

Assam’s double-engine government and fastest-growing economy are propelling historic advancements

Baijayant Panda

Guwahati, May 10: On Saturday, May 9, BJP MP Baijayant Jay Panda highlighted Assam as a significant example of accelerated development under the NDA government and attributed the party’s strong electoral performance and rising public trust to Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s leadership and frequent trips to the Northeast. In an interview with reporters, Panda referred to Prime Minister Narendra Modi as “the most popular leader on Earth” and stated that the BJP’s recent electoral success, notably in Assam, demonstrated strong public trust in his leadership. He emphasized the North East’s significance in the party’s electoral strategy in particular, claiming that Modi’s regular interactions with the area had improved governance results. In contrast to earlier leadership, Panda stated, “Modi ji has visited Assam and the North East 80 times as Prime Minister.”

Panda focused on Assam and described its developmental record as “historic,” praising the work of the “double engine government” run



by the state and the federal government. He claimed that Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma’s leadership had resulted in noticeable changes in many areas. “Assam’s progress under the double engine government has been his-

toric,” Panda stated, noting that the state’s economy is now among the fastest-growing in India. He highlighted welfare delivery through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), powered by the Jan Dhan–Aadhaar–Mobile framework, claiming

it had reduced corruption and improved last-mile delivery of benefits. He also cited expansion in healthcare infrastructure, stating that the number of medical colleges in the region had increased significantly, with several more in

the pipeline.

Panda further pointed to industrial growth in Assam, mentioning large-scale investments, including a semiconductor facility project, and said the state was no longer dependent only on traditional sectors like tea and bamboo.

“Today, Assam is the fastest-growing economy in India,” he said. According to election results cited by Panda, the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) secured a strong mandate in Assam, winning 102 seats in the 126-member Assembly. The BJP won 82 seats, while its allies Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and Bodoland People’s Front (BPF) secured 10 seats each, taking the NDA tally to 102. He also referred to electoral outcomes in other states, including West Bengal and Puducherry, describing them as part of a broader shift in public support for the BJP-led alliance, though the specific political changes and seat figures cited could not be independently verified.

Assam records 28% decline in crime cases

Guwahati, May 10: Citing the most recent Crime in India 2024 report published by the National Crime Records Bureau, Assam Minister Jayanta Mallabaruah stated on May 8 that Assam has had one of the biggest drops in crime rates in the nation. The minister stated in a post on X that Assam had 49,552 criminal cases in 2024,

a 28% decrease from 64,959 instances in 2023 and 68,937 cases in 2022.

According to the NCRB data cited by him, Assam’s crime rate currently stands at 137 cases per lakh population, significantly lower than the national average of 418. The report also showed an improvement in the state’s charge-sheeting rate,

which rose to 67.1 per cent in 2024 from below 50 per cent in previous years, indicating faster investigations and stronger legal follow-up. Assam’s crime rate is currently 137 cases per lakh people, which is much lower than the national average of 418, according to the NCRB data he cited.

He said the figures reflect the

impact of sustained governance, stronger policing, and the state’s collective efforts towards ensuring peace, stability, and development. He added that after decades of facing insurgency and law-and-order challenges, Assam is gradually moving towards a new phase focused on peace, growth, and investment.



Gauhati High Court blocks the POSH committee’s notice to the GMCH principal in the sexual harassment matter

Guwahati, May 10: Achyut Baishya, the principal of Gauhati Medical College and Hospital (GMCH), was granted temporary respite by the Gauhati High Court, which halted a notice issued by a Local Committee established under the POSH Act for him to appear in a sexual harassment investigation. Under the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013, Baishya has challenged the notice given by the Local Committee Chairperson in court, arguing that the proceedings are not legally viable. He has filed a writ petition against the Assam government and six departments, claiming that complaints should go through the Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) rather than the Local Committee after it is established. Additionally, he has asserted that the suit is past the Act’s statute of limitations. Senior counsel for the petitioner contended at the court hearing that the allegations are time-barred under Section 9 of the POSH Act since they pertain to actions that occurred between November 2022 and July 2025. In order to bolster their claim that complaints must be submitted within a certain time frame following the claimed assault, the attorney also referenced a Supreme Court ruling. Following the hearing of the submissions, the court notified the respondents and scheduled the next hearing for May 29. It further stipulated that other paperwork have to be turned in within a week. Nevertheless, the contested notice from April 27, 2026, was stayed by the court until . However, the court stayed the impugned notice



dated April 27, 2026, till the next date of hearing. The court also noted that the respondents, including the state government and health authorities, sought time to complete instructions in the matter. Meanwhile, the case stems from allegations made by a senior woman doctor of GMCH, who has accused Baishya of workplace harassment. In her complaint submitted to the Chief Minister’s Office on February 6, she alleged inappropriate remarks, intimidation, and sustained professional harassment. The complainant, an Associate Professor and former Head of the Department of Clinical Psychology, also lodged a police complaint and stated that after initial professional recognition, the situation changed when she was allegedly pressured to meet the principal alone in his office. She claimed she felt uncomfortable and began avoiding such meetings, adding that communications between them were also documented through WhatsApp messages. Following her complaint, an FIR was registered and a government inquiry committee was constituted.

Nagaland establishes a tribal cultural resource center to protect indigenous populations’ cultural heritage

Agartala, May 03:

The opening of the Nagaland Indigenous Tribes Cultural Resource Center in Kohima on May 7 marked the beginning of a new cultural project in Nagaland that aims to preserve the legacy of indigenous people. The center was established with the goal of conserving, recording, and advancing the rich cultural customs of the state’s indigenous tribes. Speaking at the opening, K Konngam Konyak stated that the center represents a forward-thinking vision that is concentrated on both maintaining customs and establishing an environment where cultural practices can be fostered and transmitted to future generations. He highlighted that Nagaland’s cultural strength



lies in the diversity of its indigenous communities and noted that all 16 officially recognised

tribes of the state have been represented in the centre through dedicated spaces showcasing their

heritage.

The facility is expected to serve as a hub for exhibitions, research,

learning, documentation, and cultural exchange while also fostering unity and mutual understanding among tribal communities.

Bodeno S Colo described the inauguration as a significant milestone in preserving and celebrating the identity and traditions of the people of Nagaland.

Meanwhile, Kakhe-li Swu said the project was developed at a cost of Rs 12.83 crore, funded jointly by the Non-Lapsable Central Pool of Resources and the state government. Officials expressed hope that the centre would emerge as a major knowledge hub where tradition and innovation can coexist, helping preserve Nagaland’s cultural legacy for generations to come.

Arunachal IAS officer’s bail is restored by the SC in the Gomchu Yekar suicide case

Itanagar, May 10: On May 7, the Supreme Court overturned an earlier ruling by the Gauhati High Court that had revoked the bail granted to Arunachal Pradesh IAS officer Talo Potom in relation to the alleged abetment of suicide case involving 19-year-old Gomchu Yekar. Justices J K Maheshwari and Atul S Chandurkar’s bench decided that there was insufficient justification to revoke the bail that the trial court had previously granted.

After hearing arguments from the complainant, the Supreme Court granted Potom’s appeal and ordered the bail order to stay in effect.

At the same time, the court warned Potom that any verified complaint could result in the revocation of bail and warned him against intimidating witnesses or influencing the inquiry. Additionally, the bench made it clear that the trial court’s observations about bail should not have an impact on the outcome of the current trial. In order to ensure that the lawsuit proceeds without preju-



dice, the Supreme Court declined to comment on the purported dying declaration.

The case is related to the death of Gomchu Yekar, who was discovered dead on October 23, 2025, at his leased home in Lekhi village. Yekar

allegedly left suicide notes accusing Potom and another government engineer of sexual assault, mental abuse, and HIV/AIDS exposure. Potom was arrested on October 27, 2025, and secured bail from the Sessions Court within a week. However, the deceased’s father challenged the bail before the Gauhati High Court, which cancelled the relief and ordered Potom’s immediate custody, observing that the trial court had ignored crucial evidence and granted bail without proper application of mind. The High Court had also noted that Potom, being an influential officer, could potentially derail the investigation at an early stage. During proceedings, the prosecution claimed that WhatsApp chats and voice messages between the accused and the deceased had been deleted and that forensic examination of the devices was still pending. Challenging the High Court order, Potom moved the Supreme Court, which had earlier stayed the cancellation of bail and directed him to cooperate fully with the investigation.

Meghalayan dumpers that are overloaded destroy Assam border roads

Shillong, May 10: Concern has been raised in a number of border villages by the unchecked flow of overloaded stone-laden dumpers from Meghalaya into Assam. The locals claim that the high nighttime traffic is seriously damaging the fragile rural roads. According to locals, the East Kamrup Forest Division’s Sukurberia route, which runs along the Assam–Meghalaya border, allows between 15 and 16 overloaded dumpers to enter Assam each night.

The villagers claim that big vehicles transporting stone and timber are constantly moving on the tiny roads, which were designed for modest country transportation. Even though Sukurberia has a Forest Beat Office, the problem has also sparked concerns about enforcement.

Locals claim that trucks filled with timber and overloaded dumpers continue to drive through the region without being stopped by the relevant authorities. One alleged violation involves a dumper with registra-

tion number HR 58F 4110, which reportedly had an expired challan as of April 24, 2026. The transport document only listed “Assam” as the destination, omitting the specific crusher unit, which locals argue is a regulatory requirement.

