.” The messaging they employed in Caerphilly lacked a sense of place. They had the impression that someone had copied a script from another nation and brought it into our country. Politics, according to Reform, is about who you aren’t rather than who you are. “The only ones who can provide an identity to the nation are its enemies,” as stated in Umberto Eco’s essay Ur-fascism. He continues, saying that “the followers must feel besieged.” It is difficult to find a more accurate description of Reform’s political philosophy.Plaid’s self-assured approach to Reform has proven motivating.

Labour failed to see that a new Wales was emerging around it because it has always been uneasy about Welshness and smug about its supremacy. In the meanwhile, Reform is attempting to give its political brand a distinctive “Welshness”; it remains to be seen if this is successful. Plaid must now continue to fend off the threat by rejecting notions of “invasion” and promoting inclusion and acceptance.

What happens when Reform’s views are normalized? A neighbour becomes hostile to another neighbour

For a brief while, look away from Westminster and the struggle to become the next prime minister and instead focus on the lives of immigrants and members of ethnic minorities in England who recently witnessed the May local elections turn many areas of their nation turquoise. Given that the Reform Party views these individuals as inferior human beings who pose a threat to the social cohesion of the areas in which they reside, how are they to be treated by their representatives? “Carnt [sic] believe amount of Nigerians in town... should melt them all down and fill in the pot holes,” according to a recently elected Reform council member. Richard Tice, the deputy leader of Reform, responded to the remark by saying that voters have already heard all of this “smearing and sneering.” Another Reform candidate tweeted that Africans have IQs “among the lowest in the world” and that Muslims “never coexist with others” and ought to be deported. Another said that Ash-

kenazi Jews were a “problem” who “caused the world massive misery” and that “the only solution” was to “remove the Muslims from our territory.” Where does one begin when it comes to Nigel Farage himself?

He is accused of being a racist abuser at school, singing Hitler Youth songs in jest, admiring Enoch Powell, believing that some Muslims are here “to take us over,” and being uncomfortable with people speaking different languages on public transportation. He has even blamed immigration for traffic congestion. However, a lot of this kind of discourse has turned into background noise, hasn’t it? Only a small portion of the decade-long political slump following Brexit. Regain control, halt the boats, and guard our borders. claims that because something wasn’t sung on the Last Night of the Proms, we are now ashamed of our culture and heritage. Black, Asian, and minority ethnic students were marginalized by university curricula. We’re not proud

enough of our flags, which is nonsense. The culture war and anti-immigration hysteria that today make up our mainstream political culture are nearly indistinguishable from reform proposals and talking points. A “who said it” test between Tory, Reform, and Labour may conceivably leave you perplexed. Tommy Robinson, whose second “unite the kingdom” demonstration took place in London over the weekend and who advocates for “national unity, free speech, and Christian values,” can even be included in this mix. However, the words that appear in our newspapers and on the radio have an impact. They influence the political opinions and ideas of those who, without a doubt, voted Reform and turned on their neighbors. Ethnic minorities are aware that the election of Reform candidates will not improve their situation; rather, it will make it worse. that identity politics is the only thing at the center of Reform’s political endeavor. that there is no

overarching plan or local economic objective to help people in a crisis caused by rising living expenses. Reform has pledged to eliminate any diversity positions in local government, reject plans to host asylum seekers in its districts, and reduce spending. The party will only succeed in fostering more mistrust, anxiety, and division since it will be as hindered by central government policies as any other. It will transform national worries about immigration into local worries about the presence of ethnic minorities in our towns. According to Farage, the number of pupils in Glasgow who use English as a second language amounts to the “cultural smashing” of the city.

As a result, Black and brown neighbors will now be suspicious, possibly even to the point of regulating the very languages they are permitted to speak. In terms of the cultural customs and public persona that minorities are permitted to exhibit, in order to avoid deviating from “Brit-

ishness,” According to Farage, the West Indies’ “shared history, shared culture, and shared religion” with the UK helped them assimilate more successfully. Regarding religious freedom, Farage has demanded that Muslim public prayer be outlawed, claiming that a Ramadan celebration in London earlier this year was “an open, deliberate, wilful attempt, not at the private observance of a different religion, but the attempt to overtake, intimidate and dominate our way of life.” In these situations, who will be exempt? Who is exempt from suspicion? To be able to call a place home, how long must you have lived there? The brown child born in the UK who speaks a language other than English to their friends and family (as I frequently do in the kind of conversations on public transportation that give Farage the creeps), the Black man whose family has lived here for generations, and the woman wearing a hijab who has applied for asylum are all portrayed as cultural smashers and

permanent outsiders unless they can remove the color from their skin and self-police their speech, dress, and culture. There has been a failure, an incapacity to recognize the seriousness of the situation. Politicians and the media have given the anti-immigrant right too much time and room to become mainstream. Concerns about immigration that were formerly seen to be genuine have become pretexts for discrimination. It is woke to bring up the racism that is at the core of this spreading politics. Reform will demand, “Listen, it’s about immigration, and no sneers or sneers will stop us from talking about it.” So let’s return to Westminster. Pretenders to Keir Starmer’s leadership are not the true threat.

The Reform party is getting closer to winning parliamentary seats in the upcoming election. The safety and dignity of ethnic minorities in the UK are at risk, not political careers. neighbors being treated like second-class people.

Austerity in the midst of the crisis in West Asia

In reaction to growing oil prices and unpredictability in West Asia, India has embarked on an austerity drive. The actions are intended to save fuel and shield the economy from future shocks.India’s demand for conservation and austerity is beginning to be seen as a wise and strategic response rather than a reason for panic as tensions in West Asia continue to rise and endanger the world’s energy supplies. Governments around the world are reevaluating their readiness due to rising crude oil prices, currency market volatility, and worries about shipping route interruptions. Early action is both strategically and economically important for India, which heavily relies on imported crude oil. In an effort to protect the nation from the cascading impacts of a protracted geopolitical crisis, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has urged residents to save fuel, cut back on needless travel, avoid excessive spending, and postpone non-essential imports. Instead of inciting panic, the goal is to promote a sense of shared responsibility and get the economy ready for potential instability in the coming months. By implementing austerity measures in his own public activities, the prime minister has reaffirmed this message. He has made it very evident that conservation starts at the top by cutting his convoy down to just two cars and promoting the wise use of

public funds. Setting a good example is especially crucial in uncertain times. The government’s plea gains credibility and public acceptance when people see that those in positions of power are prepared to reduce non-essential spending.India’s energy security architecture places a strong emphasis on West Asia. The Gulf region provides a significant portion of the nation’s needs for liquefied natural gas and crude oil. India’s import bill may be immediately impacted by any war escalation, production facility stoppage, or blockade of vital maritime routes. Particularly important is the Strait of Hormuz, which is traversed by a major amount of the world’s oil commerce. Transportation, fertilizers, industrial inputs, and domestic energy can all become more expensive if conflicts prevent tanker movement.When the rupee depreciates against the US dollar, the currency used to trade crude oil, the effects of rising oil prices worsen. India must spend more to purchase the same amount of oil when the rupee depreciates, which puts more strain on foreign exchange reserves. A persistent increase in energy prices can raise corporate expenses, reduce household purchasing power, and contribute to inflation. As fuel prices spread throughout supply chains, transportation becomes more expensive, manufacturing margins



decrease, and food prices may increase.The country’s import load is lessened with each litre of fuel saved. Reduced consumption preserves significant foreign exchange and reduces the need for imported petroleum.

The government’s request also includes cutting back on unnecessary international travel and delaying non-essential imports like gold and luxury items. The goal of these actions is to provide

foreign exchange priority for necessities including energy, medications, fertilizers, and defense. To protect itself against temporary disruptions, India has established strategic petroleum reserves and has sufficient supplies of LPG and crude oil.

During times of worldwide uncertainty, these stockpiles serve as a crucial safety net and contribute to supply continuity.Reserves do not, however, replace

responsible consumption. They are not meant to promote complacency, but rather to purchase time. A comprehensive approach to energy security must continue to include conservation. The word “austerity” frequently conjures up ideas of economic hardship and restriction. However, the suggested actions are optional and mild in the current situation.

These include taking pub-

lic transportation, carpooling, turning off lights that aren’t needed, cutting back on waste, and restricting discretionary expenditure. Millions of homes, businesses, and government buildings might save a substantial amount of money by implementing these sensible measures, which cause very little trouble. Public budgets are also affected by austerity. Reduced expenditure and gasoline use can help

keep inflation under control and ease the burden on government subsidies. This makes it possible to allocate more funds to welfare, infrastructure, healthcare, and education.The government can maintain investor confidence and macroeconomic stability by practicing budgetary restraint during times of external instability.

The economic history of India emphasizes the significance of taking prompt action during periods of external stress. Foreign exchange reserves dropped to dangerously low levels during the 1991 balance-of-payments crisis, forcing the nation to make difficult changes. The importance of preventive action has been acknowledged by succeeding governments. The intensity of exogenous shocks has frequently been lessened by prompt conservation and careful management. Calls for austerity, according to some opposition leaders, might make investors and customers uneasy. However, there is a big difference between preparedness and panic.Hoarding and speculating are the results of panic. Being prepared entails taking deliberate actions to increase resilience and lessen vulnerability. The administration is promoting prudence without inciting fear by advising moderation while reassuring the public that supplies are still plenty.

The current circumstances also present a chance to develop long-lasting

energy-saving practices. Both the economy and the environment can gain from increased use of public transportation, better fuel economy, and mindful spending.India can increase its commitment to sustainable development and lessen its long-term reliance on imported energy if these practices proliferate. The government is not the only entity responsible for ensuring economic stability.

Businesses, organizations, and citizens all have a part to play in the prudent use of resources. Combining errands into a single trip, delaying non-essential purchases, cutting back on electricity use, and promoting local goods are all small steps that can add up to a significant impact.India’s quest for austerity should be seen as a deliberate and proactive reaction to a turbulent world.

The nation is getting ready for potential difficulties by conserving gasoline, safeguarding foreign exchange, bolstering fiscal restraint, and promoting responsible consumption. The legitimacy of this strategy is strengthened by the Prime Minister’s choice to set an example. The actions show caution, self-control, and confidence rather than distress.Early and steady action is generally the greatest defense during uncertain times. Therefore, India’s resolve to tighten its belt is not only an economic need but also a positive strategic move.

