

Security tightened across state ahead for Bakrid

Patna, May 28: Chief secretary Pratyaya Amrit on Wednesday chaired a high-level meeting via video conference with senior officers from all districts to review security arrangements ahead of the Bakrid festival. He directed district magistrates (DMs), superintendents of police (SPs), DIGs and IGs to keep the administration on high alert during the festival. Emphasising peaceful and harmonious celebrations, he asked officials to maintain strict vigil on anti-social elements from early morning and closely monitor social media activity. All districts were instructed to complete preparations in advance to prevent any situation that could lead to tension. Bihar DGP Vinay Kumar stressed that the three-day festival must be conducted in a completely peaceful manner. He directed that route marches be carried out by riot control, police and district forces at sacrifice sites and in sensitive areas. Officers were asked to maintain heightened surveillance in vulnerable localities and ensure adequate availability of riot control vehicles and body protective gear. The DGP also directed identification of potential troublemakers for preventive action and called for intensified patrolling and night rounds across all police stations. Special branch and STF DG Kundan Krishnan directed police to begin flag marches from 4 am across all districts. He emphasised continuous monitoring in mixed-population areas and at religious sites to maintain communal harmony, and asked officials to act promptly on any intelligence indicating possible untoward incidents.

14 COs and revenue officials are accused of graft and neglecting their duties

Patna, May 28: Taking strict action, the revenue and land reforms department on Wednesday initiated departmental proceedings after framing charges against 14 circle officers (COs) and revenue officials in the state for their alleged involvement in corruption, negligence and financial irregularities.

Minister Dilip Kumar Jaiswal said the Samrat govt has a zero-tolerance policy on corruption and charges have been framed for departmental proceedings against 14 COs, including a few already suspended. They are Anuj Kumar (Patliputra), Chandan Kumar (Danapur), Sanjeev Kumar Trivedi (Raghopur), Rakesh Kumar (former CO, Paliganj), Pankaj Kumar (Siswan), Buchi Kumari (former

CO, Supaul Sadar), Raj Kishore Sharma (retired former CO, Gopalpur; 10% cut in pension amount for five years), Rajat Kumar Barnwal (Gopalganj), Amlesh Kumar (Ekma), Kumari Anchal (CO, Chhapra Sadar), Anil Kumar (former CO, Bairyaya), Satish Kumar Singh (Isuapur, Saran), Rishika (suspended, former CO, Kanti) and Rakesh Kumar (suspended, former CO, Patarghat, Saharsa).

The minister, who reviewed revenue-related operations via videoconferencing on Wednesday in the districts of Katihar, East Champaran, and Gopalganj, reprimanded officials for their low rankings and warned them to prepare for disciplinary action if their work performance did not improve within the next



15 days.

Department secretary Jai Singh directed officials from the districts concerned to ensure completion of all pending tasks

within the stipulated timeframe. The DMs, ADMs and COs of the respective districts were present during the videoconference.

Meanwhile, according to de-

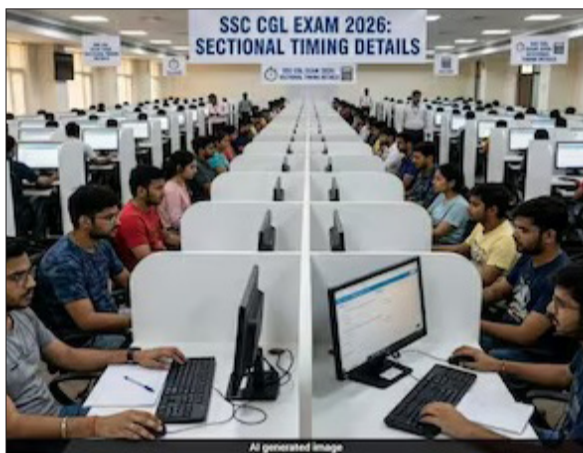
partmental sources, complaints had been lodged against all these officers. Inquiry reports found the allegations against them true, including irregular-

ities in the disposal of land-related cases, delays in the mutation (dakhil-kharaj) process, and corruption. Acting on these reports, the department framed charges against all 14 officers and initiated further disciplinary proceedings.

Jaiswal said the govt will not tolerate corruption or negligence at any level. He said the officers facing action were subject to various types of complaints. While some faced allegations of irregularities in land-related matters, others faced serious charges of financial impropriety and negligence in the discharge of their duties. Action was initiated only after the allegations were substantiated during the course of the investigations, he said.

In the SSC CGL 2026 exam, sectional timing was introduced

Prayagraj, May 28: The Staff Selection Commission (SSC) has introduced sectional timing in the Combined Graduate Level (CGL) Examination 2026, one of its biggest recruitment examinations conducted for appointments to Group 'B' and Group 'C' posts in various ministries, departments, constitutional bodies, tribunals and organisations under the Central govt. The commission has implemented sectional timing in the examination pattern for the first time, making the test more structured and challenging for aspirants.



in a fixed time limit of 15 minutes for each section. Earlier, although the one-hour examination consisted of four sections — General Intelligence and Reasoning, General Awareness, Quantitative Aptitude and English Comprehension — candidates had the flexibility to manage time according to their strengths and weaknesses. They could spend more time on diffi-

cult sections and compensate in easier ones.

However, with the introduction of sectional timing, each segment will now automatically close after 15 minutes and the next section will appear on the computer screen. Each section will contain 25 questions carrying two marks each, taking the total to 100 questions and 200 marks. Officials believe the move

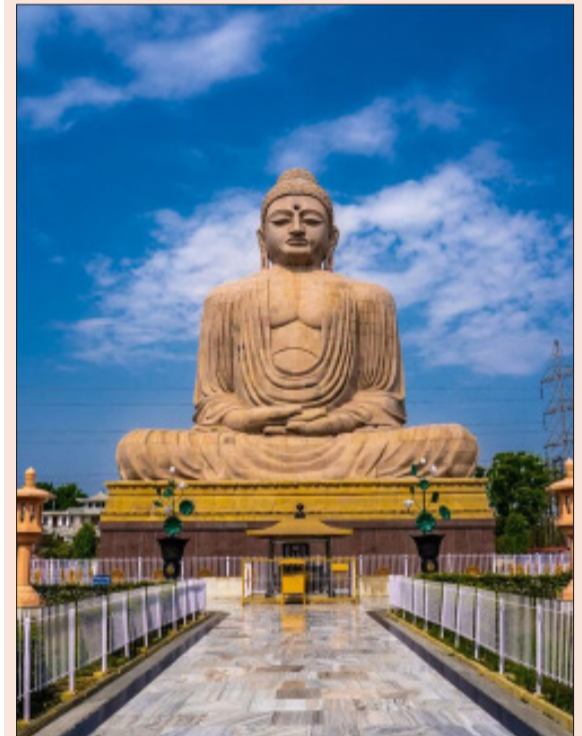
will help assess candidates' subject-wise proficiency more accurately and reduce the advantage of selective time management.

Significant changes have also been introduced in the second stage of the examination. Earlier, candidates were given a combined duration of one hour for Mathematical Abilities and Reasoning & General Intelligence. Now, both subjects will have separate sectional timings of 30 minutes each for solving 30 questions per section. Similarly, in Section B, candidates will get 40 minutes for 45 questions of English Language and Comprehension and 20 minutes for 25 questions related to General Awareness and General Knowledge. Previously, there was no such subject-wise restriction in the Tier-II examination.

Meanwhile, SSC has can-

celled the second and third shifts of the Constable GD Examination-2026 at five centres in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar on Monday due to technical issues. Examination centres in Prayagraj, Kanpur, Lucknow, Gorakhpur and Muzaffarpur were affected. Candidates faced inconvenience, while some aspirants created a ruckus at the I-Tech Zone centre in Jhansi, Prayagraj. The SSC Central Region office in Prayagraj issued an official notification confirming the cancellation. The commission said fresh dates for the affected examinations would be announced later and revised admit cards would be uploaded on the SSC website. Candidates have been advised to regularly check the official website for updates regarding the rescheduled examination and new admit cards.

Industry Leaders Meet to Bring More Domestic and Foreign Tourists



Bodhi Gaya, May 28: The Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) held a meeting at a private hotel in Bodhi Gaya on Wednesday to discuss issues related to tourism development and strategies to attract more visitors to the Buddhist pilgrimage town. Participants raised concerns related to tourism development, including inadequate publicity, infrastructure gaps and the need for improved facilities for visitors. Several attendees shared suggestions on how to strengthen tourism services and improve the overall visitor experience.

Tourist Information Officer Manmohan Kumar, Travels Association president Sandeep Kumar, secretary Rajiv Ranjan, Mrityunjay Kumar Rai, Ranjan Kumar, Brajesh Kumar and Sahendra Singh were among those present at the meeting, along with other tourism stakeholders.

operators, hotel owners and the administration would be necessary to increase the number of domestic and international tourists visiting the town. Participants raised concerns related to tourism development, including inadequate publicity, infrastructure gaps and the need for improved facilities for visitors. Several attendees shared suggestions on how to strengthen tourism services and improve the overall visitor experience.

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Within three months, the Bihar government hopes to provide tap water to 15 lakh uncovered families

Patna, May 28: Around 15 lakh families in Bihar are yet to receive tap water connections, with the majority belonging to Mahadalit communities, the state's Public Health Engineering Department (PHED) said on Wednesday. Addressing a press conference, PHED minister Sanjay Kumar Singh said the government aimed to provide piped drinking water to all remaining Mahadalit settlements within the next three months. According to the department, tap water supply coverage in Bihar has expanded significantly over the past decade. In 2016, only

2.66 lakh families had access to the facility, while by 2026 the number had risen to 1.87 crore households, covering around 93% of the state's families. The department said its overall target was to provide safe drinking water to approximately 2.02 crore families. PHED principal secretary Rajesh Kumar said more than 86,000 hand pumps across the state were currently non-functional, with many beyond repair.

He said repair work was underway for pumps that could still be restored. In south Bihar, around 1,000 new hand pumps are being installed



using funds provided by the Disaster Management Department.

Officials said the state installs an average of 5,000 hand pumps every year. To address water shortages during the summer, the department has arranged 475

water tankers, 15 water ATMs and 15 Jaldoot units.

The department also acknowledged delays in the payment of honorariums to maintenance workers due to pending land registration issues linked to water tanks. Officials said the matter

would be discussed in a meeting with the development commissioner on June 3. Engineer-in-chief Nityanand Prasad said action had been taken against contractors found negligent in project execution.

According to the department, 468 contractors have been debarred and 25 black-listed so far. The state government said large-scale rural water supply schemes using water from the Ganga, Sone and Sursar rivers were already operational in districts including Bhagalpur, Vaishali, Buxar, Begusarai, Bhojpur, Nawada and Nalanda.

These projects are aimed at addressing groundwater contamination caused by arsenic, fluoride and iron in several regions. Officials said 14 multi-village water supply schemes had become operational, while two projects were under construction. Surveys for two additional schemes have also been completed.

The department added that proposals for new multi-village water supply projects in districts including Supaul, Kaimur, Purnia, Muzaffarpur and Bhagalpur had been sent to the central government for approval.

The BJP will launch an outreach campaign highlighting the accomplishments of the Modi government

Patna, May 28: BJP state president Sanjay Saraogi said the party has planned to organise programmes at both level from June 5 to 21 to highlight the achievements of PM Narendra Modi govt's 12 years in office. He said development camps will also be held at the grassroots level to make people aware of the work done in the last decade. "Bihar has also benefitted significantly during the last 12 years. Numerous development projects across the sectors of roads, railways, infrastructure, health, education, and connectivity have gained



momentum. The benefits of the central govt schemes have reached crores of citizens in Bihar," he said.

Commenting on the Supreme Court's verdict regarding the SIR issue in Bihar, Saraogi said the verdict serves as a clear message to those

who have consistently questioned the electoral process and constitutional institutions for political interests.

He asserted that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and RJD's Tejashwi Prasad Yadav must now clarify to the people of Bihar the grounds on which

they attempted to create an atmosphere of confusion, mistrust, and apprehension regarding the Election Commission's procedures.

Saraogi said under PM Modi's leadership, India has achieved unprecedented milestones in the fields of development, good governance, self-reliance, and global prestige.

Saraogi said the world listens to India with seriousness, and the country's role under PM Modi's leadership on the international stage has become more influential than ever before.

Transport unions warn that starting on June 1, fares could increase by up to 25%

Patna, May 28: In Patna, the impact of rising inflation is becoming increasingly burdensome, especially following persistent hikes in petrol and diesel prices. As a consequence, auto drivers in the city have begun to implement arbitrary fare increases, and transportation unions are poised to raise fares by 20% to 25% starting June 1. This daunting situation is compounded by an emergency meeting of various unions, including those for autos, cabs, e-rickshaws, private buses, and trucks, which convened

at Tata Park Auto Stand near Patna Junction. Unions attribute the fare hike to escalating fuel costs, asserting that these increases are unavoidable amidst the prevailing inflation. Union leaders, expressing dissatisfaction with governmental inaction, indicated that if fuel prices are not rolled back, they will push for an official fare hike.

Rajkumar Jha, the general secretary of the All India Road Transport Workers Federation, highlighted that they had previously warned the government about adjusting rates

based on routes but received no response. Notably, even prior to any formal announcements, auto fares on four key routes increased by Rs5.

Private bus operators are also expected to finalize decisions on fare increases in a meeting scheduled for May 31, with potential hikes ranging from 15% to 20%. Following recent adjustments, bus fares on seven routes in North Bihar were raised by Rs50 to Rs100 since May 26. Uday Shankar Prasad, president of the Bihar Motor Transport Federation, en-

dorsed the planned two-hour strike on Thursday from 12 noon to 2pm, which will affect operations in Bairyaya and across Bihar.

Previously, the state transport department sanctioned a 15% hike on various bus routes; however, transport unions now propose a 20% to 25% increase, with short routes facing a rise of 25% and long-distance fares potentially escalating up to the same percentage. Thus, the financial strain on commuters is expected to exacerbate significantly in the coming days.

Ahead of the Shillong LS by-election, the NPP is holding a massive campaign in Nongstoin



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

Tynsong, along with Nongstoin MLA, Gabriel Wahlang, Rambrai-Jyrngam MLA and MDC, R.G. Momin and Lurshai Kharbani, former Mawsynram MLA Himalaya Shangpliang, and several other party leaders. NPP's MP candidate, Dr D.R.L.

Nonglait, was also present and addressed the gathering, highlighting the party's vision, principles, and commitment towards serving the nation and the community if elected to Parliament. The programme was chaired by G.

Marbaniang, Secretary of New Nongstoin shnong. Addressing the gathering,

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

of the people. Speaking on the occasion, Dr Nonglait elaborated on the principles and objectives behind his decision to contest the election and outlined his vision and plans that he intends to implement if elected as Member of Parliament.

Arunachal gov't inks MoA for 1750 MW Demwe Lower Hydroelectric Project



Itanagar, May 28: The government of Arunachal Pradesh on Wednesday signed a memorandum of agreement (MoA) with Greenko Demwe Power Limited for the implementation of the 1750 MW Demwe Lower Hydroelectric Project in Lohit district. Deputy Chief Minister Chowma Mein described it as a landmark moment for Arunachal Pradesh's hydropower journey. "Today, the GoAP signed the MoA with Greenko Demwe Power Limited for the implementation of the 1750 MW Demwe Lower Hydroelectric Project in Lohit district," he said. This is among the largest hydropower projects being developed in partnership with a private developer in the state and marks a major step towards harnessing Arunachal Pradesh's immense hydro potential for sustainable growth and clean energy generation. The project, proposed on the Lohit River near Parasuram Kund, is expected to generate about 7326 million units of clean energy annually and will bring significant socio economic benefits through infrastructure development, employment generation, improved connectivity, and investment opportunities. With an installed capacity of 1750 MW, the project will further strengthen Arunachal Pradesh's role in the renewable energy sector and accelerate the pace of development in the region. "Our government remains committed to responsible and sustainable hydropower development that balances progress, environmental responsibility, and the welfare of local communities. A new chapter of growth, opportunity, and transformative development begins for Arunachal Pradesh," Mein opined.