Residents claim the driver confirmed the delivery was for Kamal Crusher at Borihat Dhupguri. Additionally, locals have noted that 15 to 20 timber trucks frequently enter Assam at night via the same route, raising suspicions about the lack of official intervention.

This movement of overloaded vehicles is damaging roads and posing safety risks. Residents criticize local authorities for ignoring their complaints, asserting that insufficient monitoring has allowed illegal transport networks to thrive. Residents warned that the continued movement of overloaded vehicles is not only damaging roads but also posing risks to public safety and nearby properties.

Kuki Committee Questions Security Forces’ Role in Alleged Premeditated Armed Attack on Ukhrul Villages

Ukhrul, May 10: The Kuki CSO Working Committee demanded immediate government action after accusing NSCN Eastern Flank cadres of launching a planned assault on Kuki communities in spite of security forces. The committee claimed in a statement that armed individuals tried to enter through the Tongou pocket of the Kampa range on Monday at around three in the morning. It stated that community volunteers stationed

along Mt. Kampa’s Uiliphai-Bollen crest retaliated after the assailants launched indiscriminate fire. During the exchange, one volunteer apparently suffered significant injuries. The organization described the episode as part of a sustained campaign aimed at destabilising the region and undermining ongoing peace efforts. It further alleged that representatives of the group had approached security personnel stationed at Sinakei-



thel, seeking a temporary window of non-intervention to carry out operations, and demanded clarity on whether such a request had been considered.

The “Tawang Initiative” for an integrated Buddhist tourism circuit being pushed by Arunachal Dy CM



Itanagar, May 10: On May 7, Chowna Mein suggested creating an integrated Buddhist tourism circuit that would link important spiritual sites in the Northeast and other nations. She called for the project to be called the “Tawang Initiative” in order to give it a unique worldwide identity. Mein emphasized the necessity of a professional and cooperative approach to tourism development in the area when speaking

at the first session of a workshop on the “Development of the Buddhist Circuit in Northeast India” in Tawang. Delegates from numerous Indian states, Nepal, Bhutan, and Sri Lanka attended the session. Mein stated that in order to provide tourists with a continuous spiritual and cultural experience, the proposed tourism circuit should link important Buddhist sites in Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Sikkim, and Ma-

nipur while also integrating neighboring nations. Highlighting Tawang’s religious and historical significance, the Deputy Chief Minister said the region is home to the 400-year-old Tawang Monastery, the birthplace of the Sixth Dalai Lama, and lies along an important route associated with the present Dalai Lama. He also referred to heritage and spiritual sites such as Dirang, Them-

bang, the sacred Perma-ko region and the scenic Mechuka valley as key anchors for a wider Buddhist and cultural tourism network. Mein further underlined Arunachal Pradesh’s broader tourism potential, pointing to the coexistence of 26 major tribes with distinct languages, attire and customs, along with the state’s rich biodiversity that supports eco-tourism, adventure tourism and wellness retreats. To preserve the state’s intangible cultural heritage, he said the government is digitising ancient manuscripts, traditional knowledge systems and religious texts for future generations. The Deputy Chief Minister also announced that Arunachal Pradesh plans to host an international tourism event later this year and invited global stakeholders to collaborate in positioning the state as a premier tourism destination.

Due to alleged GST avoidance, two trucks carrying tobacco were seized in Bongaigaon, Assam

Bongaigaon, May 10: Assam Police conducted a successful operation on May 7, seizing two trucks loaded with tobacco in Bongaigaon district due to allegations of transporting goods without proper documentation and attempting to evade Goods and Services Tax (GST).

The trucks were intercepted by Manikpur Police based on specific intelligence inputs. The operation was led by Officer-in-Charge Jayanta Kakati, along with Gerukabari patrol outpost in-charge Hriday Goswami.

The vehicles, registered as AS01 SC4447 and AS01 SC9093, were identified to be transporting tobacco from Dinhat in West Bengal to various locations in Nalbari and



Naga districts of Assam. During the inspection, the drivers reportedly could not produce necessary transport and tax-relat-

ed documents, raising suspicions of a GST evasion attempt. Authorities are continuing their investigation into the incident.

The Dhansiri River poses a serious threat to Kuruwabahi Adarsha village’s erosion

Kuruwabahi Adarsha village, one of the proud pillars of the agricultural sector in Bokakhat sub-division, is now facing a severe existential crisis.



Bokakhat, May 10:

One of the proud cornerstones of the Bokakhat subdivision’s agricultural sector, Kuruwabahi Adarsha village, is currently experiencing a serious existential crisis. Every year, the Dhansiri River, which runs alongside the village, erodes large areas of productive agriculture, engulfing bigha after bigha. Working-class farmers in the area have become enraged about the government’s and elected officials’ lack of concern. This model village of Kuruwa-

bahi has long made a substantial economic contribution to the Golaghat district, which is known as a premier agriculture-based region. Farmers here have been forced to switch from Sali paddy agriculture to a higher reliance on Rabi crops due to the recurrent floods. Through immense hard work, they have managed to enrich the region with Rabi produce. However, the ongoing erosion caused by the Dhansi-

ri is steadily shrinking the extent of cultivable land. The villagers have issued a strong warning to the government and the Water Resources Department, demanding immediate scientific and permanent measures to prevent erosion and protect their agricultural land. They have also warned that if their demands are not fulfilled soon, a massive democratic movement will be launched against the department.

Mizoram pushes for men’s hockey academy

Aizawl, May 10: Lalnghinglova Hmar, the Mizoram Sports Minister, met with Hari Ranjan Rao in New Delhi to request more funding for the state’s sports facilities, with a particular emphasis on resurrecting hockey in Mizoram. The talks focused on building a men’s hockey academy and extending training facilities around the state under the “Empowering Mizoram Sports” program, according to an official statement released on May 6. Mizoram has a rich sporting culture, according to Hmar, who also emphasized the importance of reviving hockey, one of India’s most potential international sports. Even though Mizos are naturally gifted hockey players, the sport has witnessed a downturn recently. One of the best ways for India to win international gold is through hockey, he stated. He also sought additional Sports Authority of India training centres in hockey, badminton, archery and wrestling. Rao, who also serves as Director General of SAI, assured the state government that efforts would be made to strengthen hockey infrastructure and improve training standards by making better use of existing facilities. He said the Centre remained committed to promoting hockey as a priority discipline and praised Mizoram’s long-term approach to sports development. Rao also noted Mizoram’s recent progress in badminton and said the success achieved by Mizo footballers could be replicated in other sports.

AGP Encourages Himanta to Continue as Assam Chief Minister and Applauds His Leadership

Guwahati, May 10: Following the coalition’s resounding victory in the most recent Assembly elections, the Asom Gana Parishad, a significant ally of the BJP-led NDA alliance in Assam, formally suggested that Himanta Biswa Sarma remain Chief Minister. Following a meeting of the party’s newly elected legislators in Guwahati on May 6, AGP president and MLA-elect Atul Bora made the announcement. Bora described the encounter, saying that he met Himanta Biswa Sarma at Dispur alongside AGP Working President Keshab Mahanta and other recently elected AGP MLAs and congratulated him on leading the NDA to a landslide electoral victory in Assam.

The AGP delegation also expressed gratitude to Sarma for his extensive campaigning and support for NDA-backed AGP candidates, which they said played a crucial role in strengthening the alliance’s performance across the state. Among those present during the meeting were newly



elected AGP legislators Keshab Mahanta, Prithviraj Rava, Dip-timoyee Choudhury, Dr. Tapan Das, Dharmeswar Roy, Bikash Saikia, Dipak Kr Das, Prakash Ch Das and Jibesh Roy. Bora further stated that the AGP Legislature Party officially conveyed its decision to propose

Sarma’s name for the post of Chief Minister of Assam. The party also lauded his leadership in steering the state towards rapid development and expressed confidence that Assam would continue to achieve new milestones of progress and prosperity under his leadership.

Dimapur CSOs demand an early settlement of land concerns and oppose the relocation of the railway station

Dimapur, May 10: While pushing authorities to settle outstanding land-related problems as soon as possible, civil society organizations (CSOs) in Dimapur, the commercial center of Nagaland, have offered their support for the projected renovation of the Dimapur Railway Station into a world-class facility. The guarantee was given during a consultative meeting on the proposed upgrading project that the Naga Council Dimapur (NCD) called with a number of CSOs and tribal organizations. At the conference, representatives reaffirmed their support for the idea and expressed opposition to any proposal to move the train station outside of Dimapur. Speaking to the crowd, NCD President K G Kenye stated that while the project’s initial phase encompasses about 7.3 acres of land, unresolved title conflicts involving 96 patta holders continue to be a significant worry. He said that even though the first phase’s land surveys had been finished, 38 of the 96 patta holders had allegedly contacted the court, voicing concerns that protracted legal proceedings may cause the project to stall or perhaps be moved outside of Nagaland. Kenye cautioned that the railway modernization initiative’s early progress could be seriously impacted if the issues were not resolved in a timely manner.