Oil Shock OMCs need more fuel price hikes to offset losses as Brent surges to \$111

New Delhi: Crude prices continue to be the key concern for India at this juncture. With Brent Crude surging past the \$111/bbl mark and the Nymex rates also nearing \$110/bbl mark, the economic headwinds confronting the world’s third-largest crude importer are multi-fold. Petrol and diesel prices were increased after 4 years but Elara Capital believes that this may not be adequate to address the losses. They expect further hike in prices. As a result of the elevated crude prices, with Brent surging over 40% between February 28 and now, petrol and diesel prices have been increased by Rs 3/ litre. Though this is seen as offering some relief for oil marketing companies (OMCs), Elara Capital said that “price hikes are not enough to fully neutralise the current crude oil price shock”. This is because “OMCs are still losing around Rs 6.40/litre on diesel and Rs 8.10/litre on gasoline on an integrated basis”. As a result, the brokerage believes that India may see “further retail price hikes in the next few weeks”. According to a Elara Capital’s estimates, after the Rs 3/litre price hike, annualised integrated petrol and diesel losses

are expected to reduce from around Rs 1.42 lakh crore to Rs 1.07 lakh crore. This translates into a relief of nearly Rs 34,500 crore for the sector. Diesel’s gross margin losses narrowed from about Rs 27.5 per litre to Rs 25.2 per litre. After adjusting for refining crack benefits of around Rs 18.90 per litre, integrated diesel losses reduced to around Rs 6.4 per litre from Rs 8.80 per litre earlier. Annualised diesel-related losses are expected to decline from around Rs 92,300 crore to Rs 67,200 crore

Petrol-related losses may fall by nearly Rs 10,000 crore Retail gross margin losses on petrol declined from around Rs 15.5 per litre to Rs 13.7 per litre after the hike. After factoring in refining crack benefits of around Rs 5.60 per litre, integrated petrol losses reduced to about Rs 8.10 per litre from Rs 10 per litre earlier. Annualised petrol-related losses are estimated to decline from around Rs 49,300 crore to Rs 39,900 crore.Pain still there

However, Elara Capital estimates that, despite the price hike, companies are still losing around Rs 6.40 per litre on diesel and Rs 8.10 per litre on petrol, even after account-



ing for gains from refining margins and higher crude costs. The brokerage believes that diesel continues to be the largest earnings drag for OMCs, while relief on petrol remains incomplete.Elara also noted that every \$10 per barrel increase in crude oil prices could raise petrol and diesel losses by around Rs 6 per litre and LPG losses by about Rs 10.2 per kg. Although higher refining margins (GRMs) may

provide some support, they are unlikely to fully offset the losses from fuel sales.Elara Capital sees the fuel price hike after more than three years as a positive step. The brokerage reiterated that the move signifies that “India can absorb the first crude shock through excise/ tax buffers, but beyond \$110/bbl, the burden will gradually shift from the government to consumers and OMCs.”

Tata AIA posts record Rs 2,173 crore bonus payout for policyholders in FY26

Aizawl: Tata AIA Life Insurance has announced its highest-ever bonus payout of ₹2,173 crore for participating (Par) policyholders for the financial year ended March 31, 2026, registering an 18 per cent rise from ₹1,842 crore declared in the previous fiscal. The record payout will benefit more than 8.74 lakh policies, the company said on Sunday. The insurer stated that the bonus has been declared across eligible participating insurance plans, including Smart Value Income Plan, Shubh Flexi Income Plan, Shubh Maha Life, Diamond Savings Plan and Value Income Plan. Participating plans allow policyholders to share in the profits of the insurer through annual bonus declarations, depending on the performance of the participating fund.Kshitij Sharma,



Appointed Actuary at Tata AIA Life Insurance, said, “We are proud to announce yet another milestone year of record bonus payouts for our participating policyholders. This record bonus declaration reflects Tata AIA’s disciplined investment strategy, prudent fund management, and continued commitment to delivering long-term value to our policyholders.”The company’s Assets Under Management (AUM) grew 18 per cent year-on-year to ₹1,45,617crore as on March 31, 2026, reflecting

sustained business growth and fund performance.In Aizawl, demand for long-term savings-oriented insurance products has been rising steadily in the local market, particularly among salaried professionals and small business owners seeking stable returns and financial protection. Market observers noted that participating plans are increasingly attracting consumers in Aizawl due to their combination of life cover, disciplined savings and potential bonus payouts amid volatile investment conditions.

JP Morgan lowers gold price forecast amid weak investor demand



New Delhi: Brokerages remain constructive on gold’s long-term outlook despite recent price weakness, as rising bond yields, inflation concerns and a stronger dollar have pressured prices in the near term.While several banks have trimmed near-term forecasts due to softer investor demand and elevated rate expectations, most analysts still expect prices to recover through 2026. JP Morgan lowered its 2026 average gold price forecast to \$5,243 per ounce from \$5,708, citing softer near-term demand for the metal as investor client interest has “dried to a trickle.”“This quietness shows through in stagnant activity and demand metrics. COMEX aggregate gold futures open interest and volume have remained depressed, net Managed Money futures open interest has stagnated at low levels and ETF flows have been light,” analysts at the bank said in a note dated Sunday. “We retain our bullish medium-term outlook and forecast that after the immense energy and inflation

uncertainty clears, gold demand from investors and central banks will again re-intensify over 2H26.” Generale 2026 26, 2026Morgan \$4,600 Bull case is \$5,700 for JanuaryStanley second half of 2026 23, 2026Goldman - \$5,400 by year-end 2026 JanuarySachs 22, 2026Citi \$5,000 Raises 0-3 month price JanuaryResearch target to HSBC \$4,587 \$4,450 by year-end 2026 January 8,2026ANZ \$4,445 \$4,400 by year-end and Octobe\$4,600 by June 2026 16, 2025Bank of \$4,438 2026 gold outlook raised OctoberAmerica to \$5,000 13, 2025Standard \$4,488 - OctobeChartered 13, 2025 The downgrade comes after ANZ also on Friday lowered its year-end target price for gold to \$5,600 as inflation expectations, higher as rising oil prices stoke concerns around inflation and higher-for-longer interest rates by the Federal Reserve. Prices earlier in the day hit their lowest since March 30 as a global bond rout deepened on mounting inflation fears.

West Asia war: Mkts log best weekly gain in over 5 years on Iran-US truce

BSE-listed firms rose by Rs 6.4

New Delhi: Domestic equities rallied on Friday, logging their best weekly gain in more than five years, as the United States-Iran ceasefire — although tentative — helped improved investor sentiment and eased concern over disruption in oil prices.

The Sensex and Nifty 50, the benchmark indices, were back in the black after remaining in the red for the previous six weeks. On Friday, the broader market Nifty Smallcap 100 rose 1.65 per cent and the Nifty Midcap 100 index went up 1.5 per cent, taking their weekly gain beyond 7.5 per cent.

All Nifty sectoral indices ended the week in the black. This was led by Nifty Realty, which surged 13 per cent, and Nifty Financial Services, which gained 10.8 per cent. Shriram Finance (up 15.2 per cent) and Adani Enterprises (up 13.8 per cent) emerged as the top Nifty gainers for the week.

The Nifty is witnessing a steady recovery, and indications favour a gradual rise towards 24,300-24,700. A further cooloff in the volatility index, India VIX, which is now at 19, is adding to market comfort. Traders should maintain a positive yet cautious stance until the Nifty decisively holds above the key level of 23,500,” said Ajit Mishra, senior vice-president (research), Religare Broking. The Sensex closed at 77,550, up 919 points, or an increase of 1.2 per cent, while the Nifty 50 ended at 24,051, gaining 276 points, which too is a spike of 1.2 per cent For the week, the Sensex advanced 5.8 per cent and the Nifty 5.9 per cent — their best weekly performance since February 5, 2021. The market capitalisation of the BSE-listed firms rose on Friday by ₹6.4 trillion to ₹451.2 trillion (\$4.87 trillion), taking the weekly increase to ₹28.9 trillion. Investor confidence strengthened after the



temporary ceasefire announced earlier in the week triggered a sharp decline in oil prices. Brent crude fell about 12 per cent during the week — its steepest drop since the week ended June 27, 2025 — and was trading at \$93.67 a barrel on Friday.The decline offered relief to investors, who were worried about the inflationary impact of elevated energy prices.Higher prices of crude oil typically weigh on India’s growth and corporate earnings, given the country’s heavy dependence on oil imports. The Strait of Hormuz remained shut on Friday while Israel exchanged fire with Hezbollah in Lebanon.The United States (US) and Iran accused each other of violating the ceasefire.“If oil prices keep falling, the relief rally in markets could continue because equities are almost one-to-one correlated with oil prices right now. However, given the ongoing hostilities in West Asia, it is unlikely that oil prices will keep declining significantly, which means the relief rally could prove short-lived,” said Saurabh Mukherjea, founder and chief investment officer, Marcellus Investment Managers.Market breadth remained

strong, with 3,325 stocks advancing and 986 declining.Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) during the day were net buyers of stocks, purchasing equities worth ₹672 crore, with Friday being the first net-positive day in terms of FPI flows since the war began.Sustained improvement in global risk sentiment is unlikely until hostilities fully cease and the Strait of Hormuz reopens.Investors will monitor the outcome of the peace talks in Islamabad between the US and Iran, alongside the progress of the domestic-earnings season, which began this week.Management commentary on the impact of the conflict on corporate profitability will be in focus.“If oil prices keep falling, the relief rally in markets could continue because equities are almost one-to-one correlated with oil prices right now. However, given the ongoing hostilities in West Asia, it is unlikely that oil prices will keep declining significantly, which means the relief rally could prove short-lived,” said Saurabh Mukherjea, founder and chief investment officer.

Rupee hits all-time low of 96.33; 2% crude rally, rising US yields trigger fresh selloff

New Delhi: The rupee opened at 96.17 per dollar on Monday, compared to Friday’s close of 95.97, before touching an all-time low of 96.20 in early trade. It was last quoted at 96.18, down 0.2% on the day, eclipsing its previous record of 96.1350. High crude oil prices is seen as a key concern for the currency market. Additionally, global bond yields, especially US yields, are also soaring, denting risk appetite and deepening economic headwinds confronting the world’s third-largest crude importer. This marks the fifth straight session in which the currency has set a new all-time low. Since the Iran conflict began in late February, the rupee has declined 5.5%. It has also been the worst-performing currency in Asia in 2026. Possible RBI intervention on Friday

The Reserve Bank of India is believed to have intervened in the foreign exchange market on Friday after the rupee slipped past 96 per dollar, according to traders. Market participants expect the central bank to continue managing excessive volatility rather than defending a specific level. Indian equity benchmarks fell sharply

at Monday’s open as escalating tensions in the Middle East drove oil prices to a two-week high and sent the rupee to an all-time low, compounding an already fragile macroeconomic outlook for Asia’s third-largest economy. The immediate trigger was a drone attack on a nuclear power plant in the United Arab Emirates, which rattled energy markets and pushed Brent crude above \$112 a barrel. US President Donald Trump added to unease by warning that “the clock is ticking” for Iran, signalling that diplomatic efforts to end the conflict have made little headway. Other Asian markets fell 0.8% in early trade.Rising US yields add to pressureThe selloff in the rupee and equities was not driven by oil alone. The benchmark 10-year US Treasury yield climbed to 4.625%, extending a run of gains as investors recalibrated expectations around inflation and the pace of monetary tightening in the United States. Higher real yields in the US reduce the relative attractiveness of emerging-market assets, prompting dollar demand and currency weakness across the region, as per Reuters. India’s domestic



bond market ha moved in tandem. The benchmark 10-year government bond yield rose last week as markets began pricing in the inflationary impact of expensive crude on the fiscal and current account positions.Macro concerns mountEconomists have flagged that if oil prices remain at current levels, the consequences for India’s macroeconomic fundamentals could

be significant. Elevated crude raises imported inflation, widens the current account deficit, and complicates the fiscal arithmetic for a government that has limited room to absorb an extended energy shock.Concerns around potential disruptions to the Strait of Hormuz have added another layer of uncertainty for markets already wary of a prolonged conflict.