In response to PM Modi's request, Mizoram observes "NO OFFICIAL VEHICLE DAY" to conserve fuel



Aizawl, May 28: Mizoram observed 'No Official Vehicle Day' on Wednesday in response to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal to conserve fuel among other austerity measures. In accordance with a government notification issued recently, the initiative kicked off with government employees commuting to their respective offices using public transportation, relying on city buses, line buses, and Mizoram State Transport (MST) buses.

To facilitate a smooth commute for government staff, special transport schedules were arranged for the day. The fuel conservation drive comes as a direct response to the ongoing conflicts in West Asia, which have severely impacted the import and supply of fuel. The state government has announced that 'No Official Vehicle Day' will continue to be observed every Wednesday until further notice.

Meghalaya cabinet approves one-time settlement scheme for motor vehicle tax penalty

Shillong, May 28: The Meghalaya Cabinet on Wednesday cleared a one-time settlement scheme with up to 90 per cent exemption on penalties relating to motor vehicle tax, passenger and goods tax and fitness fees. The cabinet also approved proposed regulations on the use of name boards on Meghalaya government official vehicles and strengthen the forest administration in the state. Announcing the decision after the cabinet meeting, Chief Minister Conrad Sangma said many commercial vehicles had accumulated heavy dues over the years due to pending renewals of taxes and fitness certificates. "While the actual fees are modest, penalties imposed over time became dispropor-

tionately high, creating severe financial stress for many, especially local transporters who depend on these vehicles for their livelihood.

Keeping this in mind, and recognising that most transporters are our own local citizens, the Government has decided to grant 90 per cent exemption on penalties for pending fitness certificates and 80 per cent exemption on pending MV Tax and Goods & Passenger Tax," Sangma said. This one-time settlement will be valid till August 31, 2026 and is aimed at helping transporters return to normalcy, ease financial burden, and ensure better compliance moving forward. The Chief Minister urged all transporters and vehicle owners to take advantage of this opportunity and



regularise pending dues. The Cabinet has approved the proposed regulation on the use of name boards on official vehicles of the Government of Meghalaya. "To address the concerns around VIP culture, we had earlier introduced an SOP regulating the use of sirens,

lights, and other privileges on government vehicles.

In line with that, the Transport Department has now identified the specific positions authorised to use official name boards and prescribed a standard format based on designation," Sangma said.

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

Arunachal Pradesh to create dedicated ILP Department



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

ILP and APST matters on Wednesday. Student leaders, legal experts, representatives of political parties, CBOs and civil society organisations attended the meeting. The meeting also decided that a seven-member delegations from Arunachal Indigenous Tribes Forum, AAPSU, ST Bachao Andolan Committee and legal experts will hold a high-level follow-up meeting on May 29 to give final shape to a future roadmap in this regard. The decision followed the enforcement of a 36-hour shutdown on May 14 by

the ST Bachao Andolan Committee, a local organisation. The shutdown affected normal life in several parts of the State bordering Assam, specifically in Itanagar and Naharlagun. The ILP, issued under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation of 1873, is a temporary travel document that Indians who are not permanent residents of Arunachal Pradesh must possess to enter the State. Community-based and student organisations have been pressuring the State government to make the document forgery-proof.

Air India reduces domestic travel by 22%, while IndiGo reduces domestic travel by 5-7% and foreign travel by 17%

New Delhi, May 28: Air India and IndiGo are reducing domestic flight operations between June and August 2026. The airline said the move follows its earlier decision to trim select international services during the same three-month period. "In continuation of our previously announced adjustments to select international services between June and August 2026, we have temporarily rationalised operations on certain domestic routes during the same period, with a reduction in frequencies on select routes," Air India said in a state-

ment. According to the airline, the adjustments are "driven by the sustained impact of high fuel prices on overall operations."



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Veteran Congress leader RV Deshpande

New Delhi, May 28: Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah is likely to step down from his position on Thursday, thereby marking an end to his stint with the post and also bringing curtains down on an unending power tussle in the state. Veteran Congress leader and nine-time MLA RV Deshpande gave a near-confirmation of Siddaramaiah's exit during an interaction with the media persons on Wednesday. "This may happen tomorrow or the day after tomorrow," he said, when newsmen asked him

about the likely change of guard in the state. He also said that the news of Siddaramaiah paving the way for the rival camp came as a surprise to many like him, but the matter has been deliberated upon and decided by the Congress high command. "We tried to persuade him and urged him to continue as the Chief Minister, but that seems unlikely now, as he seems to have made up his mind," Deshpande said. The disclosures by Deshpande come ahead of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's crucial breakfast



meeting with his cabinet colleague on Thursday morning. It is after this breakfast meeting that the CM is likely to announce the power transition.

Centre says 'accept responsibility for CBSE OSM glitches, corrective measures underway'

New Delhi, May 28: Amid the CBSE results fiasco, education minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Thursday said the board has begun the reevaluation process for the Class 12 examinations and has top agencies, including IIT Kanpur and IIT Madras to oversee the OSM technology. He added that the board has collaborated with four PSU banks — SBI, Indian Bank, Bank of Baroda, and Canara Bank — for integrated payment gateways to support the process.

Speaking to reporters during a CBSE meeting, Pradhan said, "CBSE has involved top agencies, including IIT Kanpur and IIT Madras, to oversee the technology. Four PSU banks — SBI, Indian Bank, Bank of Baroda, and Canara Bank — have integrated payment gateways to support the process."

He added that the government acknowledges the discrepancies that took place during results, adding that it accepts responsibility



ty and promises corrective measures.

"The government acknowledges some discrepancies, accepts responsibility, and promises corrective measures. Officials will ensure that no student query is left unresolved and accountability will be ensured

at all levels..." "Around 17 lakh students took part, with nearly 98 lakh answer copies — about 40 crore scanned pages in total. For the first time, CBSE has introduced a digital evaluation system, aiming for transparency and student-centric reforms. Stu-

dents can now access their scanned answer sheets to check marks and raise queries. So far, about 4 lakh students have retrieved their answer sheets, covering nearly 11 lakh copies." Amid criticism over its On-Screen Marking (OSM) system, CBSE in a post on

X said that the On-Screen Marking (OSM) system is backed by a secure and robust IT platform and clarified that no compromises and vulnerabilities were reported in the actual evaluation process. The board defended the digital evaluation process, saying the platform is secure and has undergone multiple quality and security checks. It further assured students that answer books were processed through "multiple quality-control mechanisms. The Central Board of Secondary Education's (CBSE) new OSM system for Class 12 evaluation has come under criticism following a rise in complaints over alleged glitches and discrepancies during the re-evaluation process.

The controversy largely centres around claims by students that the scanned copies of answer sheets uploaded by CBSE did not match their handwriting, triggering concerns over possible answer-sheet mismatches in the digital

evaluation system. On-Screen Marking (OSM) was introduced by CBSE for Class 12 Board results starting 2026. Under this system, students continue to write exams in the same format but answer sheets are scanned digitally and evaluated online — which the board argues eliminates errors and reduces manual intervention. Some teachers had raised concerns over the new system, saying the lack of digital infrastructure and poor connectivity could pose potential problems. After the results, some school principals and teachers claimed that the system was introduced too quickly and teachers did not receive enough training.

"Many teachers, particularly in government schools, were not sufficiently familiar with the technology. Ideally, OSM should have been implemented next year after wider preparation," the principal said.

four missing as boat overturns in Bihar's Samastipur



Patna, May 28: At least three people drowned, and four others went missing on Thursday after a boat capsized in the midstream of the Ganga near Sultanpur Diyara in Bihar's Samastipur district.

Patna District Magistrate Dr Thiagarajan SM said 14 people from Bind Toli near Umanath Ghat under Barh subdivision had boarded the boat to travel to Sultanpur Diyara in Mohiuddin Nagar area, Samastipur, where they usually go to pick pointed gourds and carry out farming-related work.

On their return journey, the boat capsized near Sultanpur Diyara due to strong winds. Seven people were rescued by relief and rescue teams, while the bodies of three persons have been

recovered. The rescued persons were taken to a nearby hospital for treatment.

An SDRF team has been deployed to trace the four missing persons, with the Samastipur and Patna district administrations coordinating the search and rescue operations.

The deceased have been identified as Neelam Kumari (30), Shraavan Mahto (36), and his son Kashi Kumar (15). The injured include Rahul Kumar, Mamta Devi, Kabutari Kumari, and a 16-year-old girl, while the identities of three others injured are yet to be confirmed.

All those onboard were residents of Masumganj Bind Toli under Barh police station limits in Patna district.

Siddaramaiah signals exit at meeting with ministers as Karnataka prepares for transition

Bengaluru, May 28: Siddaramaiah on Thursday informed his Cabinet colleagues that he will step down as the Karnataka chief minister, signalling the start of a leadership transition within the Congress government that is expected to elevate deputy chief minister DK Shivakumar to the top post. According to party leaders familiar with the discussions, Siddaramaiah made the announcement during a breakfast meeting at Cauvery, the chief minister's official residence in Bengaluru, attended by Shivakumar and senior ministers, including Priyank Kharge, KJ George, MB Patil, Ramalinga Reddy and HK Patil.

Security around the residence was tightened as ministers and party leaders arrived through the morning. People aware of the meeting said Siddaramaiah told ministers that he intended to formally submit his resignation later in the day. He also informed them that a meeting of the Congress Legislature Party would soon be convened to elect a new leader of the Assembly and the next chief minister.



Speaking to reporters after the meeting, Karnataka home minister G Parameshwara said Siddaramaiah had invited ministers to thank them before demitting office. "The Chief Minister has called all the ministers for breakfast and before he resigns, he wants to thank all the ministers for their cooperation," Parameshwara said, indicating that Siddaramaiah's resignation was imminent. "I am not aware whether he was offered a position in Delhi; it is up to the

high command," he added. The developments followed several rounds of discussions in New Delhi involving Siddaramaiah, Shivakumar and the Congress leadership. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and leader of opposition Rahul Gandhi are understood to have separately met both leaders as the party worked out a leadership arrangement ahead of next month's Rajya Sabha elections.

Although neither the Con-

gress leadership nor Raj Bhavan had made a formal announcement by Thursday morning, senior party leaders privately acknowledged that a transfer of power was imminent. Questions over the timing of the resignation remained because Governor Thawarchand Gehlot was away from Bengaluru. Officials said he had left for Indore late on Wednesday night because of a family emergency and no confirmed return schedule had been communicated till Thursday morning.

Officials in the chief minister's office (CMO), however, said Siddaramaiah intended to send his resignation to the governor's office. The closed-door meeting came amid growing indications within the Congress that the leadership had settled on Shivakumar as Siddaramaiah's successor, though no official confirmation had been issued.

At the centre of the internal negotiations has been Shivakumar's longstanding claim that a power-sharing understanding was reached after the Congress victory in the 2023 assembly elections.

Blow-by-blow account of Rahul Gandhi and CBSE's faceoff over 'massive tampering' claim

New Delhi, May 28: Claims and counterclaims were exchanged between Congress MP Rahul Gandhi and the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) on Wednesday as the former alleged "massive tampering" with the board's On-Screen Marking (OSM) system to assess Class 12 board exam papers.

Rahul Gandhi claimed that the CBSE failed to answer questions raised over alleged irregularities in the evaluation. CBSE's new OSM system was used for digital evaluation of answer sheets for class 12 exams this time. The issue heated up after reports of glitches, alleged mismatches in answer scripts, and online trolling of a student who flagged discrepancies in his evaluated papers, appeared on social media.

Gandhi, on X, claimed that "millions of children across the country and their parents" were left "in shock" due to alleged manipulation in CBSE exam results. "There has been a massive tampering in the CBSE exam results, leaving millions of children across the country and their parents in shock," Gandhi wrote. He alleged that the company COEMPT, which was awarded the contract related to the digital evaluation process, had earlier operated under the name Globarena and was involved in controversies in Telangana in 2019. "Name changed but the intent the same, the nature the

same," Gandhi said. He questioned why the contract was awarded to the company and alleged that procedures may have been bypassed. "This isn't a mistake, it's a deliberate conspiracy," he wrote. "And Mr Modi? As always, no answers, no accountability, no shame," he wrote, referring to Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Gandhi also raised four questions regarding the award of the contract: "Why was the CBSE contract given to COEMPT, and on whose orders?" "Which rules and procedures were bypassed to award this contract to the company?" "COEMPT had already been embroiled in controversies under the name Globarena, why didn't CBSE know about it? Why weren't background checks done?" "What exactly is the connection between COEMPT's management and the Modi government?" "CBSE rejects the allegations regarding the award of contract to Coempt Edutech. It is erroneous, misleading and not based on facts," the board said.

CBSE added that due process had been followed while awarding the contract. "CBSE has followed the General Financial Rules protocols scrupulously in the awarding of the contract to the agency. CBSE floated the RFP for Digital Evaluation of Answer books for Board Exams 2026 on Central Public Procurement portal on 28.08.2025 and awarded the contract to the qualified

bidder," it said. Soon after CBSE's response, Gandhi posted again on X, saying the board had failed to answer the questions he had raised. "A denial is not an answer," Gandhi wrote. "Why are the Education Minister and CBSE unable to answer the four simple questions I have asked?"

"The future of 18.5 lakh students have been put in jeopardy. The problem came to light after Vedant Shrivastava, a Class 12 student, requested scanned copies of his answer sheets through the CBSE re-evaluation process due to unexpectedly low marks in Physics. After receiving the documents on May 23, Shrivastava claimed the Physics answer sheet linked to his roll number did not belong to him.

He posted side-by-side screenshots of his English and Computer Science papers on X to show that the handwriting on the Physics script was completely different. "I studied for an entire year. I sacrificed sleep, peace of mind, outings, everything for these exams. And now I don't even know whether my actual Physics paper was checked. Do students really deserve this?" Shrivastava wrote. Following his post, Shrivastava was heavily trolled online. Some users even called him "Pakistani" and "anti-national." Rahul Gandhi spoke out in support of the 17-year-old, accusing the BJP IT cell of targeting the student for seeking justice.

'Majnu Bhai would be proud': Portrait gifted to Bihar CM Samrat Choudhary by Patna builder goes viral

Patna, May 28: If you're active on social media, there are chances that you must have seen a portrait gifted to new Bihar chief minister Samrat Choudhary by a man named Sanjeev Shrivastav, identified in reports as a builder. The portrait has sparked reactions, with some users invoking the iconic 'Majnu Bhai' character of Bollywood film Welcome, to express their first thoughts on the artist.

Sanjeev Shrivastav, reportedly a builder, posted pictures on Tuesday of his meet with Samrat Choudhary on his Instagram, in which he was seen presenting several articles to the Bihar chief minister, the portrait being one of them. While the post still exists, the portrait presentation picture seems to have been deleted amid reactions over the same flooding social media.

"Cordial meeting with new CM of Bihar Samrat Choudhary and CMD of Pallav Raj Construction Sanjeev Shrivastav ji," caption of the post read. "Guess Who?" said the In-



dian Youth Congress on X, sharing a close-up of the portrait, in what appeared to be a sarcastic comment on the caricature-like sketch of the Bihar chief minister.

"This at least proves Samrat Choudhary is more tolerant than he appears,"

said another post by a user on X on the portrait. Whatever this man gifted to Bihar CM Samrat Choudhary, it certainly cannot be called a painting. Bihar CM Samrat Choudhary is a kind man, that's why this man confidently presented this bizarre artwork and

still managed to walk away safely," another X user said.