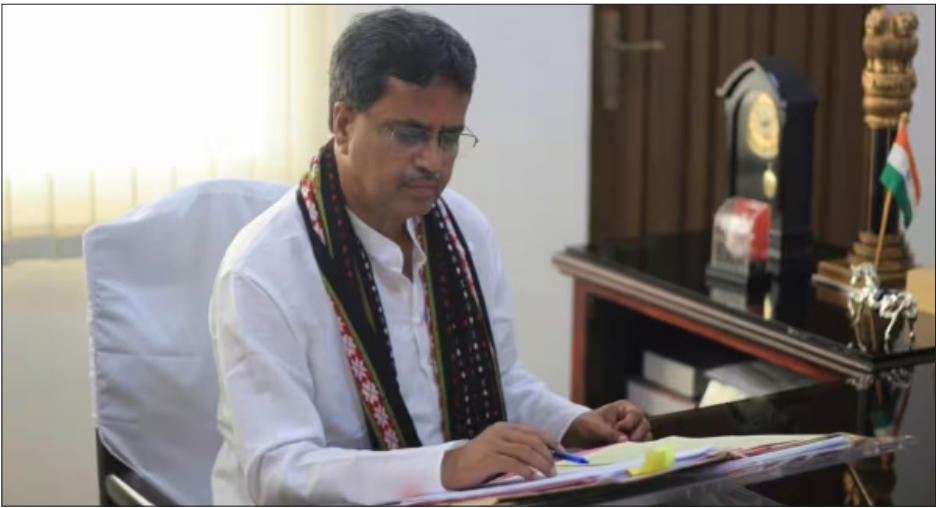
According to him, CSOs also plan to engage with the litigants and appeal for the withdrawal of cases in the interest of the larger public. He added that Phase-II of the project presents additional complications, involving 109 more patta holders along with concerns over undocumented encroachments. To address these issues, several committees and sub-committees have been constituted under the aegis of the NCD to initiate dialogue with landowners, railway authorities and the state government. The council is also expected to hold discussions with non-tribal CSOs

next week in an effort to build wider consensus and prevent misinformation regarding alleged eviction of religious structures.

During the meeting, Kenye appealed to the Government of Nagaland to facilitate an amicable and time-bound settlement of land disputes within the project area to ensure smooth execution of the railway station redevelopment plan. He further asserted that Dimapur-based CSOs and residents would extend full support to ensure that the railway station modernisation project is completed within the stipulated timeframe.

Tripura CM Manik Saha instructs officials to uphold peace and order and improve public services

Agartala, May 10: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha stated that as the current government is the people’s government, the departments should constantly be watchful and proactive in resolving the people’s issues. The state’s peace system and upholding of traffic and order were given particular attention by CM Saha. Chief Minister Manik Saha made this statement after presiding over a review meeting at the Secretariat today to assess the advancement of numerous public welfare initiatives carried out for the benefit of the state’s ordinary citizens as well as administrative operations. This Task Monitoring System (TMS) conference, held in Mahakaran Conference Hall No. 2, was substantially attended by district magistrates and superintendents of police from eight districts in the state. CM Saha focused particularly on the state’s traffic system and upholding law and order during



today’s review meeting. In addition to directing the relevant authorities to make sure that the weight of heavy vehicles is appropriately maintained and that traffic electronic signals are always operational, he stated that swift action should be taken to alleviate traffic congestion in the state’s district headquarters, including Agartala city. Transport officials were also

told to finish building new motor stands in the state as soon as possible.

The Chief Minister stated that the police administration should always be proactive in making sure that drugs do not enter the state through the railways in any way, taking a firm stance in the battle to make the state drug-free. Dr. Saha also directed the security and related

administration to strictly monitor nursing homes, rehabilitation homes, and sub-registry offices to ensure they are completely free from corruption and function properly.

The Chief Minister took a detailed look at the situation in Dhalai district to improve the quality of the public health and education systems. He instructed the District Magistrate

and health officials to take preventive measures to prevent the outbreak of diarrhea or dysentery, especially during the rainy season.

Besides, the Chief Minister emphasized maintaining a disciplined learning environment along with maintaining the quality and management of mid-day meals in schools. In terms of infrastructure development, the Chief Minister ordered the speedy completion of road renovation work while maintaining quality standards. While discussing the issue of electricity services, the officials of the department informed the Chief Minister that 99 percent of the infrastructure damaged in the recent Kalbaisakhi storm has already been restored. In addition, the Chief Minister asked the officials to keep a vigilant eye to ensure that there is no delay in the payment of MGNREGA funds and that the wages and allowances of daily wage workers are paid on time.

Teachers’ bodies in Meghalaya leave a meeting regarding the provident fund plan

Shillong, May 10: On May 6, Meghalayan teacher groups left a meeting called by the state education department, protesting the proposed Centralized Fund Scheme and accused the government of attempting to “force” registration while the High Court case is still pending.

The Meghalaya Non-Government Schools and Colleges Employees Centralised Fund Scheme, 2026, which aims to simplify provident fund management for more than 30,000 non-government education employees throughout the state, was the subject of the meeting, which was presided over by Education Commissioner and Secretary Vijay Mantri.

Among other things, deficit, ad hoc, and SSA teachers are covered under the proposed plan. The government pays the salaries of deficit teachers, who work in privately run aided schools, to cover institutional revenue gaps. After attending the talks, representatives of the Khasi Jaintia Deficit School Teachers’ Association and the Meghalaya College Teachers’ Association staged a walkout, stating the process was opaque and did not involve all relevant parties. Bosswell Pala, president of KJDSTA, stated that there was “no point” in carrying on with the talks given the current situation. He alleged that organisations such as the Garo Hills



Deficit School Teachers & Employees Association and the Meghalaya College Non-Teaching Employees Association had not been invited to the meeting. “If the government truly wants to hear the concerns of deficit teachers and employees, then all associations and all deficit employees should be invited,” Pala said. The associations also rejected the government’s decision to implement the 2026 scheme and demanded restoration of the draft scheme approved in 2023, arguing that the newer proposal creates uncertainty over employees’ rights and savings. A major point of contention was the government’s push for registration under the proposed framework despite the matter being sub judice before the Meghalaya High Court.

The Manipur Congress denounces alleged assaults on border villages

Imphal, May 10: Senior leaders of the Manipur Pradesh Congress Committee on May 8, condemned the reported attacks on border villages in Manipur and urged the government to take immediate steps to ensure the safety of civilians.

Addressing a press conference at Congress Bhawan, former Chief Minister and MPCC president Okram Ibobi Singh, along with other senior party leaders, alleged that Kuki militants from Myanmar were involved in attacks on villages located along the international border. The Congress leaders alleged that the attacks in-



volved incidents of arson, destruction of houses, and the abduction of civilians, raising concerns over the deteriorating security situation in the border areas.

They accused the government of failing to provide adequate security to residents

of vulnerable border villages and demanded immediate intervention to prevent further violence. The party also called for strengthening security measures in the affected areas and ensuring the protection of civilians living along the border.

Myanmar national was detained in Arunachal Pradesh near the Indo-Myanmar border with suspected opium

Itanagar, May 10: On May 7, a coordinated anti-drug operation along the Indo-Myanmar border in the Changlang region of Arunachal Pradesh resulted in the arrest of a Myanmar national carrying cash and suspected opium. Following specific information inputs involving illegal cross-border movement and suspected drug trafficking, a joint team of Nampong Police and the Special Task Force (STF) at Nampong conducted the operation.

The culprit was identified by police as 40-year-old Laho Kaita Kaisan, a citizen of Myanmar who was allegedly trying to enter Indian territory illegally when security guards stopped him. During the search, the team recovered around 420.5 grams of suspected opium along with cash amounting to Rs 1 lakh from his possession. The seized contraband and cash were confiscated as per legal procedure. Officials said surveillance along the Indo-Myanmar border has been intensified in view of rising concerns over cross-border infiltration and drug smuggling activities in the region. Investigators suspect the accused could be linked to a larger interstate or international narcotics network. A case has been



registered under relevant sections of the NDPS Act, the Immigration Act and the Foreigners Act. Further investigation is underway.

Bengal and Assam swearing-in ceremonies will be attended by Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha

Agartala, May 10: On May 8, Manik Saha said that he will travel to West Bengal to witness the newly constituted government's oath-taking ceremony on May 9. On May 12, he would also take part in another swearing-in ceremony in Assam. The chief minister of Tripura told reporters that he would travel to Bengal on Saturday to attend the event, calling it a happy occasion. "I'll be present at the new West Bengal government's oath-taking ceremony on May 9 and another ceremony in Assam on May 12. I'm heading to Bengal tomorrow.

"Happiness is really at issue here," Saha stated. The Chief Minister also said that under the leadership of Narendra Modi, the NDA-led BJP has continued to expand its political footprint across the country by forming governments in several states. Referring to his election campaign visits in Bengal, Saha claimed that the BJP had received overwhelming public support during the Assembly elections. "I visited Bengal during the election campaign and toured many As-



sembly constituencies. One can understand the pulse of the people, and the response I received was huge.

The victory was landslide. But unfortunately, Mamata Banerjee did not resign," he added.

Existential Crisis Affects Kerala Congress (M) Following Pala Shocker

Thiruvananthapuram, May 10: The Kerala Congress (M) is experiencing a severe crisis following a historic defeat in Pala, putting immense pressure on party head Jose K. Mani. Traditionally reliant on Christian votes in Central Kerala, the party's diminishing support could benefit the NDA as they gain traction among these voters.