PSU banks step up hiring in cyber security, tech

New Delhi: As banks increasingly deploy artificial intelligence(AI) to enhance efficiencies, improve customer service and also combat cyber risks, they are strengthening their IT systems and hiring requisite talent. State Bank of India Chairman C S Setty said recently the bank had made large-scale IT recruitments last year and would look to fill more posts. He added some mid-level specialised positions, particularly in the cybersecurity space, would be filled this year.Bank of Baroda MD & CEO Debadatta Chand told FE in an interview, the bank was hiring in big numbers for the IT team to meet the challenging tech landscape, both in terms of cybersecurity and the ability to offer the best technology to customers. “We have said we would be hiring more than 250 people to augment the tech capability,” Chand said. BarodaSun Technologies (BSTL), a whol-



ly-owned subsidiary of the bank, will be doing captive business with the bank and will be investing in emerging technology. “We are working on augmenting our capability We have set aside a minimum of 10% of the operating profit for tech spend, and we need to hike that to 15%,” Chand said. Banks’ increased focus on cybersecurity follows Fi-

nance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman’s flagging of risks tied to Anthropic’s Claude AI model in a meeting with banks last month. The ministry also urged banks to adopt proactive measures against emerging risks from AI to safeguard their systems, data, and customers’ money. On emerging Mythos-related risks.

UK’s next ambassador to Japan may be called to give evidence

Washington: The UK’s next ambassador to Japan could be called to give evidence over the decision to award Peter Mandelson security clearance against the advice of vetting officials. Corin Robertson was the Foreign Office’s (FCDO) chief operating officer when she was involved in the decision in late January 2025 to grant Mandelson clearance, according to evidence given to MPs. Robertson, who is due to take up her post in Tokyo in August, is the only official among three top civil servants involved in the decision yet to be questioned by parliament.

A source on the foreign affairs select committee, which is investigating Mandelson’s appointment as ambassador to the US, said it would consider this week whether to call Robertson to give evidence. She could be asked to give evidence verbally, or respond to questions in writing. The committee is nearing the end of its investigation into Mandelson’s appointment, but it is expected to wait until the release of further documents about the process, under the so-called humble address system, before reaching any final conclusions.

The decision to grant Mandelson clearance was made by Olly Robbins, the FCDO’s most senior civil servant. Robbins was sacked by Keir Starmer three weeks ago after the Guardian revealed he had granted Mandelson clearance despite the vetting agency recommending his clearance be denied. Starmer said Robbins’s failure to inform him was “unforgivable” and he was “furious” about what had happened. Robbins has insisted he was right not to divulge to ministers information from the vetting process. Robbins gave evidence last month. The FCDO’s former head of security, Ian Collard, who was also involved in the decision, did not appear in front of the committee but responded to questions via a letter from the Foreign Office. Robbins and Collard said they had not read Mandelson’s vetting summary document produced by United Kingdom Security Vetting (UKSV), relying instead on verbal briefings about its contents. Collard’s evidence highlighted Robertson’s role in the decision.

Her appearance before the committee could help resolve some unanswered questions, as MPs struggle to piece together events, which have been hampered by lack of any written records or audit-trails recording the Foreign Office’s decision making in relation to Mandelson’s vetting.

Robbins and Collard relied on recollections of conversations and briefings which appear to have not been minuted. Robertson could be asked to corroborate these discussions.

It is now understood the UKSV advised Collard’s department on 29 January that there was “high” concern about Mandelson and security clearance should be “denied”.

However, Starmer had already confirmed Mandelson as his pick for ambassador, with Robbins testifying there was “pressure” to get him to Washington. Collard said he initially spoke about Mandelson’s vetting with Robertson, only talking to Robbins after he briefed her. Collard told MPs, in evidence submitted on his behalf by the FCDO, that Robertson agreed “the risks could be mitigated” and Collard should take Mandelson’s case to Robbins for a “final decision”. It is unclear whether Robertson reviewed the contents of Mandelson’s vetting file or whether she too relied on an oral briefing based on notes taken by Collard, who had



in turn been orally briefed. The Cabinet Office permanent secretary, Cat Little, testified that “anyone within the security chain” could request to see vetting information “if they feel it is necessary.”

Robbins and Collard also claimed UKSV had described Mandelson’s case as “borderline”, although there has been no publicly-released confirming that, and no other official who has seen the file has described it that way. If called before the committee, Robertson could face questions about whether she too recalls being told the case was “borderline” and if what the evidence was for that.

After Robbins’ decision to give Mandelson security clearance, Collard sent an email to Robertson and one of Robbins’s close aides.

According to evidence heard by MPs, the email noted Robbins’s decision and mitigations, but did not set out the risks identified by UKSV. It has been provided to the Cabinet Office, which is collating documents to be released to the public under the terms of the humble address, a parliamentary motion passed in February requiring the release of “all papers” relating to Mandelson’s appointment. Robertson may be called to explain why Robbins and Collins sought to access copies of Mandelson’s vetting file in September 2025, after Mandelson was withdrawn from office. Neither Robbins or Collard have given an explanation for why they requested to see the file at that stage, despite not reviewing the document seven months earlier when giving Mandelson clearance. Robertson, via the FCDO, did not respond to requests for comment.

The latest tranche of documents released under the humble address is due to be published by the government in the coming weeks. However there are growing concerns the files will be incomplete or censored.

On Friday, the intelligence and security committee, a parliamentary group of MPs and peers which is reviewing the most sensitive Mandelson documents before their release under the humble address, criticised the government for withholding his vetting file and applying and applying redactions “far too broadly”.

Mali’s forces target rebel alliance fight

Washington: Mali’s armed forces, supported by Russian mercenaries, have launched airstrikes targeting a rebel alliance of Islamist extremists and Tuareg separatists as the ruling junta struggles to maintain its hold on power in the unstable west African country. Earlier this week warplanes targeted the key northern town of Kidal, which was lost when the rebels launched a surprise offensive across much of Mali in late April. Elsewhere, Russian-piloted and supplied military helicopters protected convoys or airlifted supplies to remote outposts where Mali’s army has mounted as yet ineffective efforts to reimpose government authority. The rebel offensive targeted strategic towns, government forces and their Russian auxiliaries with ambushes, car bombs, drones and raids, inflicting significant casualties. Mali’s defence minister, Sadio Camara, died in a suicide attack on his residence in the garrison town of Kati, 9 miles (15km) north-west of the capital, Bamako, and the head of military intelligence was killed. Other attacks hit Mali’s international airport, while rebels seized control of Kidal after soldiers fled and a force of Russian mercenaries surrendered. The defeat reversed a key symbolic victory won by the junta in Mali three years ago. Nina Wilén, the Africa director at the Egmont Institute, an international relations thinktank in Brussels, said the ruling military junta had shown some resilience after being badly shaken by the wave of rebel attacks. “They are fighting back,” she said. “There has not been a mutiny or counter-coup. That doesn’t mean it won’t happen but ... they are still fighting and that is something to note.” But government forces have so far failed to retake much of the territory lost last month, despite the support of between 2,000 and 2,500 Russian mercenaries first dispatched to Mali, a former French colony, by the Kremlin in 2021. Witnesses said the government forces’ airstrikes on Kidal had destroyed only a house near an old market and left a crater inside the extensive courtyard of the governor’s office. The rebel coalition, which unites the al-Qaida-linked

group Jama’at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) with the Tuareg-dominated rebel group Azawad Liberation Front (FLA), has continued its own military operations, striking dozens of military posts in the centre and north of Mali and enforcing a strict blockade on Bamako. During a press conference in Bamako last week, the Malian army commander, Djibrilla Maiga, claimed at least two major routes out of the capital remained open and Malian forces had “neutralised” several hundred “terrorists” since the April attacks. In addition to killing Camara by driving a car laden with explosives into his residence, the rebels last month targeted the home of Assimi Goïta, the leader of the government which took power after coups in 2020 and 2021. Hundreds of civilians have died in recent weeks, mostly in attacks against villages in the central Mopti region claimed by JNIM, where the dead included many members of pro-government self-defence forces. A spokesperson for JNIM said the villages had been targeted after breaking agreements made with the group to offer support and to avoid any co-operation with Mali’s authorities. Wilén said the attacks were a reminder that despite recent efforts to improve its image, JNIM remained a “terrorist organisation and violent extremists”. A historically nomadic people, Tuaregs – who are spread across Mali, Niger, Algeria, Libya and Burkina Faso – have waged an armed struggle for decades against marginalisation. Islamic militancy has surged across the Sahel over the last 20 years, fuelled by bitter competition over scant resources, sectarian tensions, decades of conflict that have left huge numbers of weapons, and the failure of governments to provide basic services or security. Last year nearly 70% of deaths from terrorism globally occurred in only five countries, three of which were in the Sahel. Analysts said a fuel blockade imposed by JNIM last year caused severe problems for the junta, bringing it close to collapse, and the new blockade was “throttling” the capital. The city is under tight curfew and a wave of arrests has been reported.

Trump says Islamic State ‘second in command’ killed by US and Nigerian forces

London: Donald Trump has said US and Nigerian forces killed the “second in command” global leader of the Islamic State “Tonight, at my direction, brave American forces and the Armed Forces of Nigeria flawlessly executed a meticulously planned and very complex mission to eliminate the most active terrorist in the world from the battlefield,” the US president said on his Truth Social platform on Friday. “Abu-Bilal al-Minuki, second in command of ISIS globally, thought he could hide in Africa, but little did he know we had sources who kept us informed on what he was doing,” Trump added. Al-Minuki had been placed under US sanctions in 2023 for ties to the Islamic State group. “He will no longer terrorize the people of Africa, or help plan operations to target Americans,” Trump said. “With his removal, ISIS’s global operation is greatly diminished.” Trump thanked the government of Nigeria for its “partnership” on the operation, while not disclosing exactly where it took place or the form of attack involved. Al-Minuki, a Nigerian national, was designated as a “specially designated global terrorist” by the former Biden administration in 2023, according to the US federal register. At the time the state department called him a Sahel-based IS senior leader and part of its general directorate of provinces, the group’s administrative body that provides “operational guidance

and funding around the world”. Trump has previously accused Nigeria of failing to protect Christians from Islamist militants in the north-west. Nigeria denies discriminating against any religion, saying its security forces target armed groups that attack both Christians and Muslims. The US carried out strikes targeting Islamic State-linked militants in Nigeria in December. Since then, Washington has deployed drones and 200 troops to provide training and intelligence support to the Nigerian military against Islamic State and al Qaeda-linked insurgencies that are spreading across west Africa. The US forces were operating in a strictly non-combat role, Nigerian military officials said earlier this year. US president calls Abu-Bilal al-Minuki ‘most active terrorist in the world’ and says he was eliminated in ‘very complex mission’ a joint-operation. Abu-Bilal al-Minuki was described by US President Donald Trump as the “second in command of ISIS globally” and “the most active terrorist in the world”. has radically shifted in recent years, with around 90% of its attacks now taking place in sub-Saharan Africa. Its Nigeria-based branch is by far the most active. Nigerian President Bola Tinubu said the two countries had carried out a “daring joint operation that dealt a heavy blow” to IS. Al-Minuki was declared a Specially Designated Global Terrorist by Washington in 2023.

UAE blames Iran or proxies for strike nuclear plant, as Trump tells Tehran

Washington: The United Arab Emirates has blamed a fire near its nuclear power plant on a drone launched by Iran or one of its proxies in what the UAE called a “dangerous escalation”.

The fire was just outside the Barakah nuclear plant and caused no injuries or radiation alerts, with the emirate’s nuclear regulator saying there was no radioactive leak or risk to the public.

But it came at an extremely tense moment in the sixth week of a ceasefire in the Iran war, with peace talks stalled and Donald Trump voicing impatience at the deadlock. “For Iran, the Clock is Ticking, and they better get moving, FAST, or there won’t be anything left of them. TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE!” the US president wrote on his Truth Social site.