"Majnu Bhai would be proud... Bihar construction company director met CM Samrat Choudhary and gifted him this portrait masterpiece with full confidence... then proudly post-

ed all 4 photos on social media," one user wrote. "But after people started roasting the sketch online, the director quietly deleted the 4th photo containing the portrait while keeping the other 3 pictures up," the user added. Other social media content of the builder were also circulated by users parallelly, with one reel showing him entering a room while smoking, surrounded by who appeared to be his staff.

Samrat Choudhary was sworn in as the 24th chief minister of Bihar last month, becoming the first Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader to occupy the top post in the state. He was administered oath by Governor Syed Ata Hasnain at the Lok Bhawan in Patna, in the presence of JD(U) president Nitish Kumar, who gave up the chief minister's post a day ago after becoming a Rajya Sabha member last week, Union minister JP Nadda, and Chirag Paswan, who heads the Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas), the third-largest constituent of the ruling NDA in Bihar.

KPCC chief race gains ground amid succession buzz

Bengaluru, May 28: As Congress leaders in New Delhi work through competing demands over Karnataka's leadership structure, a parallel contest has begun taking shape inside the party, the race to succeed D. K. Shivakumar as Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee president if the current power-sharing discussions eventually alter the state's political hierarchy. The question of who controls the Congress organisation in Karnataka has moved to the centre of internal consultations alongside speculation over a possible transition involving Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister Shivakumar.

Party leaders familiar with the discussions said the Congress high command is attempting to avoid a prolonged factional confrontation by pursuing a calibrated arrangement rather than a disruptive leadership overhaul. Within that exercise, the KPCC president's post has emerged as a critical balancing position between rival camps. Among the leaders gaining traction in internal discussions is Satish Jarkiholi, who several Congress functionaries view as an acceptable organisational figure capable of maintaining working relations across factions. Jarkiholi, who currently serves as a working president of the Karnataka Congress, has publicly acknowledged that conversations around the organisational post are taking place.

"If the party leaders ask me to take up any responsibility, I will consider it and convey my opinion to the high command," he told reporters in Delhi on Tuesday, while adding that no formal discussions had yet taken place regarding the KPCC presidency. Earlier this year, Jarkiholi had also indicated that changes within the Karnataka Congress organisation appeared likely. "A change in the KPCC leadership is necessary and inevitable," he said in April, adding that the final decision would rest

with the party high command.

Congress leaders say Jarkiholi's administrative experience, social outreach and relatively non-confrontational image have strengthened his standing within the party at a time when the leadership is searching for equilibrium between competing groups. A senior Congress functionary said the next KPCC chief would play a central role in managing both organisational cohesion and election preparation ahead of the 2028 Assembly polls. "Satish Jarkiholi is being discussed seriously because he has administrative experience, organisational exposure and support among backward classes, Dalits and tribal communities.

The party also sees him as someone who does not provoke resistance across factions," the leader said on condition of anonymity. Apart from Jarkiholi, several other Congress leaders are also being discussed informally as possible contenders for the organisational post. Industries Minister M. B. Patil has figured in internal conversations because of his standing among Lingayat leaders and his organisational connections within the party. Former Bengaluru Rural MP D. K. Suresh, Shivakumar's brother, is also among the names being discussed by leaders close to the deputy chief minister.

Some party insiders believe his appointment could help preserve organisational influence if the party eventually separates government and organisational leadership. Others privately fear such a move could deepen factional divisions within the state unit. Home Minister G. Parameshwara is also viewed by some Congress leaders as a possible consensus candidate because of his earlier tenure as KPCC president and his long association with the organisation. But party insiders said ministerial responsibilities and changing caste calculations could complicate such a move.

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Editorial

The Need to Preserve Traditional Skills

Traditional skills and crafts are gradually disappearing as industrial production and modern lifestyles dominate markets. Artisans and skilled workers often struggle to sustain livelihoods due to declining demand and limited support. These traditional practices represent cultural

identity, local knowledge, and generations of expertise. Once lost, they are difficult to revive. Preserving traditional skills requires market access, institutional support, and public appreciation for handmade and local products. Modernisation should not erase cultural heritage.

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

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

imply that deals are always like this, once again confusing commercial Floridian real estate with the fanatical remnants of a dysfunctional regime in whose interest it is to play him. On the plus side, this is all the perfect excuse to bin off attending your child's wedding. Or as Trump preferred to put it on his thwarted desire to schlep to the Bahamas: "Circumstances pertaining to government, and my love for the United States of America, do not allow me to do so." Weird – those are exactly the words I'm hoping will get me out of my next destination-second-wedding-invitation. I feel it strikes the perfect balance between "solemnity" and "any old shit". We all know the old Taco rule – Trump Always Chickens Out. But does Trump perhaps always flake too – or certainly seek to? Could it be, for a simple-souled psychopath, that a self-launched war that never quite ends up being resolved is the absolute holy grail of social bailing: the perfect rolling excuse not to have to do things he doesn't want to do? Many ordinary flakers get like this when they have children, realising that they now have the perfect long-term citation to get out of any social occasion they're not quite

feeling by texting at 5pm about vomiting bugs/rashes/fevers/not-a-fever-but-definitely-an-elevated-body-temperature. Truly, children are precious in myriad ways. Personally, I would try serial social flakers at The Hague, but I don't make the rules. So in more ways than one, Iran is Trump's baby. On the one hand, it's an unnecessarily self-started conflict that is racking up civilian casualties, will fail even on its own aims, has destabilised an already perilously destabilised region, and is causing a severe energy-supply shock that the world is only on the threshold of seeing the huge, varied and in some cases catastrophic effects of. On the other: it gets you out of boring things that require effort, travel and you not being the centre of attention for up to 30 minutes. But let's see Earth's leading flaker put this excuse into action. Asked last week in the Oval Office if he'd be attending Don Jr's wedding, Trump replied: "He'd like me to go ... I'm going to try and make it. I said: 'You know, this is not good timing for me. I have a thing called Iran ...' That's one I can't win on." If your first thought was: great, he's finally admitting he can't win on Iran – maybe we can

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

The Surat split paradigm: Bangladesh's radical plan

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



university campuses and in Dhaka's business sectors, the ICS has created a network of new, ostensibly autonomous IT cooperatives, data analytics companies, and student welfare societies. These organizations serve as institutional washing machines; a former BCL coordinator enters as a politically vulnerable target and leaves as an independent technology consultant or social entrepreneur who is "clean." The second-rung leadership of the BCL and the next generation of AL traditionalists have already taken the deliberate, group choice to join the JeI fold, so this strategic migration is no longer a subject of far-off conjecture. These young political actors have no realistic domestic alternative for self-preservation because the ruling BNP state apparatus targets them with systemic victimization, legal warfare, and physical purges because to an urgent need for insti-

tutional survival. The JeI provides much more than just a physical and legal defense against state-sponsored retaliation for this highly aspirational and politically educated group. It offers a special chance to rethink ideologies. These former BCL cadres can overcome the stigma associated with the corruption and dictatorial excesses of the Hasina regime by entering a highly disciplined organizational structure. However, the parent JeI leadership has successfully used this migration as a shield, much as the historical Surat Split shown that a strongly determined, radical cadre can entirely marginalize moderate individuals. The incoming "moderates" lack the institutional or ideological power to change the party's fundamental goals. They are being used as technocratic executors instead. In the meantime, the puritanical hardliners have prevailed in the internal

conflict, swiftly destroying the secular-linguistic consensus that characterized Bangladesh after 1971 and returning the state's social structure to a time when religious orthodoxy predominated. Bangladesh's strategic direction is aggressively changing on two fronts, with the extremist side securely securing the ideological core. A significant geopolitical realignment has been made possible by the disintegration of the post-1971 cultural paradigm. The present course indicates a methodical "Pakistanization" of the eastern seaboard of the Bay of Bengal. The hardline leadership is building strong institutional, military, and intelligence ties with Rawalpindi because they have similar ideological underpinnings and a strong desire to undo the historical consequences of 1971. As a counterweight to regional powers like India, this systemic realignment has progressed to the

point where elite theological and political circles are actively debating a formal, sovereign confederation—or a strategic merger relating Bangladesh with its former western wing. Concurrently, the governmental machinery is being transformed into a highly advanced, digitally advanced implementation of a Nizam-e-Mustafa (Order of the Prophet). This new Islamic authority, far from being a closed-off, antiquated government, uses state-of-the-art technology, a global public relations network, and sophisticated surveillance techniques to impose totalitarian religious rule domestically and project power overseas. This technologically advanced global Salafism exhibits surprising diplomatic adaptability.

It upholds strict, unyielding Islamic control at the top. However, at its core, it conducts transactional, very pragmatic foreign policy with major world powers. For example, by positioning itself as a stable, anti-anarchy anchor in the region, it maintains vital maritime security and counterterrorism discussions with Washington while simultaneously securing vital infrastructure development and digital surveillance tools from Beijing. This entire government concept is united by a systemic, unyielding anti-Indian stance. The hardline regime effectively neutralizes domestic dissent, ensures the permanent exclusion of secular alternatives, and solidifies its position along the vital sea lines of communication in the Bay of Bengal by portraying New Delhi as an existential threat to the Islamic state and its economic sovereignty. Opponents of this notion might believe that the AL's former leadership, particularly Sajeeb Wazed Joy, holds the key to its future.

However, Joy's capacity to lead the AL's remains from his US base has reached an impassable barrier. His digital decrees have no operational significance within Bangladesh due to the party's permanent outlawing and the freezing of its financial pipelines. As a result, his public relations campaigns are reduced to the echo chamber of an exiled elite. Joy's power is quickly waning as the domestic constituency shifts toward

survival and other coalitions. Cut off from the machinery of state power and unable to protect his fractured grassroots base, he will inevitably fall into political obscurity, much like his mother Sheikh Hasina, whose physical and legal confinement in Delhi solidifies her permanent exclusion from the political future of the region. The short-sighted alienation strategies of the ruling BNP have forced the new generation of traditional Awami Leaguers into the JeI, which has unintentionally created the ideal cover for a significant structural change. The state's ideological core has been safeguarded by the puritanical vanguard, even though these new members present an impression of moderation and administrative continuity. This hardline leadership is effectively eliminating the socio-cultural borders of 1971 by combining an uncompromising Nizam-e-Mustafa with cutting-edge international technology and reorienting the nation's strategic orientation against Pakistan. By doing this, they are creating an extremely strong, fiercely anti-Indian, and internationally interconnected Islamist state right on the Bay of Bengal. Moreover, there are increasing signs of a more profound and well-thought-out geopolitical alignment beneath this significant internal change. Strong evidence and covert diplomatic indicators suggest that Washington and JeI's top leaders are currently in discussions to develop a comprehensive strategy to create this new situation, with an early 2028 start date. In addition to acting as a strong maritime barrier to keep an eye on the Bay of Bengal, a highly disciplined, technocratically run Islamist state in Dhaka provides the United States with a stable, corruption-resistant option to the BNP's previous volatility. By discreetly approving this change, Washington hopes to safeguard its vital Indo-Pacific sea lines with a stable, if puritanical, government that is prepared to exchange fierce anti-India rhetoric for Western security alliances, thereby solidifying Bangladesh's transformation into a hyper-securitized, internationally integrated Islamic republic by the start of the decade.

Assam as a pillar of India-Bhutan relations

Bhutan's Prime Minister Dasho Tshering Tobgay visited Assam, demonstrating the state's strategic significance in strengthening India-Bhutan bilateral relations. Assam's enormous economic potential is highlighted by the Bhutanese PM's visit, which comes just over a year after King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck visited the state in April 2025. Deep sociocultural connections and exchanges between Bhutan and Assam have existed for generations, offering a strong basis for fostering interpersonal interactions and expanding trade and commerce between Bhutan and India. Economic activity on both sides of the international border might be advantageous because Assam shares the longest portion of the border between India and Bhutan. The Gelephu Mindfulness City project in Bhutan, which is situated just across the Assam-Bhutan border, has drawn attention from investors worldwide, and Assam is quickly emerging as a top choice for Indian and international investors. Additionally, the Kokrajhar-Gelephu rail link has established

Assam as a vital facilitator of cross-border expansion and economic development throughout the areas bordering Bhutan and India. The aspirations to turn the landlocked border regions into a well-connected economic zone have been rekindled by the neighboring countries' push for infrastructure and cross-border connectivity. The Bodoland Territorial Region will become a major Assamese economic center once these connection initiatives are fully operational. When the Bhutanese King visited the state last year, he examined the Multi-Modal Logistics Park (MMLP) in Jogighopa and the Inland Waterways Terminal. The improved connectivity made possible by the port's modernization and the MMLP has increased the Himalayan Kingdom's confidence in making Assam a major location for high-level exchanges with India. The IWT port at Jogighopa is a crucial port for Bhutan's exports to third countries, including Bangladesh. The state's remarkable achievement in reestablishing and preserving total peace and normalcy in BTR, which runs the length of the

Assam-Bhutan border, has given Bhutan greater confidence to interact with Assam, opening the door for faster infrastructural development. Once a center of ethnic violence and insurgency, BTR was transformed into a center of economic growth thanks in large part to Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. The importance of Chief Minister Sarma's role in bolstering India-Bhutan relations and making every effort to establish Assam as a crucial pillar of India's Neighbourhood First policy is demonstrated by his four-day visit to Bhutan in 2024 to discuss bilateral issues, including cooperation in the energy sector, trade and commerce, education, and healthcare. Just one month after Chief Minister Sarma took office for a second term, the Bhutanese PM visited the state and met with Assam Governor Lakshman Acharya. This meeting made it very evident how important it is for the Himalayan kingdom to promote Assam as a major international destination for investors and decision-makers. By approving the reservation of five seats in the state's medical colleges for

Bhutanese nationals, the Assam Cabinet under Chief Minister Sarma during his previous term sent a clear message that Assam should be positioned as a major player in socio-economic engagement rather than merely a conduit for trade and commerce. The Bhutanese PM's reiteration of their "shared commitment to further strengthening the close and enduring ties between Bhutan and Assam" has sparked renewed hope for advancing the partnership in a number of areas. Assam's tourism industry might grow significantly if cross-border connection projects are completed quickly. Assam and Bhutan can also provide each other with specialized tourism products. In order to encourage more visitors from Assam to experience the stunning natural scenery and rich cultural legacy of the Himalayan monarchy, Bhutan is thinking about easing the sustainable development charge. In order for India and Bhutan to jointly address issues of environmental protection, wildlife conservation, climate change impact, and water resource management in the basins of tributaries

of the Brahmaputra flowing from Bhutan hills, particularly better management of flood and erosion in the downstream areas, stronger cooperation between Bhutan and Assam is also essential. The growing significance of Assam as the center of bilateral engagement has created new opportunities for the state to advance its agenda at the high table and maximize the benefits of bilateral and multilateral projects in the region, even though these are matters of bilateral discussions at the level of the Ministry of External Affairs. Maintaining the pace will need Assam to accelerate its own economic operations and infrastructure development initiatives. It will also be essential to align the Bodoland Territorial Council's development objectives with the state's larger strategic strategy of strengthening links with Bhutan in order to provide BTR residents with new economic prospects. The state now has a critical chance to convert diplomatic momentum into tangible economic gains on the ground thanks to the revived vigor of Assam-Bhutan engagement.