Established from the original Kerala Congress in 1964 to advocate for farmers and the Syrian Christian community, the party has seen declining influence since KM Mani's leadership transitioned to his son.

A shift from the Congress-led UDF to the CPI(M)-led LDF has led to consecutive election losses, including José's recent defeat by Mani C Kappan.

The party failed to capture any seats in 12 contested constituencies, while internal dissent about leadership and alliance-



es grows. Analysts emphasize the need for the Kerala Congress (M) to clarify its strategic direction before the next election cycle. Political analysts suggest that the Kerala Congress (M) must decide its strategic direction—whether to remain with the LDF or attempt a return to the UDF—before the next election cycle.

The lack of textbooks in Bodo is against the RTE, according to the All Bodo Students Union



Kokrajhar, May 10: The All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) claimed on Thursday that the government and the relevant department were to blame for the

annual lack of Bodo-medium textbooks, which they said violates the Right to Education Act.

Speaking to reporters at Bodofa House in Kokrajhar, ABSU President Kwrwmdao Wary stated that although most Bodo-medium children had not received textbooks, education remained a fundamental right under Article 21.

He said that the classes started from April 1 as per the academic calendar, but a shortage of over 14,000 textbooks, including those of Mathematics, Social Sciences, and History of class-IX, was reported. He set a ten-day deadline for the government to fill the shortage, failing which he said that the ABSU would approach the high court.

Illegal lottery racket busted in Assam's Dhubri

Agartala, May 10: On May 9, police in Dhubri acted on complaints regarding the illegal sale of interstate lottery tickets and raided a shop, uncovering an unauthorized lottery operation.

The raid, prompted by credible information from residents, resulted

in the seizure of numerous lottery tickets and unaccounted cash. The shop's owner, identified as Dilip Kumar Das, allegedly ran an unauthorized distribution point for lottery tickets from other states, which is prohibited in Assam without state government authorization un-



der the Lotteries (Regulation) Act, 1998. Lotteries from states like Nagaland and Sikkim often evade state tax laws and target locals illegally. Po-

lice have detained Dilip Kumar Das and his son, Debopriya Das, and urged residents to report any further illegal gambling or lottery activities.

The head of the National Institute of Virology claims that the hantavirus is not currently a concern to public health in India

WHO director general Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, who briefed the media on the virus, said 'while this is a serious incident, WHO assesses the public health risk as low'

New Delhi, May 10: Dr. Naveen Kumar, Director of the ICMR's National Institute of Virology, stated on Friday that there is no immediate threat to India's public health despite worries over two Indian nationals who were allegedly infected with the hantavirus on a cruise ship. According to Kumar, there is currently no proof of community spread. He told PTI that contact with sick rodents or their excrement, including saliva, urine, and feces, is the primary way that people contract hantaviruses.

According to him, in closed or poorly ventilated environments like warehouses, ships, barns, and storage facilities, people typically contract the virus by breathing in aerosolized virus particles from rodent urine, droppings, or saliva. "The reported hantavirus cases appear to be isolated ones and there is no immediate public health threat to India," he said. His remarks come after reports that two Indian nationals aboard a cruise ship were detected with hantavi-



rus. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), the two Indian passengers were among a small cluster of suspected infections identified aboard the vessel, and health authorities were monitoring contacts and undertaking precautionary measures. WHO officials noted that hantavirus infections are rare and are generally linked to rodent exposure rather than sustained human transmission. Kumar stressed that unlike COVID-19, hantavirus does not spread easily among people. "Human-to-human transmission is extremely uncommon. Most hantaviruses, especially those reported in Asia and Europe, do not spread between humans. Limited

person-to-person transmission has only been documented with some South American strains such as Andes virus," he explained. WHO Director General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, who briefed the media on the virus, said "while this is a serious incident, WHO assesses the public health risk as low". Given the incubation period, he said, "it is possible that more cases may be reported". Public health experts say hantavirus infections can initially resemble influenza, dengue or severe respiratory illness, making early diagnosis challenging. On India's preparedness, Kumar said the country has adequate laboratory surveillance capacity

to identify suspected cases. "India has diagnostic capacity for hantavirus infection through the ICMR-National Institute of Virology and the nationwide Viral Research and Diagnostic Laboratory Network of 165 labs, where RT-PCR facilities are available for confirmation of suspected cases," he said. According to Kumar, symptoms generally appear one to five weeks after exposure and initially resemble flu-like illness. "Common warning signs include sudden fever, severe body ache, headache, fatigue, chills, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain and dry cough," he said. "In severe cases, patients may develop breathing difficulty, low blood pressure, or kidney involvement with reduced urine output," he added. The NIV director advised people working or travelling in rodent-prone environments such as ships, warehouses, storage facilities and poorly ventilated spaces to maintain hygiene and avoid exposure to rodent-infested areas. Kumar also cautioned that environmental changes could increase the long-term risk of rodent-borne diseases globally, including in India. "Climate change, flooding, unplanned urbanisation, poor waste management and increased human encroachment into rodent habitats can raise the risk of rodent-borne infections," he said.

The Lakhimpur Kheri violence case's witness production is questioned by the SC

New Delhi, May 10: In the ongoing trial of Ashish Mishra, the son of former Union minister Ajay Mishra, and others in the 2021 Lakhimpur Kheri violence case, the Supreme Court expressed disappointment on Friday over the failure to produce witnesses. Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi's bench stated that the Uttar Pradesh government's status report did not provide any explanation for the failure to produce witnesses. It noted that no witnesses have been examined in the trial for the last two months. "We direct the presiding judge to take lawful measures to secure the presence of witnesses," the bench said. It asked the trial judge to make an endeavour to conclude the trial in a time-bound manner, and also to file a status report before it.

The trials in two cases related to the incident are going on before a court in Uttar Pradesh. The bench noted that in the first case, out of 131 witnesses to be examined, 44 have been examined, 15 have been discharged and 72 are still to be produced. In the second FIR, out of 35 witnesses, 26 have been examined and nine were left, it said. Senior advocate Siddharth Dave, appearing for Ashish Mishra, said that as per the latest status report filed by Uttar Pradesh, 44 witnesses



have been examined so far in the first FIR. "No witnesses have been examined in the last two months," Dave said. He argued that the last status report filed by the state in March also said that 44 witnesses had been examined. "What have you done from March till today?" the bench asked the counsel appearing for Uttar Pradesh.

The state's counsel said that 3-4 witnesses were summoned for the recording of their deposition during the trial. The bench said at least 7-8 witnesses should be summoned instead of three or four for a day, so that even if some of them do not turn up, the trial court could proceed with the recording of statements of those appearing before it.

The top court also wondered how official wit-

nesses can remain absent during the trial. "We are disappointed to note that the so-called status report does not assign any reason whatsoever for non-production of witnesses...", the bench said. Advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for the relatives of the farmers who were allegedly mowed down in the incident, said the apex court will have to do something regarding the manner in which the trial was going on. The bench noted that besides the two FIRs, another FIR was registered in October last year concerning alleged witness intimidation. It said that, as per the state's status report, the chargesheet was filed against the main accused in that case. The bench noted that the status report reveals that, as far as Ashish Mishra is concerned, his alleged role in the third case is still being investigated. The top court directed the investigating officer of the third case to conclude the pending probe and ensure that the appropriate report is filed before the concerned court within four weeks. The bench posted the next hearing in the Lakhimpur Kheri violence case for July. On October 3, 2021, eight people, including four farmers, were killed in Tikunia in Lakhimpur Kheri district during a protest by farmers against Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya's visit to the area.

India warns Pakistan on the anniversary of Operation Sindoor

New Delhi, May 10: On Thursday, the first anniversary of the covert attack on mainland Pakistan that was carried out in retaliation for the Pahalgalam terror attack, India's top military brass declared that acts of terror will have repercussions and that Operation Sindoor has demonstrated that no sanctuary across the border is safe. The military issued a warning to Pakistan, stating that India would keep destroying terrorist infrastructure under the "new normal," which was established in the wake of the 26-person Pahalgalam incident in April of last year. According to the military leadership, the strategic achievements of Operation Sindoor provided the armed services with priceless battle experience and signaled a significant change in India's security doctrine against cross-border terrorism. "No sanctuary across the Line of Control is safe. We will hit everything.

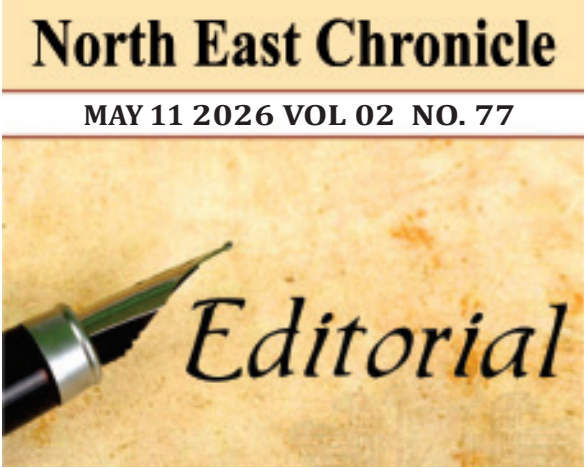
We will go after everything and that has been made clear in the new normal that the Prime Minister said last year. But the conditions, the timing and the method will be ours," said deputy chief of army staff, Lieutenant General Rajiv Ghai, in a tri-service joint media briefing in Jaipur.