According to Axios, Trump met national security advisers on Saturday at his golf course in Virginia and is due to meet his national security team on Tuesday to discuss options. Trump also spoke to Benjamin Netanyahu before an Israeli security cabinet meeting to discuss Iran, Lebanon and Gaza, amid widespread speculation in Israel that the Iran war will restart in the absence of signs of compromise. According to state media, the UAE foreign minister, Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, held talks with other states in the region, including Saudi Arabia with which it has had a strained relationship recently. Riyadh condemned the attack. The minister also informed the director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Rafael Grossi, of the details of the drone strike. He told Grossi that his country



had the full right to respond to such “terrorist attacks”. The IAEA said in a social media post that Grossi expressed “grave concern about the incident and says military activity that threatens nuclear safety is unacceptable”. The UAE is reported to have retaliated for earlier Iranian attacks on its oil infrastructure with airstrikes on Iranian facilities. It has tightened its partnership with Israel over the course of the war and has been the most hawkish of the Gulf states over military action against Iran.

The UAE’s defence ministry said the drone that targeted the Barakah plant was one of three that “entered the country from the western border direction”.

It said the unmanned aircraft had hit “an elec-

trical generator outside the inner perimeter of the Barakah nuclear power plant in the Al Dhafra area”. “Investigations are ongoing to determine the source of the attacks, and updates will be disclosed upon completion of the investigations,” the ministry added. Anwar Gargash, an Emirati presidential adviser, made clear that he believed Iran or a regional proxy were the perpetrators. “The terrorist targeting of the Barakah clean nuclear power plant, whether carried out by the principal perpetrator or through one of its agents, represents a dangerous escalation,” Gargash wrote on X. Gargash called the incident “a dark scene that violates all international laws and norms”, and accused those responsible of having a disregard for civilian lives.

WHO says Ebola outbreak in DRC and Uganda is ‘emergency’ of international concern

Africa: An Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda is a “public health emergency of international concern”, the World Health Organization has said.

The WHO made its declaration on Sunday after 88 deaths and more than 300 suspected cases linked to the outbreak of the Bundibugyo virus, prompting Africa’s top health official to say he was “on panic mode”. Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the director general of the WHO, announced the decision before convening a formal emergency committee at the organisation. Experts said the speed was likely to reflect the gravity of the situation. The Bundibugyo virus is one of three strains that can cause Ebola virus disease, and the least common. There are no approved vaccines or treatments for the strain, or specific tests. Ebola is a highly contagious disease, spread via bodily fluids such as blood and vomit. It has

a high fatality rate, particularly in low-resourced settings that are unable to provide the supportive care typically available in the intensive care units of a high-income country. Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) announced the outbreak publicly on Friday, but said it was not yet clear when it had begun. It is convening experts and likely to announce a continental public health emergency in the coming days. Dr Jean Kaseya, the director general of Africa CDC, told Sky News: “Currently, I’m on panic mode because people are dying. I don’t have medicines. I don’t have [a] vaccine to support countries.” He said the outbreak pointed to the need for vaccine and medicine manufacturing capacity on the continent, describing it as an “equity issue” and warning: “Western countries, they don’t understand that when Africa is affected, they are also at risk because people are flying every day.

Kaseya was due to be in Geneva this week for meetings at the annual World Health Assembly, but said he would return to Africa tomorrow in order to support the response. It said that the signs, however, “all point towards a potentially much larger outbreak than what is currently being detected and reported, with significant local and regional risk of spread”.

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said on Sunday it was supporting interagency partners who were coordinating the safe withdrawal of a small number of Americans directly affected by the outbreak.

He said officials were in talks with companies who had potential tests, vaccines and treatments at an early stage of development, to see whether any could be safely used or trialled during the outbreak – expressing a hope that some would become available in the “coming weeks” Kaseya stressed the importance of basic infection control measures

such as gloves and handwashing at an earlier press briefing, although officials said many informal health facilities in the affected regions may have limited supplies of that equipment. There have been 80 suspected deaths, eight laboratory-confirmed cases and 246 suspected cases in the DRC’s Ituri province, which is in the east of the country, bordering Uganda and South Sudan, and about five days’ travel from the capital. Two cases, including one death, have also been reported in Uganda’s capital, Kampala, apparently in people who had travelled from the DRC. A suspected case in the DRC’s capital, Kinshasa, had been previously reported, but the WHO later said the individual had “tested negative for Bundibugyo virus on confirmatory testing”. There were “significant uncertainties as to the true number of infected persons and geographic spread associated with this event at the present time”, the WHO said.

Chiranjeevi, at the age of 70 captivates the internet with his energetic workout regimen



Renowned actor Chiranjeevi has provided fans with an insight into his rigorous fitness routine as he gears up for his forthcoming film Mega 158, which is directed by Bobby Kolli. The actor posted a vigorous workout video, highlighting his commitment and physical transformation in preparation for the project. In the 52-second clip, Chiranjeevi is seen powering

through a series of challenging gym exercises with remarkable energy and focus. From rope drills to strength training routines, the actor appears fully committed to building stamina and muscle strength for his on-screen role. The video highlights his upper-body focused training, where he can be seen working with dumbbells

and barbells to enhance muscle strength and definition in his arms, shoulders, and chest. He also incorporates resistance band exercises aimed at improving flexibility, stability, and overall strength, particularly as part of recovery and conditioning following a minor shoulder surgery. Additionally, Chiranjeevi is seen using cable machines and pulley systems

for controlled resistance workouts that help with precise muscle engagement and upper-body conditioning. The routine reflects a well-structured fitness plan designed to improve endurance, power, and agility. The actor's intense training session offers a glimpse into his preparation for the film, underlining his commitment to achieving a high-energy, action-ready "mass look" for Mega 158. How internet reacted His clip quickly garnered attention online, with fans flooding the comments section with praise for his discipline and energy. "The dedication at this age is next level," one user wrote. Another commented, "Thy name is Discipline and Hardwork! Always an inspiration." A third simply summed up the sentiment, saying, "Boss hitting the gym hard." "Legend never rests. At 70, you're out here setting the bar higher than most in their 30s. Boss! This level of dedication is pure inspiration," read another comment. Many were also stunned by his fitness at this age, with one user writing, "Can't believe he is 70 years old," while another added, "You are the inspiration to the youth."

The Tamil model captivated the online with her first appearance at Cannes



The red carpet at the 79th Cannes Film Festival has discovered its latest muse. Tabitha Mary, a model and content creator of Tamil descent, is attracting significant attention on social media after her stunning debut. With a look that combined high-fashion sophistication and genuine, natural allure, Tabitha did not merely walk the carpet — she commanded it. Tabitha Mary's metallic glamour at Cannes 2026 Tabitha turned heads at Cannes 2026 in a liquid-silver gown by Khanum's, a British-Bangladeshi brand known for its fusion of heritage and modern silhouettes. The choice of a South Asian-owned brand for her debut was a poignant nod to her roots, blending the craftsmanship of the diaspora with the prestige of the world's most famous film festival. The silver gown featured a Grecian-inspired one-shoulder neckline

that highlighted Tabitha's frame. Intricate ruching across the bodice created a shimmering, sculptural effect. The bold pearl-embellished waistline transitioned into a fluid, floor-length skirt that moved like water as Tabitha walked Cannes 2026 red carpet. Redefining beauty standards What resonated most with social media users wasn't just the dress, but Tabitha's natural beauty. With her deep, radiant skin tone and cascading black waves, she looked every bit the cinematic lead. Her glam was kept sophisticated and dewy, highlighting her features rather than masking them — a powerful statement for a woman who has spoken openly about overcoming colourism. The response on Instagram was nothing short of a frenzy. After Tabitha posted a video of her walk on Instagram, the comments section be-

came a testament to her impact: "The gasp I gasped," one Instagram user wrote, while another added, "This is actual perfection, wow." Multiple Instagram followers urged talent scouts to take notice, with comments like "Need to get you in a movie asap" and "Drop dead beautiful." The sentiment was clear: the world wants more of her. From advertising to the global stage Tabitha's journey from a 2018 advertising passion project to the Cannes red carpet is a modern-day success story. What started as a creative outlet during the Covid-19 lockdown has blossomed into a platform for representation. As she continues to live her 'best life' in the South of France, Tabitha Mary isn't just representing the Tamil community; she is setting a new, inclusive gold standard for what a global fashion icon looks like in 2026.

What impact does stress have on our bodies

You awaken later than intended, resulting in a hurried scramble to organize everything before the school run. As you wait for the toaster, you foolishly check your phone. An incident has occurred, and your timeline is filled with an overwhelming array of the most outrageous opinions conceivable. One of your children has misplaced their shoes in an inexplicable location, and there is an envelope on your doormat reprimanding you for driving in a bus lane. You're undeniably stressed, and your body's likely to respond by ramping up the same biological systems that evolved to deal with inter-tribe disputes and mammoth attacks. But is there a downside to being stressed – and having these systems switched on – all the time? Take a calming breath, and let's dig into the science. "The most immediate effect we see in a stressful situation is a surge of adrenaline causing an increase in heart rate, blood pressure and breathing," says Prof Kavita Vedhara, a specialist in stress and behavioural medicine at Cardiff University. "This is your fight-or-flight response, and it's designed to prepare you to address the challenge you are facing." "Again, this is very useful in supporting the fight-flight response because it regulates blood pressure, suppresses inflammation and increases the availability of blood sugars to increase energy," says Vedhara. This was all very useful centuries ago when most of what life threw at us was physical challenges. But now it's fairly rare that we need to literally run away from – or physically fight – the source of our stress, and very easy for us to start worrying about someone being mean to us on the internet, or spend hours ruminating on an argument with our partner. The problem with this, broadly speaking, is that when your body diverts all its resources to fight or flight, it's moving them away from areas such as digestion, repair and the immune system (sometimes referred to as the rest-and-digest systems). This is fine if it happens occasionally – it's how we've evolved to operate – but if we're chronically stressed, the body never gets time to catch up. "Perhaps the most well-known issue associated with chronic stress is poorer immune function, which can increase risk of infections, make vaccines work less

well, impair wound healing, and so on," says Vedhara. "But chronic stress has also been shown to increase the risk of obesity, depressive illness and progression of neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's." Another issue is that all of this can create an unhealthy feedback loop. "Because of the complex physiological nature of the stress response, we often experience a range of changes in the body," says Dr Jo Daniels, a senior lecturer in psychology at the University of Bath. "This in itself can become alarming for some people: why is my heart beating so fast? This can then trigger increased attention to what are essentially normal bodily variations, which effectively amplifies those physiological sensations, adding another layer of stress and anxiety. "When we're in a stress response, we're hypervigilant, so we're more likely to consider normal variations in our bodily sensations to be threatening – and because we are flooded with stress hormones and we are using that ancient part of our brains that is programmed for survival, our decision-making is also likely to be impaired, so we might respond in ways that are unhelpful." "If you're feeling a little on edge, for instance, perhaps you won't go out, because it feels like your body is saying, 'Something's going on here that we need to protect ourselves against'." How badly stressed – and how frequently – do you have to be for all of this to be a concern? This is a question scientists are still working on. "It's an elastic system – it's designed to respond and recover," says Vedhara. "How bad is it genuinely? It's certainly true that the experience of stress has such wide-ranging effects on our physiology that there is potential for it to take a very real toll on our health and wellbeing – but that's only true for long-term and enduring stressors." One near certainty is that more challenging lifestyle factors make stress more of a threat. In a landmark study in the 90s, for instance, researchers recruited almost 400 healthy volunteers, exposed them to the common cold and found that being stressed was heavily correlated with a tendency to become ill. Older adults, dealing with an immune system that's already declining, might see worse effects from being chron-