Axis MF anticipates a short-term surge if from implementing tightening measures

Mumbai: India's bond market may be entering a more challenging macro environment as rising crude oil prices and geopolitical tensions alter inflation and interest-rate expectations, but bond investors should resist the urge to turn defensive and instead use volatility to gradually build duration exposure, according to Axis Mutual Fund. In its latest fixed income strategy note, the fund house said India is moving into a "materially different macro regime" from previous oil-driven stress episodes such as 2013, 2018, and 2022. The ongoing Middle East conflict and a sustained rise in crude prices beyond the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI's) assumptions is creating simultaneous pressure on inflation, the rupee, growth and fiscal balances. For India, the challenge is amplified because of its structural dependence on imported energy, the fund house said. Against that backdrop, the fund house recommends fixed income investors not to retreat from duration. "Investors could buy fixed income assets, but gradually," the fund house said. It added: "Markets appear excessively pessimistic in the near-term. If the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) opts for a pause after measured tightening, avoids emergency liquidity tightening or signals growth support — bond yields could rally in near-term by



20-25 basis points." According to Axis MF, investors may consider a measured addition to duration exposure under three conditions: RBI avoids panic tightening; crude prices stabilise; and policymakers introduce measures to attract dollar inflows. India imports nearly 85 per cent of its crude requirement, making the economy highly sensitive to oil shocks. According to its estimates, every \$10 increase in crude prices can widen the current account deficit (CAD) by around 40-45 basis points of the gross domestic product (GDP),

lift inflation by 45-60 basis points, and increase fiscal pressure if fuel taxes are cut to absorb the shock. "Yet, unlike earlier cycles, India entered this phase from a position of relative strength, supported by lower private leverage, healthier banks, stronger foreign exchange reserves, improved fiscal credibility, global bond index inclusion, and deeper domestic financial savings," Axis MF said. Yields on 10-year Government bonds are holding the 7-per cent mark, suggesting that the bond markets appear positioned for a much

more aggressive policy response. Axis MF said overnight indexed swap (OIS) markets are pricing nearly 75-100 basis points of rate hikes, government securities are carrying elevated term premiums, corporate bonds reflect tighter liquidity expectations, while money markets are pricing possible liquidity-tightening measures. However, the fund house believes markets may be overestimating the extent of tightening. Its base case is that RBI is unlikely to respond to rupee weakness with a 2013-style aggressive rate-hike cycle.

Inflation bodes well for FMCG companies Harini Dedhia

Mumbai: Post the start of the war in West Asia, Crude has spiked to over \$100 a barrel and stayed there. We have seen the first set of hikes in fuel prices across the board recently. Fuel prices result in higher logistics prices for every good in the country and, therefore, sustained higher inflation; the secondary impact simply compounds this effect. Common economic logic dictates that higher prices result in lower demand. As a result, our first order of thinking would suggest selling or avoiding consumer and FMCG companies altogether. However, there is no historical basis for the same. Having witnessed a prolonged period of benign inflation in the last decade as a country, we should have expected FMCG companies to witness great volume growth, if not value. However, the opposite has been true. FMCG companies have struggled at 7-8 per cent growth, with most witnessing a pare down of operating margins as well post the pandemic. When we look at all instances of prolonged periods of low and high inflation in the 21st century, three distinct 5 year phases stand out. *The average for the 2017-2021 period has been pushed higher due to inflation during the pandemic lockdown. Normalised for that, the average inflation was 4% for that period. Contrary to expectations, sustained higher inflation results in outperformance of the FMCG segment vs. NIFTY 50. This outperformance is not particular to a year or two but remains so through the period, as seen in the average 3-year rolling return for the period as well. Benign inflation results in benign stock price performance as well. The primary reason I be-

lieve this happens is that inflation lends a pricing power to FMCG companies that otherwise struggle to move away from standardised MRP rates of 5/- 10/-, etc. Periods of higher inflation, therefore, see an acceleration of sales growth for the FMCG companies. It is easy to reduce the underperformance of FMCG in the current decade to a factor of size (too big to dance) and increased competition (from new age brands). This period of anaemic growth was, however, even more pronounced in the 2000-2004 period. The ability of the large FMCG giants to constantly improve margins in 5-year blocks has been astounding. They have repeated it regardless of the inflationary scenario they find themselves in, and therefore, despite the sales growth they are able to register. Margins cannot rise to infinity, but constant improvement programs across the board seem to eke out some positive delta in any scenario. It almost seems foolhardy then for an investor to draw a first principles conclusion of inflation being bad for consumers and therefore consumption stocks altogether. Brand power shows even in mass and mass affluent categories, large organised players are able to gain share at the expense of underfunded smaller peers, and people revert to trusted brands in times of constraints rather than experiment with new brands. One of the above stated or all might be at play during sustained high inflation periods. With this history and the significant under ownership of consumer names owing to underperformance in the post-pandemic rally, it is perhaps wise not to disregard FMCG companies just yet.

Stocks making the biggest moves midday Eicher Motors, LG Electronic

Mumbai: Benchmark indices stayed firm through midday trade on May 22, with the Sensex hovering around 75,716 levels and the Nifty 50 holding near 23,810. Yet the session was not being driven by index strength alone. Earnings expectations, stake sale activity, licensing updates and deal-related developments created sharper moves beneath the surface. Autos, consumer names, banking and IT remained active as traders repositioned around company-specific triggers. Here are the top movers and shakers at this hour:



Eicher Motors share price traded over 2% higher in the intraday trade ahead of the company's Q4FY26 results announcement, with attention centred on whether volume momentum at Royal Enfield can continue to offset cost pressures building across the supply chain. April sales data strengthened sentiment ahead of results. Royal Enfield reported total sales

growth of 31% year-on-year at 1,13,164 units compared with 86,559 units a year earlier. Royal Enfield continues to dominate the mid-size motorcycle category with market share above 88%, giving Eicher a strong position as domestic demand remains healthy. Central Bank of India share price declined more than 6% intraday after the government opened its 4%

stake sale for institutional investors through an Offer For Sale. The government also included a greenshoe option to sell another 4% stake, taking the total possible dilution to 8%. If fully exercised, government ownership in the bank would reduce from 89.27% to 81.27%. The transaction is expected to raise as much as Rs 2,456 crore. Retail participation in the OFS is

Nifty ends above 24,000, Sensex climbs over 1,000 points

New Delhi: The Indian domestic indices ended today's trading session on a strong note as investors returned to buying amid improving global cues, easing crude oil prices and broad-based gains across sectors. Both the benchmark indices closed more than 1% higher, extending the positive momentum seen during the intraday session. The Sensex ended the session at 76,488.96, gaining nearly 1073.61 points or 1.42% during the day. Meanwhile, the Nifty settled above the crucial 24,000 mark at 24,031.70, up around 312 points or 1.32. The Nifty Bank also finished the session firmly in the green at 55,293, rising nearly 1238 points or 2.29%. The rally was largely driven by optimism surrounding easing geopolitical tension in West Asia, a sharp correction in global crude oil prices and buying in heavyweight banking, auto and financial stocks. One of the biggest triggers behind today's market rally was the sharp fall in crude oil prices. Brent crude prices slipped below the psychologically important \$100 per barrel mark, while West Texas Intermediate crude also witnessed a steep decline during the day. The correction in oil prices came after improving hopes of progress in discussions linked to the US-Iran situation, which eased concerns over global oil supply disruptions. Broader



market participation remains strong. Today's rally was not limited only to benchmark stocks. Broader market participation also remained healthy as investors continued buying across several sectors. Banking, financials, auto and real estate stocks saw strong momentum during the session, while consumer durable and oil & gas counters also traded firmly in positive territory. One of the biggest triggers behind today's market rally was the sharp fall in crude oil prices. Brent crude prices slipped below the psychologically important \$100 per barrel mark, while West Texas Intermediate crude also witnessed a

steep decline during the day. The correction in oil prices came after improving hopes of progress in discussions linked to the US-Iran situation, which eased concerns over global oil supply disruptions. Broader market participation also remained healthy as investors continued buying across several sectors. Banking, financials, auto and real estate stocks saw strong momentum during the session, while consumer durable and oil & gas counters also traded firmly in positive territory.

Tata vs L&T vs Bharat Forge: Race to build India's 5th-generation fighter jet

Mumbai: The Defence Ministry on Wednesday formally kicked off the selection process for a private-sector partner to build India's indigenous fifth-generation Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA) by issuing a Request for Proposal (RFP) to three shortlisted bidders: Tata Advanced Systems, Larsen & Toubro (in partnership with Bharat Electronics Ltd) and Bharat Forge (in collaboration with BEML), defence officials said. The move marks the first time private firms are in direct contention to lead development of a next-generation fighter for India's armed forces. RFP issued to 3 private contenders



The RFP sets out the government's expectations for a fast-tracked, high-ambition programme under the Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA), which will execute AMCA through an industry partnership. Under the approved Programme Execution Model, private and public sector firms are to be treated equally and compete on capability and delivery. Notably, state-run Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL) has not been included among the shortlisted contenders. Ambitious timelines and delivery milestones The RFP specifies that the winning bidder must incorporate a new Indian company within three months of selection; this entity will sign the contract and be the programme lead. Foreign shareholding in the new company is restricted to passive institutional in-

vestments allowed under Indian law and the company must remain under the ownership and control of resident Indian citizens. These clauses reflect longstanding national security and indigenous design priorities. Industrial partners and past experience Of the three bidders, Tata Advanced Systems brings prior experience of setting up production lines in India, having partnered with Airbus to assemble C-295 transport aircraft in Vadodra, Gujarat. Larsen & Toubro has partnered with Bharat Electronics Limited for this bid, while Bharat Forge has an arrangement with public sector firm BEML. The selected industry lead will work closely with ADA, the DRDO-affiliated design agency, to devel-

op prototypes, integrate systems, conduct testing and scale up production. The RFP imposes tight delivery schedules. The document requires the first flight of the AMCA prototype within 30 months of contract signing and mandates a 1,800-sortie flight test programme to be completed within 84 months before the platform can transition to series production. The first prototype is expected to be rolled out by 2029 and will initially fly with the GE F414 engine, according to the RFP. Five prototypes are planned under the programme and the Indian Air Force (IAF) intends to induct seven AMCA squadrons beginning with series production from 2035. The total outlay for the AMCA programme is

Adani Ent, Bajaj Auto, Voda Idea, 16 more BSE 500 stocks hit 52-week highs

Mumbai: Adani Enterprises, Bajaj Auto, Vodafone Idea, Angel One, Gland Pharma, HFCL, Timken India and Varun Beverages are among the 19 stocks from the BSE 500 index that hit a new 52-week high in intra-day trade on Monday. Of these 19 stocks, Hindalco Industries, KEI Industries, Polycab India, Apollo Hospital Enterprises, Anand Rathil Wealth, GE Vernova T&D, Manappuram Finance, Navin Fluorochemicals, Torrent Pharmaceuticals and J B Chemicals & Pharmaceuticals touched their respective all-time highs in intra-day deals. At 01:57 PM on Monday, the BSE Sensex was up 1.2 per cent at 76,293, while the BSE Smallcap and Midcap Select indices were up 1.2 per cent and 0.75 per cent, respectively. Meanwhile, the Nifty 50 hit 23,995.90, and up 1.2 per cent in intra-day deals. "We are starting the week on a positive note. Crude has dipped by \$5 to below \$100 on expectations that US and Iran are close to a deal. The market will wait and watch for clarity and certainty since many similar expectations have been belied since the start of the war. If this expected deal holds and crude drifts down, that can turn out to be turning point for the market," said Dr. VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Investments Limited. Another positive trend is the better-than-expected Q4 results. An important trend to note is the impressive growth of most digital platform companies. The market has been rewarding performance. The appreciation in the rupee from the recent low of 96.96 is a welcome trend. Stability in the currency is

necessary to bring back the FPIs who have been on a sustained sell mode. The resilience of the market during this period of crisis is a hugely positive factor. This is a reflection of partly the economy's strength, and partly the confidence of Indian investors, said Dr. VK Vijaykumar. Overall, market sentiment is likely to remain highly sensitive to developments around the US-Iran negotiations. A positive outcome, combined with a sustained move above 24,000, could help bulls regain stronger control of the market, according to technical analyst at Axis Securities. Among individual stocks, Adani Enterprises soared 5 per cent to ₹2,858 in intra-day deals. The stock price of Adani Group's flagship company surpassed its previous high of ₹2,800 touched on May 15, 2026. Shares of Vodafone Idea hit a fresh 52-week high of ₹14.05, up 2.2 per cent on the BSE in intra-day trade. The stock price of telecom services company was quoting higher for the fifth straight day, soaring 9 per cent during the period. In the past one month, the market price of Vodafone Idea has zoomed 48 per cent, as against 1 per cent decline in the BSE Sensex. Meanwhile, Adani Power, integrated power utilities of Adani Group, surged 6 per cent to ₹232.80 in intra-day trade. The stock quoted close to its all-time high of ₹234.35 touched on May 5, 2026. According to Business Standard report, global brokerage Bernstein said the worst may be over for Adani group, as concerns around leverage, share pledges and access to overseas funding have eased significantly after the resolution of recent US-related legal overhangs.

GOP Senator Cassidy Loses Primary After Trump Backs His Opponent

London: Republican Senator Bill Cassidy of Louisiana, a two-term incumbent, lost his primary after President Trump backed his challenger, Congressman Julia Letlow. Cassidy is the first GOP senator in nearly a decade to lose renomination. President Trump had vowed revenge against Senator Cassidy after he voted to impeach Trump following the January 6 insurrection. In his concession speech on Saturday, Senator Cassidy made an apparent reference to Trump, saying, "Our country is not about one individual." Sen. Bill Cassidy: "And when you participate in democracy, sometimes it doesn't turn out the way you want it to. But you don't pout. You don't whine. You don't claim the election was stolen. You don't find a reason why." President Trump endorsed Representative Julia Letlow, who finished first in Saturday's primary with 45% of the vote. Louisiana

state Treasurer John Fleming came in second with 28%. Both of them will advance to a runoff in June.

President Trump took to Truth Social to celebrate Senator Cassidy's defeat and went after Kentucky's Republican Congressman Thomas Massie, who co-authored the bill compelling the Justice Department to release the Epstein files. Trump wrote, "Tom Massie of Kentucky, the worst and most unreliable Republican Congressman in the history of our Country, is an even bigger insult to our Nation than Senator Bill Cassidy of Louisiana, who suffered an unprecedented loss tonight by not even being allowed to run in the Republican Primary. This is the first time such a thing has ever happened to a sitting U.S. Senator!" President Trump escalated his threats against Iran on Sunday, posting on Truth Social,

Iran killed at least six people in

southern Lebanon, including three paramedics on Friday, just hours after the U.S. State Department announced Israel and Lebanon had agreed to extend their ceasefire by 45 days, following two days of negotiations in Washington. Israel then continued strikes into the weekend, killing at least five more people while injuring over a dozen in a series of air attacks on southern and eastern Lebanon on Sunday.

More than 670 people have been killed by Israeli strikes on Lebanon since the ceasefire first took effect in mid-April.

And the number killed since early March is rapidly approaching 3,000. More than 1 million people, one in five Lebanese, have been forced to flee their homes. "For Iran, the Clock is Ticking, and they better get moving, FAST, or there won't be anything left of them." Ceasefire negotiations remain

deadlocked over Iran's demands for war reparations, an end to the U.S. blockade and a halt to fighting in Lebanon. On Sunday,

A drone strike sparked a fire at an electrical generator on the perimeter of the UAE's Barakah nuclear power plant, the first and only nuclear power station on the Arabian Peninsula. No group claimed responsibility, but the UAE has faced repeated Iranian drone and missile attacks since the war began in February.

Meanwhile, The New York Times reports that Israel built two covert military outposts in Iraq's western desert in advance of its war against Iran, with preparations for at least one site dating back to late 2024. According

The Wall Street Journal, Baghdad had notified Washington in late March over suspected covert military activity, calling it a violation of Iraqi sovereignty.