Operation Sindoor, executed on May 7, involved India destroying nine terror camps linked to banned groups such as Lashkar-e-Toiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed, with four located in Pakistan and five in



Pakistan-administered Kashmir. Air Marshal A.K. Bharti emphasized that the operation targeted terrorist infrastructure without collateral damage and was a clear message that acts of terror will have consequences. He described India's response as lethal and necessary for self-defense after Pakistan sided with terrorism.

The operation marked a shift in India's approach, showcasing indigenous capabilities, including BrahMos and Akash missiles. It is regarded as the beginning of India's ongoing counter-terrorism efforts, as highlighted by Lt Gen. Ghai. India maintains that no external parties influenced the cessation of hostilities. The Indian Air Force persists in monitoring Pakistan and China.



Trump’s redline and Iran’s brinkmanship

Recent comments by Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney at the World Economic Forum highlighted a significant rupture in the rules-based international order established post-1945. This disruption reflects a diminishing authority in multilateral institutions, now stressed by overt conflicts, particularly in the Persian Gulf.

The tensions involving Iran, the U.S., and Israel represent a shift from covert to direct confrontation, raising the critical question of Iran’s nuclear ambitions. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former U.S. President Donald Trump have made clear that preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons is a strategic red line for both nations. Iran has adeptly managed regional power through asymmetric strategies, employing proxy groups and maintaining plausible deniability, thus exerting pressure across vital areas without direct confrontation. However, this brinkmanship has a limit; the Strait of Hormuz is pivotal for global oil supply, making any disruption impact price volatility and global economic stability. China’s cautious response contrasts with Russia’s willingness to support Iran militarily, exposing different strategic approaches among rising powers. India faces a complex situation as millions of its nationals are in the Gulf, and any destabilization could affect vital remittances and energy imports. Its defense ties with Israel are crucial, showcasing a commitment to military modernization, while relations with Iran, though strategically relevant, remain secondary. India’s national interests necessitate balancing relationships with both Israel and Gulf monarchies, underscoring a pragmatic orientation in its foreign policy.Carney’s insights signal that middle powers must navigate this fracture in the international order thoughtfully, as the stakes heighten for global security, particularly regarding nuclear proliferation and regional stability. As the United States grapples with its policy towards Iran, the potential for prolonged conflict could undermine its strategic objectives, while simultaneously reaffirming Iran’s resistance narrative. In this evolving landscape, India’s strategic pivot towards the Gulf and Israel is driven by economic, military, and energy security considerations, reinforcing the notion that the world Carney described is already unfolding.

European officials are considering the unimaginable as a result of Trump’s outbursts against NATO

Donald Trump’s approach to international relations, particularly regarding Iran and NATO allies, is prompting European nations to reassess their security strategies in light of a potential decrease in U.S. military support against Russian aggression. With Trump’s possible withdrawal of critical military resources, Europe is urged to prepare for security vulnerabilities. European countries, having taken financial and political responsibility in supporting Ukraine against Russian President Vladimir Putin, now view Ukraine as a vital asset for their defense rather than a liability. Trump’s characterization of NATO as ineffective and European allies as hesitant has weakened the alliance’s credibility.

His announcement of troop withdrawals and threats of sanctions for not supporting U.S.-led operations are driving leaders to reconsider their defense policies. Recent scenarios, such as a potential Russian incursion into the Baltics, highlight the uncertainty of U.S. backing, which is increasingly concerning for European defense planners.

Germany has made significant strides by formulating its first military strategy post-World War II, aiming to become Europe’s strongest conventional force by 2039. Meanwhile, France is engaging in discussions with several non-nuclear nations to extend its nuclear capabilities, supported by a joint declaration with the UK to enhance cooperation between

the two nuclear powers. Although this initiative is intended to complement U.S. nuclear deterrence, nations reliant on American support, like Germany and Poland, are exploring independent deterrence strategies against Russia.While defense spending is rising, European countries are hindered in quickly achieving the key military capabilities provided by the U.S., such as intelligence and logistical support.

A recent tabletop exercise among EU ambassadors tested the implementation of the mutual assistance clause outlined in Article 42.7 of the EU treaty—considered stricter than NATO’s Article 5. Despite being largely theoretical until now, it aimed to clarify emergency procedures, al-

though its occurrence raised concerns about encouraging U.S. disengagement from European security. Europe’s rearmament drive also faces new challenges due to the Iran war. The conflict has massively depleted US arsenals of key weapons, and European governments are being notified that they may face years of additional delay before receiving vital air defence missiles, long-range fires and ammunition ordered from US defence contractors.

The Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk has publicly questioned the likelihood of U.S. compliance with NATO commitments under Trump’s leadership. Additionally, the ongoing war in Iran has strained U.S. military resources, causing delays for

European nations in acquiring critical defense systems. This scenario poses significant challenges for Europe, facing increased vulnerability without adequate U.S. support and continuing military capability gaps amidst geopolitical uncertainties.

These dilemmas should be top of the agenda at the next Nato summit, in Ankara in July, but European leaders will be loth to air their strategic vulnerability with Trump for fear of prompting the impetuous US leader to walk out on them. Unsure how far they can still depend on the US, Europeans need to prepare for a gradual takeover of Nato’s tried and tested command structures, defence planning and joint exercises.If possible, Nato should retain a US

Supreme Allied Commander Europe (Saceur) to embody the enduring link with US nuclear and conventional military forces – a key deterrent to Russia. But Europeans must urgently seek ways to organise their own defence in case Trump shirks his commitment.

This is unlikely to be centred on the EU, given its unanimity principle and lack of military experience, and the fact that key allies such as the UK, Norway, Turkey and Canada are not members. If the US stands on the sidelines, a European defence union led by France, Germany and the UK, backed by Nato and EU resources, and with key roles for Poland and Ukraine, offers the strongest option to a vulnerable continent.Oltusa

Vienna has been declared a renters’ utopia

Vienna is frequently cited as a model in housing policy debates, with its social-housing stock constituting approximately 43% of the city’s 1 million housing units. The social housing system, primarily comprising municipally owned council housing and limited-profit housing associations, provides affordable options for a range of income levels, including the middle class. Rent in the social-housing sector is about 30% cheaper than in the private market, and this sector’s presence helps stabilize private rental prices. The origins of Vienna’s social housing date back to the 1920s under municipal socialist policies,

financed through progressive taxation. While the Social Democrats continue to support social housing, the landscape has shifted: council housing construction has diminished, while limited-profit housing has grown, sustained in part by a 1% salary levy on workers in the city. Vienna’s social housing has shown relative stability compared to other European cities, experiencing less impact from privatization. A significant policy shift in the early 2000s saw the sale of federally owned housing associations, yet many tenants chose to continue renting. The allocation process for social housing remains complex, often benefitting