ically stressed than people in middle age. But a complicating factor is that we seem to differ hugely in our ability to tolerate stress. "A lot depends on your life experiences," says Daniels. "People who have been affected by trauma might have a lower threshold for stress response – while other people seem to seek out stressful careers and thrive in them. It is also influenced by learned resilience and ability to manage and respond to stress – though over the long term, as we saw during the Covid-19 pandemic, everyone has their limit." So what can you do to get better at managing stress? One of the most evidence-backed options, perhaps surprisingly, really is learning to just stop, take a moment and slow your breathing. "When people are stressed or anxious, they tend to breathe in a more shallow and rapid way, which reinforces the threat response, keeping the physiological loop going,"

says Daniels. "If you breathe slowly, you're giving your brain the message that everything is OK, you are safe – essentially inducing the relaxation response. So something as simple as regulated breathing really can make a difference and head stress off at the pass. The same is true for exercise, which can help reduce the excess adrenaline buildup caused by high-stress responses." It's important to understand that this is most useful in acute (ie, temporary) stress situations – serious and disabling stress can't be solved by just having a breather. If the stress is more prolonged and frequent, another option is evidence-based psychological therapies including cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT). "When stressed and overwhelmed, we often jump to thoughts like, 'I can't cope with this,'" says Daniels. "But is this true? Thoughts are not facts. A helpful strategy can be to sit down and assess the evi-

dence – have you coped before? And with worse? Can you survive the worst-case scenario if you are late for school drop-off and forgot to feed the cat? It can also be useful to stop or phase out coping strategies that aren't helpful and contribute to the problem – for example, some people tend to work longer or harder to try to solve a work-related problem, which is likely to contribute to increased stress over time." With mindfulness-based stress reduction techniques, the focus is different: you're taught skills to enable you to step back from unhelpful thoughts rather than challenge them. One option is to experiment with both, depending on the nature of what it is that's stressing you out: negative thinking patterns and unhelpful coping strategies are often best tackled with CBT, while mindfulness-based stress reduction might be better for coping with the unavoidable.

The best thing to do, if you're concerned that you are suffering from high levels of stress all the time, is to understand and address the things that are causing it: this might be as simple as not going on social media first thing in the morning, or as difficult as changing your job or having difficult conversations with your family. "Catch your stress response early, and you have a good chance of reversing it using simpler strategies – but for chronic stress, modifications to lifestyle, accessing social support and developing helpful coping skills are key," says Daniels. "I would suggest people seek help when they are experiencing stress most or all of the time, or if they themselves are concerned about their stress levels." And remember: while you can't always control the mammoths charging at you, you can control how you respond to them.

ENTERTAINMENT

Barbra Streisand withdraws from Cannes 2026 closing ceremony after injury

Agency: There was a sense of nostalgia around this year's Cannes Film Festival as cinema lovers looked forward to seeing one of Hollywood's most iconic stars make a rare appearance. But just days before the closing ceremony, plans changed unexpectedly, leaving fans disappointed yet understanding.

Legendary singer and actor Barbra Streisand has confirmed that she will not attend the closing ceremony of the 79th Cannes Film Festival



after suffering a knee injury. The festival was set to honour

her with an honorary Palme d'Or, marking what would

have been her first-ever appearance at Cannes. Despite her absence, festival organisers announced that the tribute would still go ahead. In a statement shared by Cannes, Streisand said, "On the advice of my doctors, as I continue recovering from a knee injury, I am sadly unable to attend the Festival de Cannes this year." She further added, "But I am deeply honored to receive the honorary Palme d'Or and had so been looking forward to celebrating the

remarkable films of the 79th edition."

The EGOT-winning star also spoke warmly about her connection to France and the film community. "I was also very much looking forward to spending time with colleagues whom I so admire – and, of course, returning to France, a place I have always loved," Streisand shared. "My heartfelt thanks to the Festival, and to everyone who continues to support and champion the art of cinema." Before the

announcement, Streisand had expressed excitement over receiving the prestigious recognition. "It is with a sense of pride and deep humility that I'm honored to join the company of past Honorary Palme d'Or recipients whose work has long inspired me," she had earlier said. She also reflected on the importance of films during difficult times, saying, "In these challenging times, movies have the ability to open our hearts and minds to stories that reflect our sha-

red humanity, and to perspectives that remind us of both our fragility and our resilience. Cinema transcends borders and politics, and affirms the power of imagination to shape a more compassionate world".

The Cannes Film Festival also praised Streisand's influence on global entertainment and pop culture over the decades. A press statement from the festival noted, "Barbra Streisand has reached the pinnacle of the entertainment

industry like no one before her. But this staggering record pales in comparison to her influence on pop culture in the second half of the 20th century". This year's festival has already seen several honorary Palme d'Or celebrations. Filmmaker Peter Jackson was honoured during the opening ceremony, while actor John Travolta received a surprise honorary Palme ahead of the screening of his directorial debut, Propeller One-Way Night Coach.

Suraj Nambiar breaks silence on divorce, confirms no alimony with Mouni Roy



Mumbai: Mouni Roy's estranged husband Suraj Nambiar has broken his silence on the rumours surrounding his separation from the actress. Days after the couple confirmed their mutual separation, Suraj shared a long note on Instagram Stories denying reports about alimony, disputes and third-party involvement.

His statement comes after several online reports claimed there was tension between the estranged couple, while some social media users also dragged

Disha Patani into the controversy. Suraj Nambiar says there is 'no alimony'. In his note, Suraj addressed speculation around money and legal disputes linked to the separation. He wrote, "Recent baseless reports surrounding our separation have been made in bad taste and are absolutely malicious. Let me set the record straight once and for all. There is no alimony. There are no disputes. There is no third party involved." The businessman also clarified that he and Mouni decided to separate respectfully and

privately.

"Mouni and I chose to part ways together, with mutual respect and with full consideration for each other's wellbeing. That is the truth. Everything else being reported is fiction, and in some cases, a deliberate attempt to vilify two people who have done nothing but ask to be left alone." Over the last few days, several rumours online linked other people to the couple's separation. Mouni's close friend Disha Patani was also targeted by trolls online after social media users dragged her into discussions around the split. Without naming anyone directly, Suraj strongly denied all third-party claims in his statement. "I want to state this clearly and finally: there is no truth to any of the claims being made about either of us, or about any third party. Dragging other people into this is not cool. Specially innocent friends who have nothing to do with this."

Ameesha Patel stands by Alia Bhatt amid Cannes trolls: slams 'pull others down' mentality

Mumbai: Ameesha Patel has come to Alia Bhatt's defence as the Gangubai actress is being subjected to trolling over her Cannes appearances. Alia Bhatt recently attended the 79th Cannes Film Festival, and her looks were going viral every day. While many appreciated Alia at Cannes, a certain section of the internet also started trolling the actress for allegedly being ignored by the international media.

Ameesha Patel took to X and wrote, "Recent activities have clearly made it evident that our own INDIAN mentality has become to pull others down... we call ourselves as ONE nation and united-but are we actually?" While Ameesha didn't mention Alia by name, fans assumed that the post was for the actress. Have a look here: She added, "Actors here in INDIA r more badly trolled by our own people than Hollywood stars are within their count-



ry from their own people, which is so sad! Whether it's a Indian stars appearance or attire at big events, they sadly become targets of their own people! Such a shame!" Previously, writer Shunali

Khullar Shroff took to Instagram and shared a long post supporting Alia Bhatt. Soni Razdan wrote in the comments section, "Social media is full of many things, love, information, entertainment,

and... a lot of hate. And more than anything else, it reveals something about society. A very interesting sociological discussion could ensue and be discussed and studied for years to come."

Aly Goni also wrote on Instagram, "It's sad when our own people try to pull down someone who has worked so hard to put India on the global stage. Alia Bhatt has reached places many only dream of, representing our country at Cannes with grace and pride." The actor also added, "Instead of mocking and trolling, we should celebrate and support those who make India shine internationally. We rise higher when we uplift our own, not when we try to demean them." Many fans of the actress also took to social media to defend Alia. When a user commented on Alia Bhatt's post, "What a pity, no one noticed you," along with a laughing emoji, Alia didn't shy away from reacting to it. Replying to the comment with her wit, Alia said, "Why pity, love? You noticed me :)" Earlier, Sonu Sood and Rahul Vaidya had also defended Alia against the trolls.

Zaid Darbar, Gauahar Khan's husband, set for acting debut in thriller fangirl



Mumbai: For years, fans have seen Zaid Darbar lighting up social media with dance videos, fun collaborations and glimpses of his personal life. But now, the influencer is stepping into a completely different space, one that promises suspense, drama and a much darker screen presence.

Zaid is all set to make his acting debut with the psychological thriller series Fangirl. The upcoming project marks his first major acting venture and will see him move away from the light-hearted content he is popularly known for online. The series will stream on the BULLET Microdrama app and is expected to explore the unsettling side of influencer culture, obsession and carefully curated online identities. While Zaid has

built a strong fan following through dance and digital content, Fangirl will reportedly present him in a more intense and layered role.

According to a source quoted by Times of India, "Zaid plays Karan, a charismatic influencer hiding behind a carefully curated online persona, as a fan's admiration spirals into a disturbing obsession." The source further revealed that the actor has already started preparing extensively for the role. "He has been prepping extensively for Fangirl, and the team is expected to roll with key sequences featuring him very soon. Since the show is rooted in the world of influencers and curated social media lives, the makers felt he naturally fit the part. Everyone involved is excited to see audiences discover a more intense and dramatic side to him through this project." The thriller series also stars Nyra Banerjee in a lead role alongside Abhyuday Pandey and Arya Gautam.

Yash Explains Toxic Delay, Reveals Film's Global Release Strategy and Rollout

Mumbai: Actor Yash has finally opened up about the delay surrounding Toxic: A Fairytale for Grown-Ups. In his latest interaction with Variety, the KGF star explained why the action entertainer's release has taken longer than expected.

Yash, who is also one of the producers of Toxic, shared that there is a major difference between the Indian and Western release systems. According to him, films in the West are usually completed and locked before marketing begins. Studios there also finalize release dates much earlier. He added that overseas distributors generally do not buy theatrical rights unless they watch the finished product first. Since massive investments are involved, nobody wants to take risks. Yash also pointed out that logistics and global distribution plans have contributed to the delay. The Kannada actor, who has shot Toxic in English as well, suggested that Indian audiences are used to films arriving within a fixed timeline once shooting begins. However, Toxic is following a different strategy altogether.

Directed by Geetu Mohandas, Toxic stars Yash alongside Kiara Advani, Nayanthara, Huma Qureshi, Tara Suta-



ria, and Rukmini Vasanth. Recently, the makers postponed the film yet again. This time, no revised release date has been announced, with the team stating that they are working towards a globally aligned release strategy. The makers revealed that the response received at CinemaCon 2026 opened up new international opportunities for the film. They also thanked fans for their patience and continued support during the postponement. The film's action cho-

reography is led by Hollywood action director JJ Perry, known for staging iconic sequences in John Wick, Fast & Furious, and Day Shift. Last year, Perry helmed a 45-day action schedule during the Mumbai leg of the shoot. Apart from Toxic, Yash is also preparing for Ramayana. Directed by Nitesh Tiwari, the mythological drama stars Ranbir Kapoor and Sai Pallavi, with Yash playing Ravana in the ambitious big-budget project.