Jill Biden says she thought husband was having

London: Former US First Lady Jill Biden says she thought her husband, President Joe Biden, was having a stroke during his infamously faltering presidential debate in 2024. "I was frightened, because I had never ever seen Joe like that before or since. Never," Jill Biden told CBS News, the BBC's US partner. "I don't know what happened," she said. "As I watched it, I thought, 'Oh, my God, he's having a stroke.' And it scared me to death." President Biden faced intense pressure from fellow Democrats to step down as their candidate after a poor debate performance against then-Republican candidate Donald Trump. Biden ultimately dropped out of the race and endorsed then-Vice-President Kamala Harris. The former first lady's interview with CBS News Sunday Morning's Rita Braver will air on Sunday. Jill Biden has stood beside her husband throughout his decades-long career, from his time as a Delaware senator to his years as president. She was considered to be one of his most influential advisers during his presidency, and among those who ultimately encouraged him to drop out of the 2024 race. Following the June 2024 debate, months ahead

of the presidential election, Democrats expressed unease at the president's shaky debate performance. Biden's campaign at the time insisted the president would not step down as the Democratic candidate and that he would debate Donald Trump again.

During the debate in which both men sought a second term, Biden and Trump sparred on major topics including immigration, the economy and abortion rights. Biden had a raspy voice, which his team said was because he was ill, and a moment where he seemed to lose his train of thought.

At a post-debate rally in Atlanta, Jill Biden introduced her husband on stage and praised his performance against Trump. "Joe, you did such a great job. You answered every question. You knew all the facts," she told the crowd elsewhere. Democratic leaders and donors expressed concerns about the then-president's performance. Kamala Harris, who rarely criticised Biden publicly, even admitted it was a "slow start" to the debate. Voters' concerns about Biden's health, mental acuity and age - 81 at the time - already weighed heavily on the debate.

Local elections in England indicate an increasing number of for Labour, whereas Reform UK is experiencing victories

London: As Reform makes major gains and Labour loses councillors in the local elections, the extent of the electoral problem confronting the party has become evident. Senior officials described the campaign as "tough," and Keir Starmer's party was predicted to lose up to 1,850 council members going into Thursday's local elections. The prime minister's initial findings, which showed Labour losing councillors in its traditional northern heartlands, were dismal. At approximately six in the morning, Reform seized control of its first council and overthrew Labour as the dominant force in Newcastle-under-Lyme. Nigel Farage, the leader of the party, said that his party was "scoring stunning percentages in traditional old Labour areas" and called the early results a "historic change in British politics." The political scientist Prof Sir John Curtice told the BBC that while Reform was clearly winning the most votes in early counts, it had "probably not" reached 30% of the vote, an indication of the fracturing of British politics. Curtice said: "It may well be now that Labour lose rather less than the 1,500 seats that perhaps some people said was potentially the tipping point for attempts to unseat Keir Starmer." "[Reform] are basically being trailed by four parties that are all of them just a little bit below 20% or so, somewhere between 15 and 20%, but are actually at the moment quite difficult to disentangle." He added that the Greens were struggling to convert votes into seats

because they were getting "far too many creditable second and third places". Reform were the runaway winners in north-east England. They won every single one of the 12 seats up for grabs in Hartlepool. It means Labour, which had a slim majority and was defending six seats, is likely to become the opposition. Because only a third of the council was being elected, Reform will not have an outright majority. The party will have to make deals with independents in order to take control. Labour councillors and supporters were noticeably despondent at the count in Brierton sports centre. The town's Labour MP Jonathan Brash watched his wife, Pamela Hargreaves, the leader of Hartlepool council, lose her seat. He told the Guardian he was angry and repeated his call for Starmer to go. "It has been a terrible night for the Labour party," he said. "What I've seen here is extraordinarily good, hard-working Hartlepool people lose their seats. I've seen canvassers working night and day in this election and it's all been for naught and the reason has absolutely nothing to do with them. They are delivering for this town, they have been delivering for this town and the reality is we need change at the top of the Labour party. I think the very best thing the prime minister could do now is address the nation tomorrow and set out a timetable for his departure. We can then have an orderly transition, one that, by the way, ensures the full breadth of talent within the Labour party is able to stand, should it want to." John

McDonnell, the former shadow chancellor under Jeremy Corbyn, said a leadership change must be "on the agenda" if the results overall prove "the nightmare as we are worried it will be". But he added: "If there is to be a leadership change, it has to be an orderly transition, not a coup." The Green deputy leader, Rachel Milward, told the BBC her party was optimistic about taking control of Hackney council in east London and said: "We will make some exciting breakthroughs ... this will be seen as a step change moment for us as a party." But she suggested that because of the electoral system the number of seats gained would not match the Green share of the vote across the country. The Liberal Democrat deputy leader, Daisy Cooper, hailed the party's "stonking results" in local elections so far, pointing to the party taking control of councils in Stockport and Portsmouth. She said in a statement: "The Liberal Democrats are on a record-breaking winning streak. We are heading for our eighth set of local election gains in a row and are on track to beat Labour and the Conservatives once again." The turnout was 31.5%, slightly higher than the 28% of the last local elections in 2024. In Halton, Cheshire, Labour held two of the 17 seats it was defending as Reform UK gained 15 councillors in the first council to complete its count on Friday. In some wards, Reform won with more than 50% of the vote in an area where last year it won the Runcorn and Helsby by-election by just six votes.

NASA monitors Mexico City's descent at a rate of up to 2 centimeters every month



Americas: It's disorienting to stroll across Mexico City's expansive central Zócalo. The capital's cathedral, with its towering spires, slumps in one way at one end of the square. The Metropolitan Sanctuary, an adjoining church, tilts in the opposite direction. The National Palace, which is close by, likewise appears to be in disarray. The most obvious indication of a phenomenon that has been going on for more than a century—Mexico City is sinking at an alarming rate—is the teetering of many of the capital's ancient structures. Thanks to one of the most potent radar systems ever sent into orbit, the city's decline is now being monitored in real time. Even despite dense foliage or cloud cover, the satellite, known as Nisar, is able to detect minute changes in the Earth's surface. According to Marin Govorčín, a scientist at NASA's jet propulsion laboratory, "Nisar takes radar imaging observations of Earth to the next level." Every alteration, no matter how minor, that occurs on Earth every week will be seen on Nisar. This cannot be claimed by any other imaging mission. Though not the first time that Mexico City's sinking has been observed from space, the Nisar mission has provided a greater sense of how far the sinking spreads and how it changes across different types of land than any other space-based sensor.

It has also been able to penetrate areas on the outskirts of the city that were previously challenging to study

because of the complex terrain. The implications of the imagery extend far beyond the Mexican capital. "This study of Mexico City speaks to the realm of possibilities that will open up thanks to the Nisar system," said Darío Solano-Rojas, an engineer at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (Unam). "And not just for sinking cities but also for studying volcanoes, for studying the deformation associated with earthquakes, for studying landslides." According to Nasa, the technology is also capable of monitoring the climate crisis, glacier sliding, agricultural productivity, soil moisture, forestry, coastal flooding and more. "Images like this are just the beginning," said David Bekaert, a project manager at the Flemish Institute for Technological Research and a member of the Nisar science team. "We're going to see an influx of new discoveries from all over the world." The Nisar system, a joint initiative between Nasa and the Indian Space Research Organisation, found that some areas of Mexico City, including at the city's main airport, were sinking by more than 2cm a month, one of the fastest subsidence rates in the world. Among the clearest examples of this rapid descent is the Angel of Independence statue on the city's main Paseo de la Reforma avenue. Completed in 1910 to commemorate 100 years of Mexican independence, the 36-metre monument has had 14 steps added to its base as the land around it has gradually sunk. But

the impact of Mexico City's subsidence can be seen across the metropolis of about 22 million people, from tilting buildings to warping roads and damages to the underground metro system. Efraín Ovando Shelley, another engineer at Unam, said: "It affects the entire urban infrastructure of the city: the streets, the pipes for water distribution, the water supply, the drainage pipes." First documented in 1925, the city's sinking is a result of centuries of exploitation of the groundwater. Because Mexico City and its surrounds were built on an ancient lake bed, the soil beneath the city is extremely soft. When water is pumped out of the aquifer below, this clay-like earth compacts, resulting in a city that is quietly sinking. Govorčín said: "Mexico City is subsiding primarily due to pumping of groundwater from the aquifer below the city at a rate that far exceeds natural recharge from precipitation. As water is withdrawn, the aquifer compacts under the weight of the city above it." The underground aquifer still contributes about half of the capital's water supply. As pumping of the groundwater has increased, the aquifer's shrinking has intensified, with the water table now contracting by about 40cm a year.

This creates a vicious cycle: as the city sinks in on itself, the ageing pipes that pump water across the urban centre end up cracked and broken, with the capital losing an estimated 40% of its water due to leakage. Add to that the climate crisis, which has resulted in years of low rainfall, and the metropolis may be hurtling towards a disaster scenario in which taps in swaths of the city run dry. As for the city's gradual descent, there have been limited efforts to tackle the problem beyond fortifying the foundations of ancient buildings. Experts say the Nisar imagery will help draw greater attention to the issue, although actually halting the descent will be a challenging task. "To stop the sinking, we would have to stop water extraction," Shelley said. "And if we stop water extraction, what water are we going to drink? The standard joke is that if we can't drink water, well, let's drink tequila."

After being evacuated from the hantavirus-affected ship, two Britons are "improving" in the hospital

Europe: According to international health experts, two Britons who were medically evacuated from the hantavirus-affected cruise ship are doing better. A 69-year-old man from Britain was transported to South Africa on April 27 and is currently being treated at a private medical institution in Sandton, Johannesburg. Martin Anstee, a 56-year-old British expedition guide, was removed off the MV Hondius on Wednesday and sent to the Netherlands for specialized medical treatment. According to Dr. Maria Van Kerkhove of the World Health Organization (WHO), one Briton was in critical care in South Africa, and two patients, one of whom was known to be British, were still in hospitals in the Netherlands. "I am very happy to say the patient in South Africa is doing better, and the two patients in the Netherlands we hear are stable," she stated during a WHO news conference. Thus, it is very excellent news. Five of the eight probable cases as of Thursday were identified by laboratory testing as hantaviruses, an uncommon family of viruses spread by rodents. Two of the passengers' birding excursions to Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay before to joining the ship have been linked to the epidemic, which has resulted in three deaths. Spanish authorities have given permission for the ship to anchor in the Canary Islands, despite concerns from locals and officials, and the boat left the shores of Cape Verde at 3.15pm local time on Wednesday, the tour operator Oceanwide Expeditions said. It is estimated to arrive at the port of Granadilla in Tenerife in the early hours of Sunday. Morale on board has improved since the ship started its journey to Tenerife, the WHO said. Two doctors are on board along with infectious disease experts from the WHO and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, who are conducting a medical assessment of everyone on board. While the risk to the public is low, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the director-general of the WHO, said there could be more cases due to the incubation period of the Andes virus - the variant of hantavirus linked to the outbreak - which can be up to six weeks. He said: "While



this is a serious incident, WHO assesses the public health risk as low." He thanked the ship's operator for its cooperation, and the passengers and crew, "who are going through a very difficult and frightening situation". The WHO is not expecting the outbreak to be an epidemic, according to Dr Abdirahman Mahamud, the director at the alert and response coordination department. He highlighted a similar outbreak in Argentina in 2018-19 which led to 34 cases. Seven British people were among 30 from 12 nations who left the ship when it docked in the remote South Atlantic island of Saint Helena, including a Dutch woman who became unwell during onward travel and died. The woman was accompanying her husband's body, which was being repatriated after he died on the ship on 11 April. On Thursday, a woman in Amsterdam, reported to be a flight attendant who came into contact with the woman who died, came forward with potential symptoms. Oceanwide Expeditions said guests who had disembarked have been contacted. The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has been asked whether it can confirm it has been in touch with all seven Britons who left the ship on 24 April. It has previously announced that two Britons who had already returned from the vessel are isolating at home and do not have symptoms. Contact tracing is happening for anyone who may have sat next to them on the flight home. The two people

contacted health officials when they heard about the cases on the ship. Nineteen British nationals were listed as passengers on the MV Hondius, which was sailing from Argentina to Cape Verde, with four British crew members. UK health experts said British passengers on board will be asked to self-isolate in the UK for 45 days. Prof Robin May, the chief scientific officer at the UKHSA, said: "For the broader public, not directly involved in this cruise ship, the risk here is really negligible." The Foreign Office is arranging a charter flight so the remaining Britons on board the ship who are not displaying symptoms can be repatriated once they dock in Tenerife in the next few days. According to the UKHSA, none of the British citizens on board are reporting symptoms, but they are being closely monitored. May said the "most extreme case of incubation" of hantavirus "may be up to eight weeks", but the general consensus was that people needed to isolate for "probably six weeks, and so that's the period of isolation, 45 days, that we're likely to be recommending". Three people were taken off the ship on Wednesday to the Netherlands for treatment, including Anstee, an expedition guide and former police officer. Speaking from hospital, he told Sky News: "I'm doing OK. I'm not feeling too bad. There are still lots of tests to be done. I have no idea how long I'll be in the hospital for. I'm in isolation at the moment."

'Traceability is vital': labs test thousands of unregulated substances amid peptide craze

People in the UK are sending thousands of unregulated substances that claim to support weight-loss and wellness to laboratories for testing, as experts say the underground market for injectable peptides has exploded.

The peptide-testing industry has expanded rapidly alongside demand for these substances, with one lab telling the Guardian that a decade ago, they handled a handful of tests a month sent by customers and vendors around the world to check what was in them. Today, they process around 60,000 samples a year, including roughly 2,000 orders from the UK since 2024. Peptides are short chains of amino acids. These can be found naturally in the body – for example hormones, such as insulin, oxytocin and vasopressin are peptides – but they can also be made synthetically in the laboratory.

They include the active ingredients in prescription weight-loss drugs, such as Wegovy, which mimic the natural hormone GLP-1, as well as in experimental compounds pushed online by the booming biohacking and anti-ageing industries. On Telegram and TikTok, users claim the injections can heal injuries, sharpen focus and smooth wrinkles.

Unlike medicines such as Wegovy, however, many of these experimental peptides are unapproved by regulators, with experts warning the compounds lack reliable safety data and quality control. Many are sold with labels stating they are "for research purposes only", even as customers inject them into their bodies.

Finnrick, a peptide testing laboratory in Texas, said about a third of the thousands of products it analysed failed basic quality checks, and that proportion had stayed broadly unchanged over the 12 to 14 months it



had been gathering data. The failures typically fall into three categories: identity, meaning the substance is not what the label claims; purity, with anything below the 98% threshold considered substandard; and quantity, where the vial contains either more or less than the stated milligram dose. The result, the lab said, was that buyers were frequently not receiving the compound, or the amount, for which they believed they had paid.

Finnrick typically buys peptide products itself for testing, saying it prefers to analyse samples bought through the same channels used by

ordinary customers rather than accepting products directly from vendors. In June last year, the lab also began accepting samples submitted by members of the public. Any products that came directly from vendors were flagged as such on its website.