FTA signing

On the eve of the landmark signing of the India–New Zealand Free Trade Agreement, Union Minister for Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal and New Zealand Minister for Trade and Investment Todd McClay jointly led a high-level Industry Engagement Programme in Agra, bringing together a diverse crosssection of industry stakeholders and reaffirming the deepening economic partnership between the two nations, with the interaction also attended by Minister of State for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying S. P. Baghel, where representatives from sectors including leather and footwear, AYUSH, pharmaceuticals, medical devices, light engineering, sports goods, and Laghu Udyog Bharati from Uttar Pradesh engaged in detailed discussions highlighting the depth and diversity of India’s manufacturing capabilities and export potential, and in keeping with the broader vision articulated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi of building inclusive and forwardlooking trade partnerships rooted in national priorities, both Ministers underscored that the India–New Zealand FTA is positioned as far more than a conventional tariff reduction agreement, instead emerging as a comprehensive framework encompassing market access, agricultural productivity, investment flows, talent mobility, and enhanced collaboration across sectors such as sports, tourism, education, and people-to-people ties, thereby aiming to deliver tangible benefits to manufacturers, farmers, MSMEs, women entrepreneurs, students, and skilled professionals in both countries, while Agra’s prominence as a major hub for leather and footwear manufacturing was highlighted as a key focal point of the engagement, given that the city accounts for approximately 75 per cent of India’s leather footwear production and holds a Geographical Indication tag for its products under the One District One Product scheme, positioning it as a flagship contributor to India’s export ecosystem, and with the FTA set to eliminate duties on 100 per cent of Indian exports from the date of its entry into force, including reducing tariffs on leather and footwear from 5 per cent to zero, industry representatives expressed strong optimism that Indian exporters will gain a decisive competitive advantage in the New Zealand market, further noting that the sector has the potential to grow to USD 50 billion by 2030 driven by a strategic transition from mass production to high-value-added manufacturing, while also leveraging complementarities such as New Zealand’s rich raw leather resources combined with India’s established manufacturing capabilities, thereby creating opportunities for joint ventures, global sourcing, and enhanced supply chain integration, with both Ministers and industry leaders emphasizing the vision of positioning Agra as a global sourcing destination, a major employment generator, and an export powerhouse capable of competing on the world stage, and the discussions also extended to the pharmaceutical and medical devices sectors where industry stakeholders welcomed provisions in the FTA that facilitate faster regulatory access, including the acceptance of Good Manufacturing Practice and Good Clinical Practice inspection reports from comparable international regulators, which is expected to significantly reduce compliance burdens and expedite product approvals for Indian manufacturers seeking entry into the New Zealand market, while the inclusion of a dedicated chapter on Health and Traditional Medicine, marking the first such provision in an FTA for both countries, was widely appreciated as it recognizes the importance of AYUSH systems and opens new avenues for collaboration and export growth in traditional and alternative medicine sectors, and during his address, Shri Piyush Goyal emphasized the transformative opportunities created by the Agreement in areas such as education and talent mobility, urging industry stakeholders to actively leverage these provisions and encouraging Indian students and professionals to explore new pathways enabled by the FTA, while calling upon businesses to view the Agreement not merely as a trade instrument but as a gateway to a deeper, people-centric partnership that fosters innovation, skill development, and crosssectoral collaboration, further describing the FTA as an opening of both doors and minds and urging industry to think beyond conventional approaches by fully utilizing the breadth of opportunities available across sectors including pharmaceuticals, AYUSH, education, sports, tourism, and investment, and he also called upon industry bodies to ensure that the benefits of the Agreement reach every MSME and small enterprise, thereby promoting inclusive growth and widespread economic participation, while Mr Todd McClay reaffirmed that India remains a strategic priority for New Zealand and described the Agreement as one of the highest quality FTAs concluded by his country, encouraging businesses from both sides to actively pursue joint ventures and capitalize on the significant investment opportunities emerging from India’s rapidly growing economy, and highlighting the mutual benefits that can be derived from stronger economic integration and collaboration, and the Industry Engagement Programme in Agra forms part of a broader series of high-level interactions accompanying the signing of the India–New Zealand FTA in New Delhi, which has been concluded in a record period of nine months since its launch on 16 March 2025, marking a new chapter in bilateral economic relations characterized by speed, ambition, and strategic alignment, and as the Agreement moves towards implementation, it is expected to unlock new avenues of trade, investment, and cooperation, reinforcing India’s position as a global manufacturing hub while strengthening its economic ties with key partners in the Indo-Pacific region, and overall, the engagement in Agra reflects a proactive and collaborative approach to trade policy, where government and industry work together to maximize opportunities, address challenges.

The extent of Britain’s energy crisis is a delusion shared by both the left and the right

Britain is currently facing an energy crisis exacerbated by geopolitical events, notably Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and a blockade in the Gulf, signaling a failure in political foresight regarding energy security. Over the years, decisions made from the 1980s to the 2010s have led to diminished control over energy sources, including the privatization of strategic energy industries and a reduced focus on domestic capacities like coal and natural gas. This has rendered Britain heavily reliant on imports for petroleum and natural gas, affecting resilience during global supply disruptions. Calls for renewed drilling in the North Sea to mitigate dependence on imports have gained traction, with various political factions advocating for this approach.

However, the realities of North Sea production suggest that much of the oil extracted is exported, and existing refineries are ill-equipped to process heavier crude oils resulting from years of extraction. The decline in the number of refineries—from 18 in the early 1970s to just six in 2025—has further exacerbated the situation, demonstrated by the recent closure of Grangemouth, which produced jet



fuel and has contributed to potential supply shortages.

Despite advocates promoting renewable alternatives like wind and solar power, the dependence on hydrocarbons remains high, with these sources comprising 70% of energy consumption in 2024. Electricity accounts for less than a quarter, highlighting a significant

mismatch between current energy needs and the outputs of renewable sources.

While efforts toward electrification are necessary, the transition is slow, hampered by dependency on market forces and private initiatives, resulting in uneven benefits across socioeconomic groups. The current energy discourse lacks

genuine confrontation with the need for rapid state intervention and significant policy changes to achieve true energy sovereignty. This requires acknowledging the complexities of energy needs beyond mere electricity generation and addressing the nuances of energy politics in light of pressing global realities.

India must recognize the generational shift as Balen’s RSP sweep puts an end to the old order

The recent electoral victory of the Rashtriya Swatantra Party (RSP) in Nepal represents a pivotal moment in the country’s political landscape, with the RSP securing 180 out of 275 seats and striving for a two-thirds majority. This triumph, driven by influential young leaders Rabi Lamichhane and Balen Shah, contrasts sharply with previous electoral outcomes, including the Maoist victory in 2008. While the RSP currently lacks representation in the Upper House and faces challenges due to Lamichhane’s legal issues, its successful acquisition of 125 out of 165 First Past The Post seats reflects a notable shift among Gen Z voters prioritizing electoral reform and potential constitutional amendments, positioning the RSP to significantly impact Nepal’s political stability.

The electoral landscape has seen the Communist Party of Nepal Unified Marxist Leninist (CPN UML), Nepali Congress (NC), and, to a lesser extent, the Nepal Communist Party (formerly Maoists) alternating in governance. Public frustration over corruption, scandals, and misgovernance has propelled the Nepali populace to endorse the RSP, seeking “Parivartan” (transformation) and “vikas” (development) as pledged in its

manifesto. Promises of achieving 6% GDP growth and creating 1.5 million jobs, alongside plans to double per capita income from \$1,500 to \$3,000, reflect the urgent need for action, given the trend of approximately 1,500 youths leaving daily for opportunities abroad amidst a populace of 30 million, with a third working outside the country.

Having debuted in the 2022 elections with only 21 seats, the RSP’s dramatic victory has obliterated its competitors, reducing NC, UML, and Maoists to just 17, 10, and 8 seats, respectively, showcasing a brutal electoral defeat. Additionally, the emergence of promising candidates such as Sudan Gurung in Gorkha and defeats of former leaders like KP Oli and Gagan Thapa further signify a shift in political allegiance towards the RSP among younger voters.

Notably, the reactions from traditional parties have varied, with the NC attempting to adapt in response to Gen Z aspirations, while UML leaders, including Oli, dismissed these movements. In contrast, Maoist leader Prachanda swiftly rebranded his party and aligned with smaller left factions to regain some political footing, although historical communist dominance had

long stifled progressive reforms. The RSP’s substantial electoral win diminishes Communist control in Parliament to approximately 20%, adding complexity to domestic and international relations. The UML and Maoists’ joint rejection of the Agnipath/Agniveer scheme underscores a potential rift in Nepal’s strategic relationship with India, a gap the RSP is anticipated to bridge. The newly formed government faces the urgent need to revitalize an economy heavily reliant on tourism and remittances, currently valued at \$45 billion with a foreign exchange reserve approximating annual remittances of \$10 billion. Former NC leader Swamim Wagle, an esteemed economist and likely finance minister, is expected to spearhead anti-corruption efforts and address previous governance failures. The RSP’s promise of good governance will necessitate concrete actions rather than rhetoric, particularly in restoring police morale compromised during recent protests and overhauling the bureaucratic structure established during Oli’s tenures. Political buzz in Kathmandu hints at Sushila Karki possibly succeeding the ailing NC president Ram Chandra Poudyel, marking a significant shift in leadership dynamics. It is suggested that predictions regarding



Balen Shah’s foreign policy, shaped by his role as Kathmandu’s mayor, should be approached with caution, as his strategic decisions as Prime Minister will be influenced by Nepal’s geographical and political realities. Overall, the emergence of the RSP heralds a potential new dawn for Nepal’s political future.

Retail car sales reached 2.61 million units in April, up 12.9%

New Delhi: Total automobile retail sales in India rose by 12.94% in April, reaching 2,611,317 units compared to 2,312,221 units last year. Factors contributing to this growth include GST 2.0 affordability gains, supportive RBI rates, healthy rural cash flows, and a prolonged marriage season. Passenger vehicle (PV) sales were notably high at 407,355 units (up 12.21%), while two-wheelers also achieved record sales of 1,916,258 units (up 13.01%). Three-wheeler and commercial vehicles showed increases of 7.19% and 15.02%, respectively.



Fada Vice President Sai Giridhar emphasized strong rural demand and sustained interest in SUVs and alternative powertrains. While inventory levels have risen, they remain healthy, and dealer confidence for the coming months is cautiously optimistic despite potential challenges from weather, geopolitical issues, and supply constraints.