Gaurav Khanna reaches cape town, shares KKK15 pics with stars

Mumbai: Television actor Gaurav Khanna has reached Cape Town, South Africa, for the shoot of Rohit Shetty's stunt-based reality show 'Khatron Ke Khiladi 15'. Fans have been eagerly waiting for updates, and Gaurav has now shared glimpses from Cape Town with his co-contestants Orry, Karan Wahi, Jasmin Bhasin, Harsh Gujral, Rithvik Dhanjani, Avinash Mishra and others.

On Sunday, Gaurav Khanna took to Instagram to share a series of selfies with his fellow contestants from Khatron Ke Khiladi 15. In the first photo, he can be seen posing for a group selfie with Jasmin, Orry, Avinash Mishra, Harsh Gujral, Karan Wahi, Rithvik Dhanjani, and Ruhaanika Dhawan as they explored Cape Town ahead of the show's shoot. Another photo also features Vishal Aditya Singh. In his caption, Gaurav wrote, "Ok so here we are....#kkk #capetown #calmbeforethe storm #itbegins." Gaurav Khanna, who has won Bigg

Boss 19 and Celebrity MasterChef in the past, recently revealed that his mother was against him joining Khatron Ke Khiladi 15. "My mother was very worried when she found out I'm doing Khatron Ke Khiladi. During Bigg Boss, whenever things got emotionally intense inside the house, she would get stressed watching everything from outside. There were moments when she would start hyperventilating while watching me under pressure on the show. For her, Khatron Ke Khiladi felt even tougher because this isn't just mental pressure; it's physical as well," he said.

He further added, "Her biggest concern was safety. She kept asking me what kind of stunts we'll be doing, how everything works, and whether it's all safe there. For the first few days, she kept telling me not to do the show. I had to reassure her that there's a proper team handling everything and that every precaution is taken.

Diljit Dosanjh skips vaapas aaunga promotions, adopts hands-off PR approach



Mumbai: Diljit Dosanjh will not be doing traditional promotional rounds for his upcoming release Main Vaapas Aaunga, continuing a pattern that has become something of a trademark for the Punjabi superstar. According to a source close to the actor, the decision is deliberate and consistent with how he handled his last major Bollywood outing.

"Diljit Dosanjh has taken the decision to not promote his latest release Main Vaapas Aaunga. This is in line with his stance of not promoting Border 2 as well. It's not that he has a problem with film promotions, but he doesn't want to be exposed to the rigmarole

of media queries and unnecessary controversies. He's very excited for the release of Imtiaz Ali's Main Vaapas Aaunga, but he doesn't want to adopt the run-of-the-mill approach to making noise about this movie," the

source revealed. The decision will raise eyebrows but will surprise few who have followed Dosanjh's career closely. It was only in April that the singer-actor sat alongside director Imtiaz Ali, composer AR Rahman

and lyricist Irshad Kamil to tease the film's music, a rare and carefully curated public appearance that pointedly came after he had stayed away from the Border 2 press circuit altogether. The war drama, which starred Sunny Deol and Suniel Shetty, was already dogged by industry controversy surrounding Dosanjh, making his absence from its promotional tour the path of least resistance.

That controversy stemmed from the backlash over Sarada Ji 3, in which Dosanjh had cast Pakistani actress Hania Aamir. Released internationally in June 2025 and withheld from Indian cinemas, the film triggered

boycott calls from film bodies including the FWICE and AICWA, and briefly saw aspersions being cast around Dosanjh involvement with Border 2, before it was made official that he was slated to complete his portion of the shoot. For Main Vaapas Aaunga, however, the calculus is different. The Partition-era romantic drama, Dosanjh's second collaboration with Imtiaz Ali after the acclaimed Amar Singh Chamkila, arrives with none of that political baggage. Instead, our source suggests Diljit has developed a broader aversion to the media circuit itself, wary of being pulled into controversies that have

little to do with the work on screen. It is a philosophy increasingly shared by top-tier global artists who let the art speak for itself. Whether Bollywood's promotional machine built on chat shows, airport photo ops and reality TV appearances, is ready to accept that calculus remains another question entirely. But out in the West, where Diljit frequently collabs and talks about his music and career, this restrained approach has become somewhat of a trend.

Main Vaapas Aaunga also features Sharvari, Vedang Raina and Naseeruddin Shah with music by Rahman. It will release in cinemas on June 12, 2026.

Karthik Subbaraj collaborates with ilaiyaraaja on tenth landmark film

Chennai: Filmmaker Karthik Subbaraj has confirmed that iconic composer Ilaiyaraaja will score the music for his upcoming directorial venture, marking a significant milestone for both artists. The yet-to-be-titled film, backed by Guneet Monga and Achin Jain under the Sikhya Entertainment banner, is Subbaraj's tenth outing as a director.

For Subbaraj, the collaboration represents a deeply personal moment. Sharing a video from their first meeting, the director described the experience as a "blessing" and a long-cherished dream fulfilled. The footage captures Ilaiyaraaja greeting the filmmaker and producer Guneet Monga before settling into a spontaneous musical session. Seen playing the harmonium and guiding musicians with his characteristic hand gestures, the composer exudes the effortless command that has defined his decades-long career. The video also features a warm exchange, including Ilaiyaraaja gifting Subbaraj a signed guitar, underscoring the significance of the occasion. "From growing up with his music to working with him. Karthik Subbaraj joins with Maestro Ilaiyaraaja," read the description accompanying the clip. The project also brings together multiple production forces, with Jyoti Deshpande of Jio Studios and Dhammam Films joining as co-producers.



Captagon Doon’s lab is busted by NCB, and an Indian is detained for leasing

New Delhi: The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) has busted a clandestine laboratory in Dehradun where a Syrian national manufactured Captagon, a banned synthetic stimulant popularly known as the “jihadi drug”, and arrested an Indian national who had leased the place to another Syrian, police officers aware of the matter said. The NCB on Saturday night unearthed the laboratory after questioning Alabras Ahmed, the Syrian national who was arrested on May 11, and is the lookout for a second Syrian national who prepared the drug in the Dehradun laboratory, the officers added.

Last week, 31.5kg of Captagon was seized from a house in Delhi’s Neb Sarai, where Ahmed lived, and 196.2 kg from a container at the Mundra Port in Gujarat. Both seizures were cumulatively valued at ₹182 crore.Following this, Union home minister Amit Shah announced on Saturday that the NCB had seized the first-ever consignment of Captagon, valued at ₹182 crore and arrested a foreign national.

An officer aware of the matter, who asked not to be named, said, “The questioning of Syrian



national Alabras Ahmed led us to the illegal laboratory in Dehradun where the pills were manufactured. The 31.5 kg Captagon found in his Neb Sarai house was manufactured here, while the 196.2 kg of Captagon found at Mundra Port was imported from Syria.” The officer added that the factory owner, Sanjay Kumar, charged the Syrian national ₹50,000 daily rent for using the premises to manufacture the drug. “This is the first case to come to light of drug traffickers manufac-

turing Captagon in a clandestine laboratory,” he added.

Kumar, police said, is a resident of Saharanpur, who was earlier arrested for misusing his food license to make chemicals at his factory in Dehradun in 2025, and was out on bail.“For 14 days, he had already taken ₹700,000 from Ahmed and manufactured over 200,000 pills (nearly 32 kg). A Syrian national known to Ahmed put him in touch with Kumar and arranged the factory on rent. The man also arranged another Syr-

ian to manufacture the tablet,” the official added. Captagon is a synthetic stimulant developed in the 1960s and later banned because of its addictive nature. Illicit Captagon tablets are now produced using amphetamine and other stimulants and are often called the “poor man’s cocaine” because of their low production cost. In international media and security discourse it is referred to as the “jihadi drug” owing to repeated allegations and intelligence linking its trafficking

and abuse to extremist and conflict-zone networks in parts of West Asia.

The term also arose from its reported use by groups such as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), since the drug’s stimulant effects allegedly help users remain awake, suppress fear and exhaustion, increase aggression and risk-taking behaviour, and sustain prolonged combat-like activity. The large profits from Captagon trafficking have reportedly become a significant source of illicit financing for extremist-linked networks.

Drug cartels operating clandestine labs nationwide have become a major challenge for security agencies. Last year the NCB wrote to all state police forces, urging them to identify illegal labs in their jurisdictions. It also outlined red flags for police to watch for, including blacked-out windows, perimeter CCTV, strong chemical odours, unusual ventilation systems, abnormally high electricity use, large quantities of chemicals, discarded lab equipment, frequent deliveries of unlabelled boxes, and residents displaying evasive or paranoid behaviour.

Aaron Rai becomes first English golfer to win US PGA Championship since 1919

Agency: There’s never been a PGA Championship quite like this one. Come Sunday morning there were 21 players within four shots of the lead, and eight major winners among them. Every one of those 21 and a good few more woke up thinking that they had a shot at winning the Wanamaker Trophy.

There was the six-time major champion Rory McIlroy; the 2022 Open champion, Cam Smith; the 2017 and 2022 PGA champion, Justin Thomas; the 2021 US Open and 2023 Masters champion, Jon Rahm; and on, and on, and on, all the way down the leaderboard. And then there was Aaron Rai, a 31-year-old from Wolverhampton, the world No 44. Rai has won Tour events before, but his biggest achievement in major golf until this point was his top-20 finish in this tournament last year and a victory in the rinky-dink par-three contest they play the day before the Masters.

Well, it had to be someone.

And by doing it, Rai has ended one of the longest-standing jinxes in golf. It had been 107 years since an Englishman last won the PGA. That was “Big” Jim Barnes way back in 1919, when it was still a matchplay event.

The last four days – the last four hours – of the wait were the most excruciatingly tense of the lot. It has been a week of high-wire golf at Aronimink, which was set up in such a tough way that on Friday McIlroy and Scottie Scheffler, the two best players of their generation, were left complaining about how tricky it was.

But like McIlroy said a day later, hard as it was, it made for a “helluva entertaining” day on Sunday. There was hardly a player in the field who didn’t fancy their chances. And when Kurt Kitayama, who started the day tied for 64th, went out in the morning and scored a 63 to rocket into the top 10, everyone knew there were plenty of opportunities out there for anyone



good enough to take them. The flipside was that in a field as busy as this one, when everyone was pressed up against each other on the leaderboard, you would be lucky to get away with one mistake, let alone two. Rahm, Alex Smalley, and Matti Schmid all found that out the hard way. All three led the field at different points in the day, and all three fell away again after making a bogey at the

wrong moment. One dropped shot always seemed to mean three steps back down the ladder. The remarkable part about Rai’s victory was that he made so many little errors in his first eight holes that he didn’t even seem to be in the running for a large part of his round.

It all turned when he made an extraordinary eagle on the par-five 9th. He hit his second shot into the heart of the

green, to set up a 40-foot left-to-right putt. Rai once broke the record for making the most consecutive putts from 10ft (he made 207 of them, if you were wondering) but this one was an absolute brute. It turned like the second hand of a clock as it rolled towards the hole and in, and all of a sudden he was one under for the round and right back in the reckoning. Rai walked off that green with renewed confidence.