Sometimes these peptides are essentially bootleg versions of approved drugs – such as semaglutide, the active ingredient in Wegovy, or tirzepatide, the active ingredient in the weight-loss jab Mounjaro – but are procured for a fraction of their market price from dealers online. Because they are sold as compounds "for re-

search purposes only", and in some cases are not formally classified as medicines, vendors are able to exploit a legal grey area with little regulatory oversight. Dr Luke Turnock, a senior lecturer in criminology at the University of Lincoln, said: "There are risks that you don't necessarily know that what you think you're buying is in fact the product that it claims [to be], and also you don't know if it's over-dosed or underdosed. "And in terms of if you do get the correct thing, the main risks are we do not have that long-term clinical data," he said. "We don't know the potential harms you

could be doing longer term, such as increased cancer risk [or] damage to organs that you might not even perceive whilst you're using them." Peter Magic, a chemist at Janosik Analytical, a laboratory in the Czech Republic known for testing peptides and performance-enhancing drugs, said the volume of samples arriving for analysis each month had rocketed to 5,000. "Roughly three or four years ago there was an exponential growth in demand, mostly for peptides," Magic said, attributing the boom to the arrival of highly effective GLP-1 drugs. "Especially with the advent

of semaglutide ... we've seen an insane explosion with that, then with tirzepatide, and now with retatrutide, which is the most modern one available." Retatrutide is a weight-loss medication that is being tested in clinical trials and has not yet been approved for use in the UK – meaning it is illegal for the peptide to be sold and supplied. Magic said the UK was in the vanguard of this explosion in testing. While the US and China dominated the market, he noted that the UK tied with Canada for third place, generating roughly 2,000 testing orders since 2024. "I would say the UK is a rather big peptide market," he said. "It's a populous country, and the peptide market is closely related to performance-enhancing drugs. Often it's the same factories, the same vendors and the same distribution channels." The large profit margins were also drawing dangerous players into the supply chain. "You can buy a vial for about \$15 from China and sell it on for 10 times that," Magic said. "That attracts a lot of people, including some nefarious actors. It is easy money, and it is not treated as seriously as selling narcotics or anabolic steroids." Analysis of more than 5,000 peptide-related videos on TikTok found that 64% were from US-based accounts. UK creators were the second largest group, making up 16% of the videos. Prof Amira Guirguis, the chief scientist at the Royal Pharmaceutical Society, said: "Websites that sell peptides in a retail-style way, often with labels like 'research use only', sit outside the usual controlled systems. Where substances have biological effects or, when introduced in the body, can change one or more physiological functions, questions about oversight, traceability and quality assurance are vital."

Open plan is not the answer: design professionals on the dos and don'ts of small space living

In 2010 Colin Chee picked up the keys to his 37 square metre off-the-plan apartment in Melbourne's city centre. "It was only then that I realised how shit it was."

With no design experience and a limited budget, his quest to find inspiration eventually led to the birth of Never Too Small, a YouTube channel showcasing clever designs for small spaces from around the world. Launched in 2017, it now has more than 3 million subscribers. A housing crisis and a surge in apartment building means more Australians are searching for ways to make the most of small-scale abodes.

This weekend Chee will join Claire Scorpo, a director of Agius Scorpo Architects, and Tahj Rosmarin, a director of Card Practice, for Small Spaces, Big Living – a free talk at the National Gallery of Victoria. In the lead-up to the event they share their experiences of designing their own diminutive domiciles.

Formulate your furnishings

When we move into a new space the first instinct is to settle in as quickly as possible. But Chee cautions against hasty fit-outs in smaller spaces. He urges people to move in with whatever they have that fits, then take time to live in a space before trying to find solutions. "People think a home needs to be finished instantly," Chee says. "But what I try to convey is that homes will never be perfect."

Small spaces take more time to understand, he says, and we should regard our living spaces like a flatmate; with pros and cons,

good days and bad.

When he moved into the 40 sq m converted warehouse he now shares with his partner, those extra 3 sq m felt like a luxury. To keep costs down the apartment was furnished with a mix of second-hand items and budget customisations. Economical solutions, Chee says, are essential for most people living in tiny homes: "If I was rich, I'd live in a bigger house. Budget is our biggest consideration."

In the kitchen Chee placed a bar fridge and a separate small freezer to avoid the bulk of one large unit. He installed a DIY entryway shelf, months after moving in, once he was clear on the purposes it needed to serve. He looked for "skinny legs"

when sourcing furniture, which he says maximises the floor space you can see, giving an illusion of spaciousness. Instead of a coffee table, he says, "maybe you just need a stool for your drink" that can double as a step ladder. Rosmarin installed a piece of multi-functional custom joinery along the main wall of the living space in his North Melbourne apartment. He and his partner store their camping gear beneath the bench seat in their dining nook. Measuring six metres long, the piece also functions as a display shelf and a television cabinet. At a cost of about \$5,000 it wasn't cheap but it serves so many purposes – "It just removes the need for any other furniture."

Don't default to an open plan

Rosmarin says 1960s walk-ups like his have great external features but inside the trend was to box everything off, making things feel poky.

"What we tried to do is connect the spaces a bit better while still keeping that sense of separation, because that is especially important for small homes – you don't want to feel like you're in just one big room." Rather than demolish the wall between the kitchen and living areas, the couple knocked through a cafeteria-style window.

"It created a bit of visual connection so that when you're in the kitchen, you can see people in the living



area but it also hides all the mess."

Demolishing load-bearing walls is expensive, he adds, "so creating these tactical openings" also helps with the budget.

When Scorpo and her husband – who's also her business partner – moved in together at the Cairo block in Fitzroy, it was a badly renovated bedsit. In the tiny bathroom, they managed to retain the bath and divided the space in half using a fluted glass partition that diffuses light, while breaking the room

into separate dressing and bathing areas.

The most sanity-saving design choices keep rooms usable for different purposes by two people at the same time," she says. "We get lured into the idea that open-plan living is the best kind of design for small spaces but often that one big space can only do one thing at once." Make use of vertical space

With just 23 sq m of floor space to work with, Scorpo's first step was to downsize to a double bed. And rather than let it dominate

the space, the couple created a "nook" to conceal it. As long as you don't have mobility issues, Scorpo says, it makes sense to eliminate wasted bedside space, elevate the bed for storage – a washing machine, in their case – and climb in. Scorpo's is custom designed and built but Chee says there are countless "hacks" online that make DIY bed elevation more affordable. Having set themselves a \$5,000 budget to upgrade their space, he and his partner leaned into Ikea and Bunnings solutions that

emulate custom options while being considerably cheaper.

"We used an Ikea Elvarli modular shelving system, salvaged some wood for the shelves and had that cut to size," Chee says. While Chee's Federation conversion has 3.3-metre-high ceilings, for apartments with more standard dimensions, raising shelving and curtain rods as close as possible to the ceiling accentuates height. Painting those ceilings with a glossy paint, he says, adds to the illusion too.

Preity Zinta Reflects on Punjab Kings' Mixed IPL 2026 Form

New Delhi: Punjab Kings (PBKS) co-owner and celebrated Bollywood actress Preity Zinta has voiced her deep emotional gratitude to the franchise's fanbase, characterizing their turbulent and heartbreaking IPL 2026 campaign as a literal "rollercoaster ride." Reflecting on the competitive season, Zinta emphasized that the erratic journey of the team was made significantly more meaningful and wholesome because of the unwavering loyalty and unconditional love radiated by the supporters throughout the grueling tournament.

Taking to X (formerly Twitter) shortly after the Punjab Kings' campaign officially drew to a close in the league stage, Zinta penned a heartfelt note to connect with millions of fans, encapsulating the dramatic emotional swings that defined their season. "A big thank you to all the supporters of PBKS for standing strong with us all through the rollercoaster ride of IPL 2026," Zinta shared. "From the highs to the lows & everything in between.... felt more wholesome with all of your love Till we meet again, all my love & best wishes #Ting." The Punjab Kings had entered the IPL 2026 edition under an intense media spotlight and carrying the massive baggage of expectations. Having finished as the runners-up and finalists in the previous edition of the tournament, the fran-

chise was heavily backed to go all the way this time around. In the initial phase of the tournament, they looked exactly like the formidable powerhouse everyone expected. PBKS completely dominated the points table during the first half of the season, stringing together a phenomenal six-match winning streak that left opposing teams completely searching for answers.

However, the momentum shifted drastically and unpredictably in the crucial second half of the league stage. The winning momentum evaporated, and a series of narrow defeats severely dented their campaign. Despite their early-season brilliance and mathematical advantage, PBKS suffered a catastrophic slip in form, ultimately missing out on the coveted playoff spots by the skin of their teeth. They bowed out in fifth place on the standings with 15 points—just a single agonizing point short of the top-four cut-off required to qualify for the next stage. A High-Octane Cinematic Comeback While the cricket season ended in heartbreak, Preity Zinta is redirecting her energy toward a massive year on the silver screen. The actress is gearing up to delight cinephiles with a highly anticipated return to mainstream Bollywood, headlining two distinctly versatile and massive film projects. Zinta is locked to star alongside ac-

tor-director Kunal Kemmu in the upcoming high-stakes action-comedy titled Vibe. Produced under the newly minted banner of Drongo Films by Kunal Kemmu and Chirag Nihalani, the movie holds special significance as it marks the production studio's maiden venture into commercial filmmaking. Scheduled for a grand theatrical release later this year on September 18, Vibe features a stellar supporting cast, including Laapataa Ladies breakout star Sparsh Shrivastava in a pivotal role, alongside promising debutante Vanshika Dhir. The narrative of Vibe centers on two inseparable friends whose mundane, ordinary lives are abruptly turned upside down by an unpredictable, high-energy adventure, pushing their survival instincts and the core of their friendship to the absolute limit.

Additionally, Zinta will be seen portraying a powerful character in the historical drama Lahore 1947, directed by veteran master storyteller Rajkumar Santoshi. Backed by Aamir Khan's production house, the film is an epic narrative set against the tumultuous and emotionally charged backdrop of the Partition of India. The project boasts a powerhouse ensemble cast led by action icon Sunny Deol as the main protagonist, flanked by veteran actress Shabana Azmi, Ali Fazal, and Abhimanyu Singh in crucial, high-impact roles.

"Aditya Dhar's 'Chandragupta Maurya' Faces Uncertainty Amid Ranveer Singh's FWICE Row"

Ranveer Singh's ongoing FWICE controversy has now raised serious concerns around several of his upcoming films. The actor's projects, including Aditya Dhar's Chandragupta Maurya film and the zombie thriller Pralay, are reportedly facing uncertainty after the Federation of Western India Cine Employees issued a non-cooperation directive against him.

The situation has become one of Bollywood's biggest talking points because the directive came after Ranveer Singh's reported exit from Don 3, which producers Farhan Akhtar and Ritesh Sidhwani allegedly claimed caused major financial losses. The Federation of Western India Cine Employees (FWICE) issued the non-cooperation directive on May 25 following complaints linked to Don 3. Reports claimed the producers suffered heavy losses after Ranveer Singh allegedly walked away from the project during pre-production. The move has now sparked concern across the Hindi film industry because FWICE represents multiple workers' unions connect-



ed to film shoots, including technicians, spot staff, make-up artists, lighting teams and costume workers. One of the biggest concerns right now is the future of Pralay, which is expected to begin filming in August. According to reports, the film is expected to involve nearly 500 crew members across different departments.

Since FWICE has 34 vendor associations under its umbrella, there are fears that the directive could affect production schedules if workers refuse to cooperate. According to a Mid-Day report, a source close

to the production questioned whether the move would ultimately hurt daily wage workers more than the actor himself. "In the Hindi film industry, where over 70 per cent of the daily wage earners are already out of work because not many films are being made, shouldn't the FWICE allow them to work instead of taking opportunities away with this directive?" The report further stated, "As for 'Pralay', in the worst-case scenario, Ranveer can take the cast and crew and shoot the movie anywhere in India." It also added that non-members of FWICE

cannot legally be stopped from working and productions outside Mumbai may hire local crews from other unions.

FWICE Says The Directive Has Real Power FWICE chief advisor Ashoke Pandit, however, maintained that the directive remains effective because of the federation's reach across the industry. "The FWICE directive is effective because our federation has 34 vendor associations under it. He further added, "If they don't have vendors, workers, and technicians, who will they shoot with? People under-

estimate the strength of the federation. The situation can only be resolved if everybody sits together and sorts it out amicably." Producers May Move Competition Commission The report also claimed that producers associated with Ranveer Singh's upcoming films are considering approaching the Competition Commission of India (CCI) over the directive. A previous 2017 case involving filmmaker Vipul A Shah reportedly saw the CCI rule that non-cooperation directives and restrictions on hiring non-members could amount to anti-competitive conduct under the Competition Act. A producer linked to one of Ranveer Singh's projects reportedly said anonymously, "If this situation escalates further, producers may collectively approach the commission for intervention." What Happens Next For Ranveer Singh? Apart from Pralay, Ranveer Singh is also attached to Aditya Dhar's historical project based on Chandragupta Maurya and is reportedly in discussions with YRF chief Aditya Chopra for another film.

"Huma Qureshi on Trolling: How Constant Criticism Affects Mental Well-Being"

Mumbai: Huma Qureshi recently opened up about facing online trolling and body-shaming during the early years of her career, revealing how harsh comments about her appearance deeply affected her confidence. The actress candidly spoke about dealing with insecurities and explained how she gradually learned to embrace herself despite constant public scrutiny.

Huma Qureshi was seen attending Double Date, a chat show hosted by Neha Dhupia and Angad Bedi. She recalled how her confidence was shattered because of being judged. "After my second film, I started reading a lot of negative comments about my looks and appearance. It really affected me, and I became very withdrawn for a while. I think when you are con-



stantly being judged, it starts impacting your confidence." She opened up about dealing with insecurities and online criticism, "Over time, I realised I had to cut out the noise and focus on myself. I started meditating, writing about my feelings, journaling, and even

taking therapy. Slowly, I became more secure about myself and the way I looked. Today, I can laugh at jokes, even crack jokes about myself, and take things in a much more positive way. I feel far more confident and comfortable in my own skin now," Huma

added. Huma Qureshi's Work Front

During an interaction with Brut India at the Cannes Film Festival, Huma Qureshi was asked whether audiences have become more accepting of women-centric cinema and if more Hindi adaptations of

female-led films are on the horizon. The actress replied, "I hope we don't do any remakes. I hope we do more original content. We have so much potential in our country to have our own kind of female forward narrative. We have such a diverse country. Look at our mythology, culture. Look at the stories that come from our country. I feel like the focus should be on that constantly."

The actress is set to captivate audiences in Geetu Mohandas' directorial venture Toxic: A Fairy Tale for Grown-Ups, where she will essay the dark and intriguing character of Elizabeth. The action thriller, headlined by Yash, brings together an ensemble cast including Nayanthara, Kiara Advani, Tara Sutaria, Rukmini Vasanth, and Sudev Nair.

"Anees Bazmee Looks Back as Salman Khan's Cult Comedy 'Ready' Turns 15"

Anees Bazmee turned nostalgic as Salman Khan's blockbuster entertainer Ready completed 15 years. Celebrating the milestone, the filmmaker shared a heartfelt note along with a throwback collage featuring himself and Salman Khan from the sets of the 2011 comedy film.