Vedanta demerger explained: Investors should be aware of these four new stocks

New Delhi: Vedanta's long-awaited demerger has progressed, and the mining and metal giant is getting closer to listing its divided companies. The company will be divided into five entities as a result of the restructuring, including four new firms. The company's stock surpassed the demerger's May 1 record date, which fell on Maharashtra Day, when markets were closed. In September 2023, the Anil Agarwal-led firm initially presented its demerger plan, which called for dividing its diverse portfolio—which included businesses in aluminum, zinc, oil and gas, power, and ferrous materials—into separately listed companies. Later, the strategy was changed from six entities to five, indicating a stronger emphasis on operational clarity. Under the approved scheme, Vedanta will demerge its core businesses into four separate entities—Vedanta Aluminium Metal Ltd, Vedanta Power Ltd, Vedanta Oil and Gas Ltd, and Vedanta Iron and Steel Ltd. As part of the arrangement, shareholders of Vedanta will receive one share in

each of the four newly created companies for every one share held in the parent entity. The remaining or residual company will continue to house the group's key operations, including its stake in Hindustan Zinc Ltd, along with zinc international, copper, and ferro chrome businesses. The restructuring aims to create pure-play companies that can attract sector-focused investors, improve operational efficiency, and enable sharper capital allocation—potentially addressing the long-standing conglomerate discount. Explaining the rationale, Agarwal said in an interview with PTI in December 2025 that the demerger was chosen over asset sales or alternative restructuring to unlock the full growth potential of each business amid strong and rising demand, particularly in India. "Vedanta is like a big banyan tree. There is tremendous potential in each business, and each one of them has the potential to become a banyan tree by itself," he said. "I have a vision that each company will be as big as Vedanta in terms of revenue. Effectively, we are



creating five more Vedantas, which will make shareholders the happiest." Commenting on the demerger, Ravi Singh, chief research officer at Master Capital Services, said the restructuring aims to unlock value by creating focused businesses across aluminium, zinc, oil & gas, power, and steel. This, he noted, could improve transparency, capital allocation, and valuation multiples.

Toyota anticipates a \$4.3 billion loss due to supply interruptions and the consequences from the Iran War

New Delhi: In one of the biggest warnings to yet over the crisis's effects on multinational corporations, Toyota stated on Friday that it anticipates the consequences of the Iran war will cost them approximately \$4.3 billion this fiscal year. As growing costs and supply problems related to the war overshadowed high demand for hybrid vehicles, Toyota announced a than 50% reduction in quarterly profitability and stated it anticipates full-year profit to decline by a fifth in the year that just began. For the first time this year, the carmaker anticipates that sales of hybrid vehicles will surpass 5 million units. The findings highlight the unequal effects of the Middle East crisis, as rising fuel prices increase demand for fuel-efficient vehicles but are insufficient to counteract growing cost constraints. For the three months that ended on March 31, Toyota reported an operational profit of 569.4 billion yen (\$3.6 billion), down from 1.1 trillion yen the previous year. It anticipates a 3 trillion yen operational profit for the current fiscal year. The median estimate of 4.59 trillion yen in an LSEG survey of 23 analysts was significantly higher than that expected. Following the release of the results report, Toyota shares dropped roughly 2.2%,



closing at their lowest level since mid-October. The company said the total impact of the Middle East conflict would amount to around 670 billion yen (\$4.3 billion) in the year ending March 2027. That estimate exceeds the figures provided so far by many major companies, including airlines. The latest rise in energy prices adds to challenges

for the global auto industry, which is already dealing with US tariffs and intensifying competition from Chinese automakers. Volkswagen CEO Oliver Blume said this week that tariffs represent a burden of 5 billion euros (\$5.9 billion) annually on the German group's operating profit. Toyota said last week that its sales in the Middle East fell sharp-

ly in March after shipments to the region were disrupted. The outlook is the first issued under new CEO Kenta Kon, who took over last month and now faces the challenge of steering the automaker through the impact of US President Donald Trump's tariffs, which reduced operating profit in the year just ended by 1.4 trillion yen.

Britannia declines 5% after Q4 and issues a price increase warning

New Delhi: Following the release of the company's March 2026 quarter results, shares of the massive FMCG company Britannia Industries fell almost 5% to an intraday low of ₹5,524 on the National Stock Exchange (NSE). Due to a significant increase in freight expenses during the Middle East turmoil, the company recently announced that it will raise pricing. By 10:30 AM, the stock had down 3.8% from the previous session's closing of ₹5,814 to ₹5,590. By contrast, the benchmark NSE Nifty50 index was down 90 points, or 0.37 percent, at 24,236.55 levels.

The stock has dropped by about 3.6% so far this year, while the Nifty50 has dropped by 6.9%. The market capitalization of the company was ₹1.35 trillion. Its 52-week high was ₹6,336, and its 52-week low was ₹5,298. Britannia Industries recorded a net profit of ₹678 crore for the March 2026 quarter, up 21.2% from ₹560 crore for the same time the previous year. From ₹4,432 crore in Q4FY25 to ₹4,719 crore in Q4FY26, the FMCG major's consolidated revenue grew by 6.5% year over year (Y-o-Y). Earnings before interest, tax, depreciation, and amortization (Ebitda) increased from ₹805 crore to ₹853 crore, a 5.9% increase. Ebitda margins, however, slightly decreased to 18.1% from 18.2% in the same quarter of the prior fiscal year. The company stated that its international business revenues and profitability were impacted in Q4 FY26 due to vessel unavailability, demand slowdown, and a sharp rise in fuel and ocean freight costs. However, there was no material disruption to production operations at its India manufacturing facilities due to



industrial fuel supply constraints. To mitigate these challenges, the company said it has initiated calibrated price hikes from Q1FY27, is optimising sourcing between India and international manufacturing facilities for key markets, and is accelerating cost optimisation and efficiency initiatives across the business.

Additionally, the company board has recommended a final dividend of ₹90.50 per equity share of face value of ₹1 each for the financial year ended March 31, 2026. Harish Jujarey, AVP and head of technical equity research at Prithvi Finmart, said Britannia is currently trading near the 5,550 mark and has faced strong resistance around its 200-DMA, placed near 5,850 levels. The stock continues to exhibit a weak chart structure, indicating limited upside in the near term. "On the downside, the stock may witness further weakness towards the 5,350 zone, where multiple bottoms have been formed in the past and could act as an important support area. Considering the overall technical setup, a "sell on rise" strategy near the 5,650-5,700 zone appears favourable, as long as it trades below 200 daily moving averages," he said.

Bajaj to launch new Pulsars across 125-250cc range



Mumbai: Bajaj Auto is strengthening the Pulsar, its most well-known motorbike brand. "We will have new motorcycles in the 125cc and in the 150cc to 250cc segment — we would like to put them in as early as possible, particularly in quarter two, so that we are in time to harness the surge which usually comes in the season time," Executive Director Rakesh Sharma stated during the company's Q4 FY26 earnings interaction. Sharma was typically reticent about specifics. Most of these would fall under the purview of Pulsar. In recent months, the Pulsar brand has become more popular and significant.

In just the Pulsar N and NS series, Bajaj released eight to ten improvements and versions between October 2025 and March 2026. Sharma pointed out that more than half of Bajaj's sales in the 150cc-plus market now come from these updated models, indicating that the new product cadence is directly translating into customer acceptance. For the remainder of FY27, the launch calendar will be as active. According to SIAM data for FY26, the 150–200cc sector—the core of Pulsar's market—grew 37.5% year over year to 1.51 million units, making it the fastest-growing major segment in the Indian motorcycle market. In this

band, Bajaj's own volumes increased by 61.5%, greatly exceeding the segment average. Despite starting from a smaller base of 223,066 units, the 200–250cc segment—where the Pulsar 220, Pulsar 250, and Dominar play—grew even quicker at 66.9%. Bajaj is the leader in the 200–250cc segment and the second-largest player in the 150–200cc segment behind TVS — and the market is moving in its favour. Sharma's read of the broader industry is nuanced. He described a motorcycle market that roared through FY26 at 20 per cent-plus growth rates in its latter half, only to hit an air pocket in April 2026. A confluence of geopolitical disruption — stemming from the Middle East crisis — led to LPG shortages, supply-chain stress, and softening consumer sentiment. He now expects the industry to moderate to 7–9 per cent growth in the near term, a sharp step-down from recent momentum. He was careful to distinguish between the two halves of this market. "The growth is continuing largely from the top half and in particular from the 150cc-plus segment, which is expected to grow at twice the rate," he said. For Bajaj, whose portfolio is precisely weighted towards that upper half, the softening is a challenge mostly for competitors more exposed to the entry commuter space.

AI propels Asian equities as Brent rises 1% on renewed Iranian conflict

London: While many equity markets, especially in Asia, were poised for spectacular weekly gains due to the surge in demand for AI, oil prices increased and stocks fell as the US and Iran engaged in combat in West Asia. European stocks dropped 0.9%, as benchmark Brent crude futures increased by almost 1% to \$101 per barrel. Although sterling gradually increased and British bonds and stocks traded in line with their European counterparts as the results came in, traders were closely watching Labour Party losses in the British elections, which might put pressure on Prime Minister Keir Starmer's leadership. The United States and Iran clashed in the Gulf and the UAE came under renewed attack in a test of a month-long ceasefire, but the warring parties downplayed the situation, leaving investors guessing. "The market seem to

be taking every chance to price in a quick end to the war," said Jan von Gerich, chief analyst at Nordea. "But it seems unlikely there's going to be an agreement. I still think there are going to be disruptions in the Strait (of Hormuz) for a longer time and it won't be resolved any time soon." Stock markets in Europe were lower.

The pan-continental STOXX 600 was down 0.9 per cent, while major bourses in Frankfurt and Paris were off a similar amount. Stock markets in Asia, which have been soaring thanks to strong revenue and spending plans from the US AI hyper-scalers - which will benefit the region's chipmakers - slipped slightly from record highs. MSCI's broadest index of Asian shares outside Japan fell 1 per cent, although South Korea's KOSPI inched up 0.1 per cent, for a weekly gain of more than

13.5 per cent - the largest since 2008 - on the back of a surge in Samsung and SK Hynix.