And he did it at the very moment when everyone else in contention seemed to be faltering. Rai split the fairway with his drive at the 11th, hit his approach to five feet, and made a birdie to take the lead. Then at the 13th he managed to splash out of a green-side bunker to set up another five-foot birdie putt. That took him to seven under, one shot beyond what anyone else had managed all week and two shots clear of the field. McIlroy and Rahm tried to chase after him, but the harder they reached after his lead, the fur-

ther away it got. Aronimink is not a course you can force, and while they were taking risks, Rai was playing with icy accuracy. Rai picked up another birdie on the par-five 16th and then delivered the knockout blow with another remarkable birdie putt from 68 feet on the 17th green that brought the fans all around to their feet roaring and screaming in disbelief. The sound was so loud it seemed to carry clean across the city.

Rai was three shots clear now, and had the luxury of being able to walk up the 18th fairway knowing he was about to become a major winner. His final round was 65, three bogeys, six birdies, and that one glorious eagle, and he had covered Aronimink’s ferociously difficult back nine in just 31 shots. It put him three clear of Rahm and Smalley, who were tied for second on six under, and four clear of Thomas, five clear of McIlroy, Smith, and Xander Schauffele. He had bested the strongest field in golf.

CBI questions parents who bought leaked NEET paper for their children

New Delhi: The Central Bureau of Investigation’s (CBI) probe into the alleged NEET-UG 2026 paper leak has widened beyond paper setters, experts and middlemen, with several parents who allegedly purchased leaked question papers now coming under the agency’s scanner, officials said. A CBI team comprising eight officers conducted searches on Saturday and Sunday at three to four different premises including a house in the Vidyut Nagar area in Nanded and in Latur after receiving inputs that the family had allegedly procured leaked NEET papers for their daughters. Officials suspect they paid between ₹5- ₹10 lakh to alleged middlemen to obtain the leaked papers before the examination.

Investigators believe the racket extended beyond the core network of paper setters and intermediaries and involved financially well-off parents who allegedly paid large sums to secure medical admissions for their children.According to officials, the CBI team arrived in Nanded on Friday and launched the search operation. The officials questioned the parents of a girl who appeared for the NEET-UG on May 3. The parents were interrogated for more than eight hours, officials added.

CBI officials also examined electronic devices, documents and communication records, including phone calls and messages exchanged by family members.Officials alleged that in the Nanded case, the girl’s father, a businessman, paid around ₹10 lakh — ₹5 lakh to a middleman and ₹5 lakh to a separate individual — for access to leaked papers.

Investigators are probing the girl’s links with a coaching institute in Pune, where she had reportedly stayed for around 15 days for NEET preparation. A private coaching institute, AIB, had displayed flex banners featuring photographs of its top-perform-

ing students in Nanded under the tagline “The Results To Come”. Officials said investigators were examining claims related to the student’s expected performance in the examination as part of the broader probe. AIB’s Atul More told HT that he had no information regarding the CBI action. “Yes, she was my student and was repeating NEET this year. In our mock tests, she used to score around 400 to 450 marks,” More said. He further said the student had not been associated with the institute for the past 15 days.

Officials said searches were also carried out at residences of another parents in Nanded on Sunday morning, after which another CBI team moved towards Latur.

Investigators suspect some parents may have circulated leaked papers to others in an attempt to recover part of the money they had paid. They suspect the alleged racket was being operated through a well-organised network spread across Pune, Latur, Nanded and nearby districts. Officials said some parents allegedly paid amounts ranging between ₹10 lakh and ₹25 lakh to gain access to leaked question papers.

CBI has already arrested several accused in connection with the case, including alleged masterminds, paper solvers and intermediaries. Investigators are now focusing on tracing the money trail and identifying beneficiaries who may have knowingly availed leaked examination material.

Senior officials said further raids are likely in the coming days as the investigation progresses. The agency is also verifying whether similar transactions took place in other districts and whether additional candidates benefited from leaked papers.The families questioned by the CBI could not immediately be reached for comment.

Jannik Sinner’s GF Laila makes sweet gesture for Italian star’s parents after win vs Ruud

Rome: Jannik Sinner created history at the Italian Open after defeating Casper Ruud 6-4, 6-4 in the final, becoming the first Italian man in 50 years to win the tournament. But while the world no 1 celebrated another major milestone in Rome, fans also noticed a touching moment involving his girlfriend Laila Hasanovic and his family following the victory.

Hasanovic was present throughout the final weekend at Foro Italico, sitting alongside Sinner’s brother Mark during the rain-delayed semi-final against Daniil Medvedev. After Sinner sealed his place in the championship match, cameras caught Hasanovic warmly embracing Mark Sinner in the stands. The Danish model returned again for Sunday’s final against Ruud and was later seen celebrating with Sinner’s family after the historic win.

Fans online also reacted to Hasanovic wearing Sinner-themed apparel during the tournament, including a black cap featuring the Italian star’s signature Nike fox logo.

Sinner’s victory over Ruud carried enormous significance for Italian tennis. He became the first Italian male player to win the Italian Open since Adriano Panatta lifted the trophy in 1976. The triumph also completed another historic achievement for Sinner, who became just the second player after Novak Djokovic to win all nine ATP Masters 1000 events. Djokovic completed the career Masters sweep in 2018.

Sinner extended his winning streak to 29 matches and improved to 17-0 on clay this season heading into the French Open. “Incredible,” Sinner said after the final. “It’s been a long time since an Italian won – 50 years.



I’m happy one of us was able to take advantage of this great period for Italian tennis.”

The Italian celebrated in his usual composed style before smiling broadly after converting championship point in front of a packed home crowd that included Panatta himself seated courtside.

Earlier this month, Sinner admitted he wanted to spend more time with his loved ones amid the demands of the ATP Tour.

“It’s definitely a little bit [like] I missed out a little bit of time, spending time with my parents. I would like to catch up as much as I can,” he said while speaking to the ATP Tour.

“Obviously, at home, grandma and grandpa, the parents of my mum, they’re still both alive. I understand her very much that she wants to stay at home and spend as much time as possible with them. But I also would like to have more time with family.”

“So hopefully I can have some more time with my parents and the people I love, and also with my brother and friends. Because things can change.” While Sinner has largely kept his relationship with Hasanovic away from the spotlight, he previously admitted in an interview with Corriere della Sera that he was in love. Before the championship match, Ruud openly acknowledged the enormous challenge of facing the red-hot Italian.

“It will be a tough match no matter who it is,” Ruud said ahead of the final.

“Either it will be a guy who cannot lose, it seems like.”

The Norwegian also hoped he could finally reverse his struggles against Sinner after entering the match winless in their previous meetings.

Instead, Sinner once again proved unstoppable on home soil as he continued one of the most dominant stretches of his career.

Will Aaron Rodgers return as Steelers QB? Jalen Hurts’ honest reaction goes viral

Agency: The 2026 schedule release video of the Philadelphia Eagles has unexpectedly created discussion about the Pittsburgh Steelers’ quarterback situation. The Eagles will face the Pittsburgh Steelers in week 11 of this season. During the Eagles’ promotional video, a teammate asked quarterback Jalen Hurts whether Aaron Rodgers would still be Pittsburgh’s quarterback. Hurts’ response captured the uncertainty surrounding Pittsburgh’s plans. Hurts replied, “Who knows?” The clip quickly circulated online, creating many interesting reactions. NFL reporter Kimberley A. Martin shared it on social media and remarked: “Jalen Hurts is all of us when it comes to the Steelers’ QB situation...”

The uncertainty surrounding the Steelers’ quarterback is one of the talking points of the NFL offseason. Although they have Aaron Rodgers on their side, the delay in a contract extension is increasing the uncertainty. Rodgers, who joined the Steelers in 2025 on a one-year deal, played a crucial role in leading the team to an AFC North title. The season also marked the end of Mike Tomlin’s tenure as Steelers head coach. Despite age and injuries, Rodgers delivered a strong campaign, recording 25 to-



tal touchdowns against just 7 interceptions and a 94.8 passer rating. His consistency was central to Pittsburgh’s 10-win season.

However, this offseason has raised a lot of questions for the Steelers, including the new head coach and quarterback. The franchise hired Mike McCarthy as its new head coach. This decision can reunite Rodgers and McCarthy after their successful partnership with the Green Bay Packers from 2006 to 2018. Together, they produced eight straight playoff appearances, five NFC North titles,

three NFC Championship appearances, and a Super Bowl XLV victory. Rodgers received seven Pro Bowl selections and two MVP awards during this period.

The reunion possibility has sparked optimism that Pittsburgh could again contend if Rodgers returns for 2026. The Steelers have also strengthened their offense with some free-agent additions. If Rodgers plays, then he would be surrounded by DK Metcalf, Michael Pittman Jr., Jaylen Warren, and Rico Dowdle, giving Pittsburgh one of the stron-

gest offensive lineups in the league.

Still, Rodgers’ future remains uncertain, and Hurts’ casual remark reflects the broader sentiment across the NFL. As the Eagles prepare for their Week 11 matchup, fans and analysts alike are left wondering whether Rodgers will be the one who leads the Steelers’ offense or whether Pittsburgh will turn to a new direction under McCarthy. The lack of an official announcement has increased the speculations and rumors around the team for the 2026 season.

Kane hat-trick powers Bayern Munich over Cologne in final-day Bundesliga win

Berlin:: Bayern Munich signed off from its Bundesliga campaign with another emphatic attacking display as Harry Kane hit a hat-trick in a 5-1 home win over Cologne before the newly crowned champion received the trophy on Saturday. Leon Goretzka, making his final Bayern appearance after eight years in Munich, started alongside Joshua Kimmich, while Manuel Neuer returned in goal. Cologne, already safe after securing its survival the previous week, defended deep in the opening stages. Kane met a cross from Lennart Karl to put Bayern ahead in the 10th minute, and struck again three minutes later from a free-kick touched off by Kimmich. Cologne had barely threatened before Said El Mala punished a midfield mistake by Jamal Musiala, burst through the Bayern half and beat Neuer in the 18th minute. Bayern's response was swift. Tom Bischof drove in from distance in the 22nd minute, taking the champion beyond the



120-goal mark for the season. Luis Diaz was denied by goalkeeper Marvin Schwabe before halftime, while Musiala struck the post shortly before the break. Cologne coach Rene Wagner brought on Linton Maina after the interval, and the visitors found more presence higher up the pitch. Karl hit the outside of the post and Musiala went close again, before Kane settled the contest in the 69th minute with a long-range finish following Goretzka's run from deep. Goretzka then departed to a standing

ovation before replacement Nicolas Jackson scored with his first touch in the 83rd minute to round off the 5-1 win. Elsewhere, Borussia Dortmund secured second place with a 2-0 win at Werder Bremen, while Leipzig ended the season third despite a 4-1 defeat at Freiburg. Freiburg's victory sealed it the seventh place and a UEFA Conference League berth. Stuttgart took the final Champions League spot after a 2-2 draw at Eintracht Frankfurt, helped by Hoffenheim's 4-0 loss at Borussia Monchengladbach. Bayer Leverkusen was held 1-1 by Hamburg and finished sixth. Wolfsburg climbed into the relegation playoff with a 3-1 win at St. Pauli, who was relegated alongside Heidenheim after the latter's 2-0 defeat against Mainz. Union Berlin closed with a 4-0 win over Augsburg. They have cited the ongoing ethnic conflict in Manipur as the reason behind their poor performance.