Taking to his Instagram stories, Anees Bazmee shared a throwback collage featuring himself alongside Salman Khan during the shoot of 'Ready', "15 years later... and Ready still feels less like a film, more like a memory we all grew up with together. What stays with me isn't just the scenes or the songs, it's the love people continue to give it even today. The messages, the smiles, the nostalgia... all of it has kept this journey alive far beyond the screen. Thank you for giving so much love to Ready." Released in 2011, Ready starred Salman Khan alongside Asin and featured an ensemble cast including Paresh Rawal, Mahesh Manjrekar, Manoj Joshi, and Sharat Saxena. Packed with comedy, action, romance, and chartbuster songs, the film emerged as a massive box office success and became one of the highest-grossing Hindi films of the year. The movie's songs, especially Dhinka Chika and Character Dheela, continue to enjoy popularity among fans. Salman Khan's work front

Salman Khan is currently busy shooting for his upcoming film, Maatrubhumi, which was earlier titled Battle of Galwan. Ever since the film underwent



a title change, the internet has been speculating on the reason behind it. Amid the ongoing rumours, it was being said that Salman decided to rework the script and change the narrative from a war story to a peaceful patriotic drama. However, the fresh report suggests that Maatrubhumi was never a war film. While it is based on the backdrop of the 2020 Indo-China clash, it rather sends out a message of peace. Meanwhile, the film, also starring Chitrangda Singh, was set to hit theatres on April 10. However, it is now pushed ahead. The makers are yet to announce the new release date. Apart from this film, Salman has an untitled project with producer Dil Raju, which will be helmed by Vamshi Paidipally. The film was announced recently by Salman

and the makers. Anees Bazmee's Untitled Family Entertainer To Release On THIS Date In December? Akshay Kumar is reportedly gearing up for another big-screen entertainer, this time with filmmaker Anees Bazmee. According to recent media reports, the duo's untitled family entertainer is eyeing a grand theatrical release in December, although an official confirmation from the makers is still awaited. As reported by 123 Telugu, the film will hit theatres on December 4, 2026. The untitled film stars Vidya Balan and Raashii Khanna as the female leads. A major portion of the shoot has already been completed, and Anees Bazmee is planning to wrap up filming by the end of May. The title and further updates are expected to be revealed soon.

"Nawazuddin Siddiqui Joins the Cast of Sohum Shah's 'Tumbbad 2'"

Mumbai: Acclaimed actor Nawazuddin Siddiqui is trading festive celebrations for film cameras this Eid, as he officially begins shooting for the highly anticipated sequel to the cult classic Tumbbad. The actor revealed that it will be a working festival for him, expressing immense enthusiasm for his inclusion in the dark, mythological universe. "It is going to be a working festival for me. Even on Eid, I am shooting for Tumbbad 2," Nawazuddin shared from the sets. "I am very excited about bringing this character to life because it has multiple layers."

The original Tumbbad, which released in 2018, was a groundbreaking period folk-horror film directed by Rahi Anil Barve and Anand Gandhi. Starring Sohum Shah as Vinayak Rao, the film followed a man's obsessive, treacherous search for a hidden 20th-century treasure guarded by a fallen god in a cursed Maharashtra village. It etched its name in history by becoming the first Indian film to ever screen in the prestigious Critics' Week section at the 75th Venice



International Film Festival. The sequel, Tumbbad 2, is being directed by Adesh Prasad and produced by Sohum Shah under the Sohum Shah Films banner in association with Pen Studios, with distribution handled by Pen Marudhar. The makers officially announced the project earlier this year, teasing fans with a dark poster and a chilling caption: "A sinful past, an ominous future. The hunger rises, the legacy of greed continues..."

The film is officially slated to hit theatres on December 3, 2027. For Nawazuddin, tackling complex, layered characters is second nature. After starting his career with brief appearances in films like Sarfarosh, Shool, and Munna Bhai M.B.B.S., he shot to fame with powerhouse performances in Anurag Kashyap's Black Friday and the Gangs of Wasseypur duology. Since then, he has built an illustrious filmography featuring critically ac-

claimed and commercial hits alike, including The Lunchbox, Kick, Bajrangi Bhaijaan, Raman Raghav 2.0, Raees, Mom, and Manto. Nawazuddin has also made waves on the global stage, starring in two International Emmy-nominated series—Netflix's Sacred Games and the British crime drama McMafia. His collaboration with the Tumbbad franchise promises to be another landmark entry in his celebrated career.

India Wins U23 Asian Freestyle Team Title, Bags 27 Medals



New Delhi: The Indian men's freestyle wrestling team secured the Team Championship Trophy at the U23 Asian Wrestling Championships in Da Nang, Vietnam, engineering a spectacular first-place finish. India dominated the freestyle standings to claim the top spot ahead of continental powerhouses Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, who finished second and third respectively. This historic victory capped off a sensational campaign for the entire Indian contingent, which amassed a staggering total of 27 medals—comprising eleven gold, seven silver, and nine bronze—across the Freestyle, Women's Wrestling, and Greco-Roman categories. The championship-winning men's freestyle squad wrapped up their dominant run with nine medals, including four gold, three silver, and two bronze. Akshay T Dhere (57kg) and Vicky

(97kg) initially set the tone with brilliant gold-medal performances. That momentum was seamlessly carried forward by Kumar Mohit (65kg) and Chandermohan (79kg), both of whom stood atop the podium. Meanwhile, Deepak Rathi (61kg), Punit Kumar (92kg), and Lacky (125kg) contributed to the historic team title with hard-fought silver medals, while Deepak Berwal (74kg) and Mor Sachin (82kg) rounded out the freestyle tally with crucial bronze finishes. "Lifting the U23 Asian Championship Trophy is a monumental achievement for Indian wrestling and a moment of immense pride for the entire country. Our freestyle grapplers have shown unparalleled determination and technical superiority to finish ahead of top wrestling nations," said Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) President Sanjay Singh. "Across

all three styles, our athletes have proven that the future of Indian wrestling is incredibly bright." India's women wrestlers were equally clinical throughout the tournament, delivering an exceptional performance to capture ten medals. The women's contingent brought home a remarkable six gold medals, with Muskan (53kg), Tapasya (57kg), Bhagyashree (62kg), Pulkit (67kg), Mansi (68kg), and Kajal (76kg) all showcasing their technical superiority in their respective title clashes. Neha (59kg) and Sweety (50kg) fought valiantly to secure silver medals, while Amruta (72kg) and Ahilya (55kg) finished their campaigns on the podium with bronze.

In the Greco-Roman category, the Indian grapplers laid a strong foundation early in the tournament by securing eight medals. Sumit led the charge with a spectacular gold in the 63kg division, supported by silver medals from Suraj (60kg) and Sagar Singh (67kg). Neeraj Patel (55kg), Sachin (77kg), Rohit Bura (87kg), Rohit (97kg), and Hardeep (130kg) added to the impressive haul with well-deserved bronze medals. With the highly successful conclusion of the U23 competition, the focus now shifts to the sub-junior contingent. The U17 Asian Wrestling Championships are set to commence at the same venue in Da Nang tomorrow, with the opening bouts scheduled to begin from 10 AM onwards.

Swiatek Dominates to Reach Last 32; Fifth Seed Pegula Stunned at Roland Garros

Paris: Defending champion Iga Swiatek safely navigated her way into the women's singles third round at the French Open, while the opening week of the tournament witnessed a massive upset as fifth seed Jessica Pegula crashed out in the very first round.

Four-time Roland Garros champion Swiatek secured her spot in the last 32 with a 6-2, 6-3 victory over Sara Bejlek. Despite the straight-sets scoreline, the top seed endured an uneven performance on court. Swiatek struggled heavily with her rhythm early on, hitting 38 unforced errors against 17 winners and landing just 37 percent of her first serves in an opening set that dragged on for 46 minutes. The baseline battle intensified in the second set, where a grueling opening game lasted nearly ten minutes. By the time Swiatek held serve for a 1-0 lead, the match had already crossed the one-hour mark. Despite the lack of clinical execution, the world number one's trademark resilience carried her through. Swiatek broke the 35th-ranked Bejlek seven times and converted eight of eleven net points to close out the match in one hour and 31 minutes, setting up a highly anticipated potential third-round clash against Jelena Ostapenko.

While Swiatek survived her erratic patches, world



number five Jessica Pegula was not as fortunate. In the biggest shock of the tournament's opening week, Australia's Kimberly Birrell engineered a stunning comeback to eliminate the American in a dramatic first-round encounter. Initially, the match seemed to follow the script. Pegula raced through the opening set in under 30 minutes and consolidated her position by winning eight

of the first ten games to lead by a set and a break. However, Birrell, ranked 83rd in the world, refused to back down. The Australian gradually settled into the baseline rallies, drastically raising her intensity and seizing crucial break points. Despite winning fewer total points than Pegula across the match, Birrell pulled off a remarkable 1-6, 6-3, 6-3 victory. The result marked the biggest

win of Birrell's career, her first-ever main-draw victory at a Grand Slam outside of the Australian Open, and handed Pegula her earliest exit at a major in five years. In contrast to Pegula's misfortunes, fellow American Madison Keys enjoyed a much smoother outing to book her second-round spot. The 19th seed shook off an initial lapse in concentration to utterly dominate Belgian debutant

Hanne Vandewinkel, cruising to a comprehensive 6-3, 6-0 victory. Meanwhile, action elsewhere on the Parisian clay saw rising Canadian prodigy Victoria Mboko make a statement in her tournament debut. The youngster required just 69 minutes to dismantle Czech prospect Nikola Bartunkova 6-1, 6-2, rounding off an action-packed day of contrasting fortunes at the year's second Grand Slam.

India and China Link Border Peace to Normalizing Relations in Recent Talks

New Delhi, May 28: India and China held "constructive" and "forward-looking" talks on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh during a Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination (WMCC) meeting in Beijing. Both sides noted that maintaining border peace has successfully enabled progress toward the gradual normalization of overall bilateral relations.

Reviewing the situation in the border areas, the two nations expressed satisfaction with recent developments. According to India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), the delegations discussed critical issues pertaining to delimitation, border management, mechanism building, and cross-border cooperation. Importantly, New Delhi and Beijing agreed to work together on "substantive preparation" for the next meeting of the Special Represent-



tatives (SR), scheduled to be held in China. The Indian side also stressed the need to expedite the next expert-level mechanism meeting on trans-border rivers.

"Both sides agreed to maintain regular exchanges and contacts at the diplomatic and military levels through mechanisms including those that

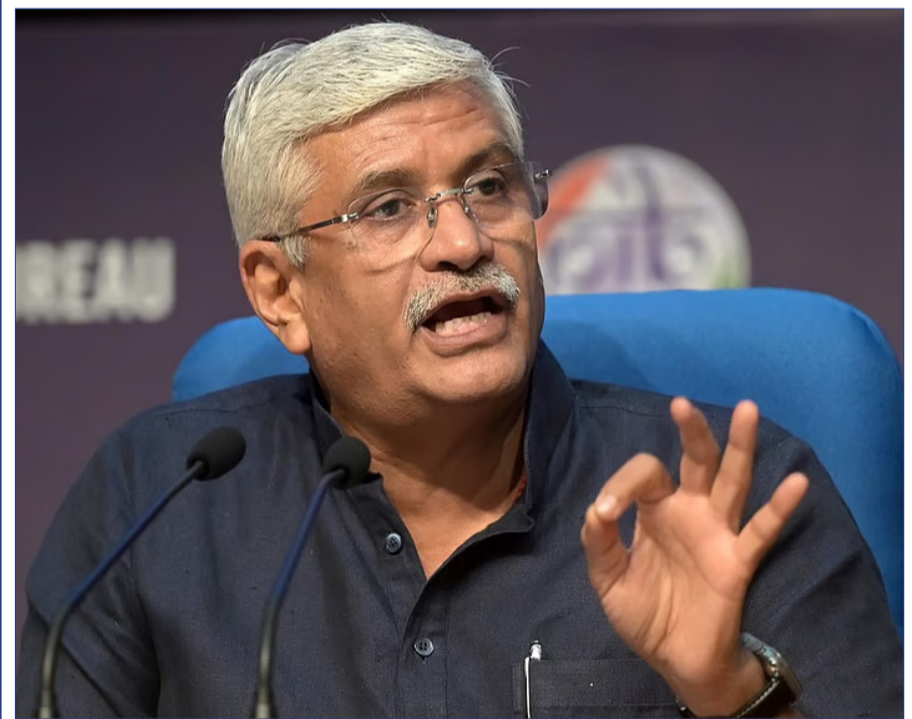
were agreed as part of outcomes of 24th Special Representative talks," the MEA stated. The Indian delegation was led by Sujit Ghosh, Joint Secretary (East Asia) in the MEA, while the Chinese side was headed by Hou Yanqi, Director General of the Boundary and Oceanic Affairs Department. During his visit, Ghosh also held

talks with Liu Jinsong, Director of the Department of Asian Affairs, and paid a courtesy call on Chinese Assistant Foreign Minister Hong Lei. The diplomatic engagement comes as both nuclear-armed neighbors continue steady efforts to stabilize ties, which deteriorated sharply following the deadly Galwan Valley clashes in 2020 and the

subsequent military stand-off in eastern Ladakh.

Following protracted diplomatic and military negotiations, the two sides successfully disengaged troops from multiple friction points. This momentum culminated in a major breakthrough when India and China finalized a disengagement pact for Depsang and Demchok—the final remaining friction points in eastern Ladakh. This disengagement paved the way for structured, high-level political engagement. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping previously held bilateral talks in Kazan to chart a roadmap for improving relations. This was followed by a meeting on the sidelines of the SCO summit in Tianjin, where Prime Minister Modi reiterated that India remains committed to advancing bilateral ties based on the pillars of mutual trust, mutual respect, and mutual sensitivity.

India's Heritage Lies in Unity of Faiths, History Can't Be Erased: Union Minister



New Delhi, May 28: Acknowledging India's deep cultural diversity, Union Culture and Tourism Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat asserted that Indian civilization is a composite of multiple faiths and traditions. Speaking in an exclusive interview with PTI Videos, the Minister emphasized that no chapter of history, regardless of its nature, can be erased or removed from the national narrative.

His remarks come amid ongoing public discourses by various right-wing outfits that heavily emphasize a "Hindu civilizational identity" prior to the advent of Islamic rule in roughly the 12th century. Defending a holistic approach to the country's past, Shekhawat noted that all historical eras contribute to the nation's identity. "Heritage means heritage for us, and that is equally valuable," he stated. To illustrate this continuity, he pointed to India's vast array of architectural marvels, contrasting ancient sites like the 8th-century Kailasa temples at Ellora and the 10th-century Khajuraho temples with

later Islamic monuments such as the Taj Mahal. The Minister affirmed that both traditions hold "equal importance" in the tapestry of Indian civilization. "The history of civilization of India is a history of continuity, of more than 10,000 years of continuity," Shekhawat said. "Pages of that history, no matter what their color, cannot be removed. They are part of our history. It is as important a heritage for us as any Vedic-era heritage is... as the major legacy sites of Rakhigarhi or Sanauli are." When questioned about his perspective as Culture and Tourism Minister regarding ongoing communal frictions over historically significant sites that otherwise hold immense tourism potential, Shekhawat declined to comment on specifics, citing legal pendency. However, he spoke broadly about historical corrections and communal harmony. "Ultimately, we will have to accept this fact that the things which were changed on the basis of the power of sword, and if it is proved, then it is not only expected from Hindus but it is also expected

from other communities that they should also look back at it, understand its importance and its faith, and take a decision," the Minister said. Shekhawat also dismissed suggestions to convert highly contested religious structures into neutral, multi-faith tourist attractions. Citing prominent examples, he questioned the feasibility of such proposals: "Can you make the structure that stands next to the Kashi Vishwanath Temple a tourist site? You and I, all know about the kind of structure that stands near the Janmabhoomi, near the Mathura temple... both sides know why it was built, when it was built, and under what circumstances." Despite acknowledging these deep-seated disputes, Shekhawat remained a strong proponent of preserving the plurality of India's cultural framework. "India has an identity. India's identity is its diversity, its inclusivity," he asserted. "It is the amalgamation of different cultures, different faiths, different beliefs, different cultural practices... only then is it one India."

BJP Appoints Kewal Singh Dhillon as Punjab Chief, Archana Gupta in Haryana

Chandigarh, May 28: With an eye on the 2027 Assembly elections, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has overhauled its leadership in the twin states of Punjab and Haryana, balancing caste dynamics, political experience, and gender representation.

In Punjab, the BJP has appointed former Congress leader Kewal Singh Dhillon, a 75-year-old Jat Sikh, as its state unit president. Dhillon replaces Sunil Jakhar, whose three-year tenure concludes this July. Jakhar is expected to remain pivotal in the party's upcoming election campaign. Dhillon, a former two-time MLA from Barnala (2007-2017) and current state vice-president, is a close ally of former Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh. He joined the BJP in 2022 following the Congress party's electoral defeat in the state. Despite recent setbacks—including losses in the 2019 Sangrur Lok Sabha election, the 2022 Sangrur bypoll, and the 2024 Barnala Assembly bypoll—Dhillon secured the top post with strong backing. Internal support



came from Punjab RSS in-charge Mantri Srinivasulu and BJP national general secretary Tarun Chugh, both of whom advocated for a prominent Sikh face to head the state unit, a sentiment reportedly shared by Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Saini.

Political analysts view Dhillon's appointment as a strategic shift for the BJP, which has traditionally relied on Hindu leadership in Punjab. The party aims to utilize his extensive organizational experi-

ence from his Congress years to rebuild its rural cadre. Dhillon edged out other heavyweights for the post, including Manpreet Badal, Jagmohan Raju, Manjit Singh Rai, and Union Minister Ravneet Singh Bittu. Simultaneously, in Haryana, Dr. Archana Gupta has been named the state BJP president, succeeding Mohan Lal Badoli. This marks only the second time a woman has been chosen to lead the Haryana BJP unit, following the legendary Kamla Verma, who passed away in 2021. Dr. Gupta, 58, brings a robust organizational track record, having served as Haryana BJP vice-president, state general secretary, and chief of the state's Mahila Morcha (2016-2020). A radiologist by profession, she runs a diagnostic center in Panipat and has deep roots in the ideological ecosystem through her association with the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP). Hailing from a family of freedom fighters, her appointment underscores the party's intent to consolidate its core base while promoting women in leadership roles ahead of future electoral challenges.

West Indies Will Host Sri Lanka New Zealand And Pakistan During Major Home Season

St John's: Cricket West Indies (CWI) has officially unveiled the full schedule for the 2026 Men's International Home Series, setting the stage for an electrifying summer of cricket across the Caribbean. The 2026 home season will feature international series against Sri Lanka, New Zealand, and Pakistan, bringing world-class cricket to multiple territories and delivering months of high-energy action throughout the region, according to the CWI website. As part of the finalised schedule, Barbados has been added as a host venue for the One-Day International series against New Zealand, with the final two matches now set to be played there.

CWI CEO, Chris Dehring, explained the adjustment, "Cricket West Indies engaged in discussions with the Government of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana regarding logistical challenges associated with hosting the five ODIs. Subsequently, the Governments of Guyana and Barbados proposed a collaborative arrangement to share the matches and associated operational costs between the two territories. Following consultation with New Zealand Cricket, Cricket West Indies approved the arrangement as part of its continued commitment to delivering a successful and memorable series for players, fans, and the wider Caribbean community. Cricket West Indies wishes to express



its sincere gratitude to the Governments of Guyana and Barbados for their cooperative spirit, flexibility, and swift action in ensuring the series proceeds without disruption." The summer officially bowls off in Jamaica with a white-ball series against Sri Lanka from June 3-14, featuring three One Day Internationals and three T20 Internationals. The teams will then travel to Antigua for a two-match Test series scheduled for June 25-29 and July 3-7. Attention will then shift to a five-match ODI series against New Zealand, with Guyana hosting the opening three matches on July 11, 13 and 16, before the series concludes in Barbados with

the final two encounters on July 19 and 21. The final leg of the home season will take place in Trinidad & Tobago, where the "Men in Maroon" will face Pakistan in a two-match Test series from July 25-29 and August 2-6.

The series will also mark a historic milestone for the Brian Lara Cricket Academy, which is set to host its first-ever international Test match. Rajasthan Royals thrashed SRH by 47 runs in the Eliminator clash and qualified for the second qualifier, where they will face Gujarat Titans for a spot in the IPL 2026 final, where the defending champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) are already waiting.

Vaibhav Sooryavanshi Motivated After Being Humbled By Sachin Tendulkar's High Praise

New Delhi: Vaibhav Sooryavanshi has reacted to legendary cricketer Sachin Tendulkar after his explosive knock powered the Rajasthan Royals into Qualifier 2 of the IPL 2026 season. On Wednesday, May 27, the left-handed batter smashed 97 off just 29 balls, including five fours and 12 sixes, as the Royals defeated Sunrisers Hyderabad in the Eliminator in Mullanpur. Following the innings, Tendulkar praised Sooryavanshi's outstanding bat swing and his ability to clear the front foot to create room for deliveries aimed at his legs, saying it allows him to play his natural attacking game.

Speaking to Dhruv Jurel in an interview uploaded by the BCCI, Sooryavanshi said Tendulkar's praise felt special and motivating. He added that he was initially unaware of the tweet and described it as a huge honour and a proud moment to be appreciated by the "God of Cricket". "It feels really good sir. It motivates me. You (Dhruv Jurel) just told me about it. I wasn't even aware. And of course,



everyone knows he's the 'God of Cricket'. If he has tweeted something like that, it's a huge deal for us that a legend like him has tweeted about us. Of course, it's a moment of pride," Sooryavanshi said. Sooryavanshi dominated from the outset against the Sunrisers, racing to a 16-ball half-century to equal the record for the fastest fifty in an IPL knockout match. The youngster tore into the SRH attack, smashing three consecutive sixes off captain Pat Cummins, and came close to breaking Chris Gayle's record for the fastest IPL century before falling just three runs short. Speaking after

the match, Sooryavanshi said his self-confidence is always high and that he tries to play according to the team's requirements. He added that he is capable of building a long innings or attacking with big shots depending on the situation, stressing that helping the team remains his top priority. "My self-confidence is always high. I just wanted to give us a good start and carry it through because if the ball is coming nicely onto my bat, the longer I play, the more it benefits the team. That's all I was thinking about while playing today," Sooryavanshi said. "I know what kind of game I have. If the team needs me to

play a long innings, I can do that. If the team needs sixes, I can do that too. I just try to play according to the situation and back myself. A year ago, I didn't know I would be playing in the IPL so soon. But it feels great that I broke a record. But the focus is on what I can do for the team," Sooryavanshi added.

The youngster also surpassed Chris Gayle's long-standing record for the most sixes in a single IPL season, taking his tally to 65 maximums. Sooryavanshi currently holds the Orange Cap in IPL 2026 with 680 runs from 15 matches at an average of 45.33 and a stunning strike rate of 242.85, including one century and four fifties. Vaibhav Sooryavanshi's explosive 97 off 29 balls, featuring 12 sixes, propelled Rajasthan Royals to IPL 2026 Qualifier 2 by defeating Sunrisers Hyderabad. Praised by cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar for his attacking style, Sooryavanshi equaled the fastest IPL knockout half-century record and surpassed Chris Gayle's season sixes record with 65.

Djokovic Criticizes Paris Crowd After Boos During Tense Match

Paris: Novak Djokovic hit out at sections of the Roland Garros crowd after being repeatedly booed during his second-round clash against Frenchman Valentin Royer, accusing the Paris spectators of showing "no respect" throughout the match. The Serbian eventually battled past the local favourite in four sets to reach the third round of the French Open. The 24-time Grand Slam champion defeated Royer 6-3, 6-2, 6-7(7), 6-3 in a gruelling contest that lasted nearly three hours and 45 minutes on Court Philippe-Chatrier. But while Djokovic secured his place in the next round, the atmosphere inside the stadium remained tense for most of the evening. Speaking after the match, Djokovic admitted he hoped he would avoid facing more French players for the remainder of the tournament because of the crowd behaviour "I hope I won't play any more French players for the rest of the tournament," Djokovic said after the win.

The tension between Djokovic and the crowd escalated midway through the match when the Serbian sarcastically applauded the



spectators after being booed during points. The chair umpire eventually stepped in and appealed for calm inside the stadium. Ladies and gentlemen, please have some respect for both players," the umpire announced. Djokovic immediately responded by saying: "They have no respect. No respect." The atmosphere remained heated for most of the evening as Royer, ranked 74 in the world, continued pushing the Serbian far harder than many expected heading into the clash. The match itself turned into a much

tougher battle than Djokovic would have ideally wanted. Playing under intense Paris heat, with temperatures once again rising above 32 degrees, the 39-year-old repeatedly used ice packs around his neck and head during changeovers to stay cool.

Royer, who had won only one tour-level match before arriving at Roland Garros this year, produced the best performance of his young career and managed to frustrate Djokovic for long spells, especially after stealing the third-set tiebreak.

Djokovic even missed an earlier opportunity to finish the match during that tiebreak when he pushed a backhand long before eventually needing four more match points in the fourth set to finally close things out.

One of the biggest moments of the night came early in the fourth set when Djokovic produced a stunning forehand winner around the net post from well outside the court. After winning the point, the Serbian waved his arms toward the crowd in celebration, almost inviting more noise from the Paris spectators. When the match finally ended, Djokovic briefly stumbled on the clay before performing his trademark violin celebration with his racket. The victory extended Djokovic's incredible record against French players at Roland Garros to 14-0 and also marked his 21st consecutive appearance in the third round at the French Open, equalling Roger Federer's Open Era record for most straight third-round appearances at a single Grand Slam. Djokovic will now face one of the fastest-rising young stars in tennis, the tournament so far.

Denmark Goalkeeping Legend Kasper Schmeichel Announces Retirement From Football At Thirty Nine

Copenhagen: Former Leicester City and Denmark goalkeeper Kasper Schmeichel has announced his retirement from professional football at the age of 39 after failing to recover from a serious shoulder injury. The experienced goalkeeper, who was recently with Celtic F.C., had been sidelined since February and decided to end his career after consulting specialists regarding the injury. "I believe that now is the right time," Schmeichel told Danish broadcaster TV2. The injury originally occurred during Denmark's UEFA Nations League quarter-final defeat to the Portugal football team in March 2025. Despite suffering the problem, Schmeichel continued playing as Denmark had already used all their substitutes.

The veteran goalkeeper later aggravated the injury during Celtic's UEFA Europa League defeat to VfB Stuttgart nearly a year later. Schmeichel had initially hoped to continue playing and was reportedly prepared to undergo a lengthy rehabilitation process to extend his



career. However, medical advice ultimately forced him to step away from the game. I didn't realise how bad it was in March. It's been a long process. When I landed on it in February, I could tell straight away that something was seriously wrong. "I have consulted with various surgeons and experts regarding my shoulder, and they have told me that I should not expect to return to playing top-flight football," he added. The son of legendary former Manchester United F.C. goalkeeper Peter Schmeichel, Kasper began his professional career at Manchester City F.C. He made his senior debut for the club in August 2007 and kept a clean sheet in a 2-0 win over West Ham

United F.C. He followed it with shutouts against Derby County F.C. and Manchester United. Schmeichel signed for Leicester City F.C. in 2011, where he enjoyed the most successful period of his career. In a poignant moment for global football, legendary Danish goalkeeper Kasper Schmeichel has officially announced his retirement from professional football at the age of 39. The decision comes after the veteran shot-stopper, who was playing for Scottish powerhouse Celtic FC, failed to recover from a catastrophic shoulder injury. Schmeichel confirmed the heartbreaking news during an emotional interview with Danish broadcaster TV 2 Sport in Parken.

IOC Mourns Raja Randhir Singh; Olympic Flag To Fly At Half-Mast

New Delhi: The International Olympic Committee (IOC) mourned the death of its Honorary Member Raja Randhir Singh, describing the former shooter and sports administrator as one of the most influential figures in Asian sport, while announcing that the Olympic flag will be flown at half-mast for three days as a mark of respect. Raja Randhir Singh, a five-time Olympian and the first Indian to become President of the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA), died in New Delhi on Wednesday at the age of 79.

In a statement, the IOC said Singh dedicated his life to the development of the Olympic Movement in India, Asia and across the world, becoming a central figure in the growth of sport administration in the region. IOC President Kirsty Coventry paid tribute to Singh's contribution to global sport and the Olympic Movement. "Raja Randhir Singh devoted his entire life to sport. As an Olympian, as



an IOC Member and as a leader of Asian sport, he served the Olympic Movement with exceptional loyalty, wisdom and generosity over many decades. He will be remembered not only for his remarkable service and leadership, but also for his warmth, friendship and lifelong dedication to sport. On behalf of the International Olympic Committee, I extend our heartfelt condolences to his family, his friends and all those across the Olympic Movement who had the privilege of working with him," Coven-

try said. A distinguished trap and skeet shooter, Randhir Singh represented India at five Olympic Games -- Mexico City 1968, Munich 1972, Montreal 1976, Moscow 1980 and Los Angeles 1984. He had also been India's reserve shooter for the Tokyo Olympics in 1964. Among his biggest sporting achievements was winning the gold medal in trap shooting at the 1978 Asian Games in Bangkok, making him India's first Asian Games gold medalist in shooting. He later secured an individual bronze and

a team silver medal at the 1982 Asian Games in New Delhi. The IOC noted that Singh's success and leadership played a key role in inspiring future generations of Indian shooters and strengthening India's emergence as a major force in the sport. While still an active athlete, Singh was appointed Secretary General of the OCA and later became its Acting President in 2021 before being elected President in 2024, becoming the first Indian to head the continental body. He was elected an IOC Member in 2001 and served until 2014, after which he became an Honorary Member. During his tenure, he served on several IOC commissions and was also the IOC representative on the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) Foundation Board between 2003 and 2005. Singh also served as Secretary General of the Indian Olympic Association for nearly three decades and was widely regarded as one of the most influential administrators in Indian sport.

Bengal T20 League Unveils Men's And Women's Fixtures For Season Three

Kolkata: The Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) on Thursday announced the fixtures for the third edition of the Bengal T20 League, which will be streamed live on JioHotstar as the tournament's official streaming partner for the 2026 season. The upcoming edition will feature eight men's teams and eight women's teams, with matches scheduled across two venues in Kolkata from June 5 to June 21. All men's matches will be played at Eden Gardens, while the women's competition will take place at JU Salt Lake Campus, according to a release. The men's competition will begin on Friday, June 5, with Adamas Howrah Warriors facing Novus Royals Purulia at Eden Gardens at 7:00 PM. The eight franchises competing in the men's tournament are Adamas Howrah Warriors, Novus Royals Purulia, Murshidabad Kings, Sobisco Smashers Malda, Shracchi Tribes Rarh Tigers, Servotech Siliguri Strikers, Rashmi Nes Medinipur Wizards, and Kolkata Royal Tigers. The league stage will run until June 19, followed by the semi-finals on June 20 and the final on June 21. The women's competition will commence on Saturday, June 6, with Kolkata Royal Tigers taking on Novus Royals Purulia at 9:00 AM at JU Salt Lake Campus. The participating women's teams include Kolkata Royal Tigers, Novus Royals Purulia, Murshidabad Queens, Sobisco Smash-



ers Malda, Shracchi Tribes Rarh Tigers, Servotech Siliguri Strikers, Rashmi Nes Medinipur Wizards, and Adamas Howrah Warriors. The women's league stage will also continue through June 19, with the semi-finals and final scheduled for June 20 and June 21, respectively. Now entering its third season, the Bengal T20 League has rapidly established itself as one of India's premier state franchise T20 tournaments. Organised by CAB, the league has become an important platform for identifying and nurturing emerging cricketers from across Bengal, while simultaneously strengthening the state's domestic cricket structure. The

partnership with JioHotstar is expected to significantly expand the tournament's reach, bringing comprehensive live coverage of both the men's and women's competitions to cricket fans across the country through multilingual streaming access and nationwide digital distribution. Since its inception, the Bengal T20 League has played a vital role in enhancing competitive opportunities for players across both the men's and women's games. By creating greater exposure and a professional franchise ecosystem within the state, the league continues to contribute to the long-term growth and development of cricket in Bengal.