The clubs, which finished at the bottom of the 2023-24

season points table, argued that the ongoing turmoil has taken a huge toll on the players in terms of their mental strength and performance. NEROCA FC and TRAU FC were relegated by the All India Football Federation (AIFF) after a disappointing finish to their season campaign, ending in 12th and 13th place respectively. The unrest in Manipur made it impossible for the local clubs to host matches in their home state, as a result of which, five fixtures had to be relocated to Kalyani, West Bengal while the remaining seven games were moved to Shillong. Additionally, the clubs urged to move their away fixtures against Aizawl FC to a neutral venue, but this request was denied, leading to the matches getting cancelled. Earlier, Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh had spoken in favour of an exemption for the clubs, highlighting the severe disruption caused by the ethnic conflict which began on May 3, 2023.

Lionel Messi shines as Inter Miami beats Portland Timbers 2-0 in MLS



Miami: Argentina's FIFA World Cup-winning legend Lionel Messi has his World Cup preparations in full swing as he contributed with a goal and an assist to help Inter Miami secure a 2-0 win over Portland Timbers in their Major League Soccer (MLS) match on Monday morning. Inter Miami stays at the second spot in the competition with their eighth win, having drawn four and losing three, giving them 28 points. They are just two points away from table-toppers Nashville. Inter Miami secured the lead in the 34th minute, with Mes-

si picking up Luis Suarez outside the box, playing the ball into Segovia's path, who fed Messi present in the centre of the box. Messi wasted No time in scoring his 12th goal of the season, courtesy of Segovia's eighth assist of the competition so far, as per the club's official website. In the 40th minute, Inter Miami doubled its lead, courtesy of a Messi assist to German Berterame, who recorded his fifth goal of the season, while Messi got his sixth assist of the MLS season. Messi has now recorded multiple goal contributions in his past

four appearances. In the second half, both sides tried to score, with St Clair intervening in the 78th minute to deny a header from Kevin Kelsy of the Timbers. The Canadian goalie produced four saves, making sure that the scoreline stayed undisturbed. Next, Inter Miami will host Philadelphia Union at Nu Stadium next Sunday, May 24. With this win, Messi's men have extended their away winning streak to seven. They are placed second in the Major League Soccer (MLS) with seven wins, two losses and four draws,

Amina Orfi makes history while Mostafa Asal retains Men's World Championship

Egypt's Orfi and Asal claim World Squash titles

New Delhi: Egypt celebrated a landmark evening in world squash as teenage prodigy Amina Orfi and World No.1 Mostafa Asal emerged victorious at the 2026 CIB Palm Hills PSA World Championships in Giza. Competing in front of a home crowd at Golf Central Palm Hills, Orfi produced one of the most memorable performances in recent women's squash history, while Asal delivered a dominant display to successfully defend his men's title. The spotlight firmly belonged to Orfi, who stunned eight-time world champion Nour ElSherbini in an epic five-game battle to become the youngest women's world champion ever. The 18-year-old prevailed 6-11, 11-6, 11-9, 7-11, 14-12 in a gripping contest that stretched to 106 minutes and saw her save two championship points in the deciding game. The triumph rewrites the record books for the Egyptian teenager, who surpasses ElSherbini as the youngest player to capture the women's world title. Orfi's breakthrough also prevented ElSherbini from claiming what would have been an unprecedented



ed ninth World Championship crown. The final now stands as the longest women's World Championship match played under the modern point-a-rally scoring system to 11 and ranks among the lengthiest women's professional squash matches ever recorded. Former President Ram Nath Kovind had earlier attended a felicitation ceremony of the Special Olympics athletes at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in the national capital on Tuesday. Motivating the athletes, the Hon'ble 14th President of India, Ram Nath Kovind said, "Our Indian athletes won 202 medals, with 76 Gold, 75 Silver and 51 Bronze medals at the Special Olympics World Summer Games 2023. It makes me elated that out of

202 medals, our daughters won 89 medals. This fact paints a picture of a happy India." "As we move forward, I hope you all remember that your journey does not end here. Special Olympics World Summer Games 2023 Berlin was a platform to showcase your talents and sheer determination. I am sure your victory here will motivate you to achieve more each day. Remember your nation stands behind you and you are never alone. We are proud of all our Special Athletes and their achievements will remain in our hearts and minds forever. Dream big, keep your targets high and never forget the unimaginable power inside you," he added. He defeated Tamil Nadu's PB Avanand 4-2 in the final. Earlier, the Assam team

had also secured a bronze medal in the U-19 boys' team event. At the end of the third round of the final bout of the 75 kg weight category, Li Qian was able to beat Lovlina Borgohain with a unanimous decision. The final reading on the scorecards read 30-26, 30-26, 29-27, 29-27 and 29-27 in favour of Li Qian. She had earlier qualified for the upcoming Paris 2024 Olympics when she qualified for the Finals. Lovlina Borgohain was born in Golaghat District of Assam. Her parents are Tiken and Mamoni Borgohain. A former Muay Thai practitioner, Lovlina Borgohain is the youngest of three sister-siblings and got interested in boxing after seeing her twin sisters, Licha and Lima decide to take up kickboxing and follow the same trail. When the Sports Authority of India held trials at her high school Barpathar Girls High School, where Lovlina Borgohain participated. She was noticed and selected by renowned Coach Padium Chandra Bodo at the SAI STC Guwahati in 2012 to learn the basics of boxing and to achieve excellence in boxing.

Jannik Sinner wins Italian Open to become youngest Career Golden Masters champion

New Delhi: Jannik Sinner created tennis history in Rome after clinching the 2026 Italian Open title, defeating Casper Ruud 6-4, 6-4 in the final to cap off a landmark run on home soil. The victory made Sinner the youngest player ever to complete the Career Golden Masters, achieving the rare feat of winning all nine ATP Masters 1000 tournaments in his career. With this triumph, Sinner also became the first man in history to win the first five Masters 1000 events of a single season, extending a record-breaking streak that has defined his year. His run included titles across all major early-season events, including the Indian Wells, Miami Open, Monte Carlo Masters, Madrid Open and the title in Rome. The Italian Open victory carried even deeper historical significance for home fans. Sinner became the first Italian male champion in Rome since Adriano Panatta in 1976, ending a 50-year wait for a home winner at the Foro Italico. Sinner's triumph also placed him alongside Rafael Nadal in another elite category.

He became only the second player in history to win all three clay-court Masters events (Monte Carlo, Madrid, and Rome) in a single season, matching Nadal's achievement from 2010. After his victory, Sinner said, "I don't know. It's tough to say. I think this year was the 50th year since an Italian won, and I'm really, really happy. There was a lot of tension on both sides, and it wasn't perfect tennis from either of us, but I'm very, very happy." "It has been an incredible last two and a half months. I always try to put myself in the best possible position every time, trying to do the best I can. Not every day is simple, but I'm really, really happy," Sinner added. The match began with Ruud trying



ing to impose his heavy topspin game on clay, but Sinner quickly neutralised the Norwegian's rhythm with deep returns and aggressive positioning inside the baseline. Both players held serve early, but the turning point of the first set came when Sinner increased the tempo on Ruud's second serve, creating repeated break-point pressure. Ruud managed to stay competitive until 4-4, but Sinner broke at 5-4 and calmly served out the set to take control of the final. In the second set, Sinner carried the momentum forward with even greater intensity. He broke Ruud early to establish a 2-1 lead and immediately consolidated it with strong service games, forcing the Norwegian to play from behind for the rest of the set. The World No. 1 consistently targeted Ruud's backhand corner, drawing short replies that allowed him to dictate rallies and finish points efficiently. Ruud attempted to respond by extending rallies and using drop shots to disrupt Sinner's rhythm, but the Italian's movement and court coverage proved too strong on the day. Sinner maintained a high first-serve percentage and rarely

allowed Ruud any free points, keeping constant scoreboard pressure throughout the match. At 5-4 in the second set, Sinner once again showed composure under pressure, holding serve comfortably to seal the title and complete a historic milestone run in Rome. Jannik Sinner achieved a historic start to the 2026 season by winning the first five ATP Masters 1000 titles in Paris, Indian Wells, Miami, Monte-Carlo, and Madrid. This unprecedented 25-0 start culminated in a record-breaking performance at the Italian Open, where he defeated Casper Ruud in the final. By winning in Rome, Sinner became the youngest player to complete a Career Golden Masters, having won all nine active Masters 1000 tournaments. His dominance included a record 32-match winning streak at the Masters level, surpassing the previous record held by Novak Djokovic. Throughout this run, he showcased tactical adaptability in varying conditions and exceptional consistency, notably winning all six hard-court Masters titles and sweeping the three clay-court Masters in a single season.

Horrible MotoGP crash in Spain sends Alex Marquez into wall, destroying his bike

New Delhi: Spanish rider Alex Marquez was taken to hospital after a terrifying high-speed crash during the Catalunya Grand Prix on Sunday, May 17. The incident, which forced the race to be red-flagged midway through the contest, left Marquez with multiple injuries and his motorcycle completely destroyed on impact. The crash occurred on the back straight of the circuit after race leader Pedro Acosta suddenly slowed down because of a technical issue with his bike. Marquez, who was following closely behind at high speed, had little time to react and slammed into Acosta from behind. The impact launched Marquez violently off his motorcycle and into the barriers, while his bike flipped multiple times before breaking apart across the track. Debris from the crash scattered across the circuit and also struck other riders, including Fabio Di Giannantonio and Raul Fernandez. Trackside medical staff attended to Marquez immediately before he was



transported to hospital in an ambulance for further evaluation. According to his team, the Spanish rider suffered a fractured right clavicle and a vertebra injury. Marquez was scheduled to undergo surgery later on Sunday to stabilise the clav-

icle, while additional medical evaluations are expected next week. Despite the severity of the accident, Spanish media reports stated that Marquez's injuries were not considered life-threatening. The chaos at the Catalunya Grand Prix machinery.

Bumrah's workload and Rohit's fitness in focus for Afghanistan series squad

New Delhi: Pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah's workload management will be debated alongside the match fitness of Rohit Sharma when the national selectors pick India's squads for next month's one-off Test and three ODIs against Afghanistan on Tuesday. There is a short turnaround between the IPL and the one off Test which begins in Mullanpur (New Chandigarh) from June 6. The IPL final is scheduled on May 31 in Ahmedabad. The ODI games will take place in Dharamsala, Lucknow and Chennai on June 14, 17 and 20. It is unlikely that Bumrah would be picked for both formats because there is no immediate rush for him to



feature in ODIs. The 50-over World Cup is still a long way off (October-November, 2027). Rohit had missed a chunk of Mumbai Indians' matches earlier in the IPL due to a hamstring injury, and in the last game against Punjab Kings, he only came out to bat as an impact play-

er. The selectors will include him in the side only if he is fully fit for 100 overs of an ODI game. Superstar Virat Kohli, who, like Rohit, is now a one format player, has shown sublime form in the IPL and is expected to feature in all three ODIs against Afghanistan. The one-off

Test holds more significance considering India's troubles in the traditional format, especially at home. The batters need to find a way to tackle spin-friendly conditions. It is an aspect that has bothered them for a while now and was thoroughly exposed by South Africa in the home series last November. India have also not been able to find a stable number three since Cheteshwar Pujara left the scene. Sai Sudharsan got his chances but could not deliver. And now Devdutt Padikkal is expected to be given a decent run from the start of the home season. Architect of Jammu and bail laws, and a tragic emerged from the Air India crash morgue.

For any queries or clarifications, please reach out at the contact details:
contact@northeastchronicle.com