Taiwan's benchmark was up 7 per cent this week and Japan's Nikkei rose 5.4 per cent. The European benchmark was heading for a 0.1 per cent weekly fall. Currency markets were broadly steady with the dollar falling slightly and heading for its second straight weekly loss, although the yen remained in focus.

Japan intervened in the foreign exchange market during holidays in early May to stave off further falls in the battered currency, a source familiar with the matter told Reuters. The euro bought \$1.1742. China's yuan, Asia's best-performing currency since the war broke out, is on the cusp of strengthening past 6.8 to the dollar and sits near its strongest since 2023.

JLR reduces the cost of imported models by up to Rs. 75 lakh

New Delhi: In anticipation of the India-UK free trade agreement, JLR India on Tuesday announced a price reduction of up to ₹75 lakh for its Range Rover fully constructed unit models imported from the UK. According to a statement from JLR India, the Range Rover SV and Range Rover Sport SV are the main models gaining from the FTA. It further stated that "the Range Rover SV has been repriced from ₹4.25 crore to ₹3.5 crore (starting price ex-showroom)" under the revised pricing. Additionally, the business stated that the Range Rover Sport SV's pricing has been lowered from ₹2.75 crore to ₹2.35 crore, greatly improving its market positioning.

"The revised prices reflect the new duty structure enabled by the FTA and will be effective immediately," it stated. Rajan Amba, Managing Director of JLR India, commented on the development, saying, "We are happy to extend its benefits to our clients

in anticipation of the India-UK FTA being implemented." The updated pricing of Range Rover SV and Range Rover Sport SV underscores our customer-first approach and commitment to building long-term relationships with our clients." He further said, "We are confident that this FTA will allow more clients to experience the highly desirable and aspirational SV portfolio, and further strengthen the JLR India growth story."

JLR India said prices of locally manufactured models, including Range Rover, Range Rover Sport, Range Rover Evoque, Range Rover Velar and Discovery Sport, will not be impacted by the UK-India FTA. Other models Defender and Discovery will maintain their current pricing structures as they are manufactured in Slovakia, Europe and hence do not fall under the purview of the UK-India FTA, it added.

Pidilite Industries' stock rises 4% after a solid Q4



New Delhi: After the firm released better-than-expected results for the March 2026 quarter (Q4FY26), shares of Pidilite Industries, a manufacturer of adhesives and construction chemicals, increased by more than 4% to reach an intraday high of ₹1,515 on the National Stock Exchange (NSE). The stock was up 2.3% from its previous session closing level of ₹1,450.40 at 12:20 PM, trading at ₹1,479. By contrast, the NSE Nifty50 index was down 138.60 points, or 0.57 percent, at 24,188.05 levels. Since its 52-week low of ₹1,259 on April 6, 2026, Pidilite stock has increased by around 15%. The market capitalization of the company was ₹1.50 trillion. In the March 2026 quarter, Pidilite Industries reported consolidated net sales of ₹3,572 crore, up 14.1 per cent from ₹3,120 crore in the corresponding quarter of the previous fiscal. Its profit after tax (PAT) came in at ₹584 crore, up 36.6 per cent as compared to ₹428 crore in the Q4FY25. The company's earnings before interest, tax, depreciation, and amortisation (Ebitda) grew 31.6 per cent to ₹833 crore as against ₹633 crore in the year-ago period. Ebitda margin also expanded by 310 basis points to 23.3 per cent from 20.2 per cent. For the full FY26, Pidilite reported net sales of ₹14,553 crore, up 11.1 per cent from ₹13,094 crore in the previous fiscal. PAT jumped 17.9 per cent to ₹2,481 crore from ₹2,096 crore. Ebitda came in at ₹3,519 crore in FY26, up 16.8 per cent from ₹3,013 crore in FY25. Ebitda margin expanded to 24.2 per cent from 23 per cent. Its underlying volume growth (UVG) remained strong at 15 per cent. In the Consumer & Bazaar (C&B) segment, UVG was 15.4 per cent, and in the B2B business, it was 14.8 per cent. The company's board of directors has proposed a final dividend of ₹11.5 per share. Sudhanshu Vats, managing director at Pidilite Industries, said the company delivered strong mid-teens UVG and revenue growth with robust expansion in margins, underscoring the strength of our brands and business model. Consumer & Bazaar segment continued to accelerate, while the Business-to-Business segment made steady progress despite external challenges. "Looking ahead, we are confident of our disciplined execution as we navigate the current supply side environment. We expect the momentum in domestic demand to continue as we manage the potential impact on input costs in the year ahead," he said.

Iran warns US amid escalation in strait of Hormuz



Tehran: More orders for forcible relocation have been issued by the Israeli military for residents of southern Lebanon, this time targeting the towns of Sarafand and Jabsheet. Avichay Adraee, the military’s Arabic-language spokesperson, advised the locals to leave their homes “immediately and move away from the villages

and towns for a distance of at least 1000 meters to open areas” in a social media post. Adraee announced impending bombings and asserted that the IDF is “compelled to act forcefully against” Hezbollah for allegedly violating the ceasefire deal between Israel and Lebanon, which was mediated by the US and went into effect in the mid-

dle of April. Hezbollah, which has been attacking Israeli soldiers in Lebanon, claims that as long as Israel continues to violate the ceasefire, it would not stop attacking Israeli troops in Lebanon and cities in northern Israel. Despite the military’s claims that it is only targeting Hezbollah locations, Israel has been repeatedly accused of

breaking the ceasefire agreement by carrying out strikes that kill people and demolish homes. As long as Israel maintained its “right to take all necessary measures in self-defense, at any time, against planned, imminent, or ongoing attacks,” it was essentially granted permission to carry out its war on Lebanon under the terms of the agreement. India’s ministry of external affairs said the attack on Fujairah in the UAE – which injured three Indian nationals – was “unacceptable” and called for an immediate end to the “targeting of civilian infrastructure and innocent civilians”. Officials in Fujairah said yesterday that a fire broke out at the Fujairah Oil Industry Zone following what they described as a drone attack originating from Iran. Civil defence teams were deployed immediately to contain the blaze, Fujairah Media office said in a statement.

UK raises terror threat to ‘severe’ after London stabbings

London: Following the antisemitic stabbings in northwest London, the UK’s terror threat level was elevated from “substantial” to “severe,” indicating a significant likelihood of an attack. The upgrading on Thursday, according to the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre (JTAC), an intelligence organization connected to the UK’s security service that evaluates the nation’s terrorist risks, was not exclusively motivated by the terror assault in Golders Green the day before. It said that the threat had been growing for a while due to an increase in more general Islamist and extreme right-wing terrorism threats from UK-based individuals and small groups.

“Today, the national threat level has increased to ‘severe’, which means a terrorist attack is considered highly likely,” said UK Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood. “I know this will be a source of concern to many, particularly amongst our Jewish community, who have suffered so much.” The government has today announced a signif-



icant increase in investment to protect our Jewish communities, with record funding for policing and security at synagogues, schools and community centres.

And we will do everything in our power to rid society of the evil of antisemitism,” she said. The terror threat level had been at substantial, which means an attack was likely, but has now been raised further. Severe is one level lower than the highest on the five-point scale,

where “critical” signifies that a terror attack is “highly likely in the near future.” “As the threat level rises, I urge everyone to be vigilant, as they go about their daily lives, and report any concerns they have to the police,” Mahmood added. It came after two Jewish men, aged 76 and 34, were stabbed on the street. A 45-year-old Somalia-born British male suspect remains in custody following his arrest at the scene.

The UK’s strategy to address the jet fuel deficit depends on a Nigerian refinery that is alleged to have fired union members

London: Amid a lack of jet fuel, a refinery in Nigeria that is alleged to have fired employees for joining a union has become crucial to the UK government’s efforts to salvage the summer break. Transport Secretary Heidi Alexander stated over the weekend that increasing gasoline imports from the United States and West Africa is one way to address the Strait of Hormuz situation. Dangote in Lagos, which began manufacturing aviation fuel in January 2024, is the primary refinery on Africa’s west coast that exports fuel to the UK for commercial aircraft. The massive Nigerian facility imported over 130,000 tonnes of jet fuel into the UK in March, according to market data firm Kpler. Unions have accused the refinery, which is owned by Aliko Dangote, the richest man in Africa, of being a “plantation of exploitation.” The corporation was accused of firing employees when they joined the Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association of Nigeria (Pengassan) union last fall, forcing the Nigerian government to mediate a disagreement. More than 800 Nigerian workers were allegedly sacked for voluntarily joining the union, and some of them were replaced by foreigners, primarily from India.

The corporation refuted this, claiming that a limited reorganization had targeted a few employees who were interfering with operations and jeopardizing the facility’s stability. Dangote insisted that the corporation did not prevent union involvement and that over 3,000 Nigerians were still working. During the conflict, Pengassan’s branches instructed oil companies to immediately stop delivering gas and crude oil to the refinery. “We have it on good authority that Dangote refinery pays one of the



lowest wages in the oil and gas sector in Nigeria today and treats its staff members beneath acceptable standards,” the Nigerian Labour Congress stated, accusing Dangote of having a “consistent record of union-busting, exploitative labor practices.”

The government stepped in and confirmed the right to union membership, adding in a statement that it had been agreed that the “management of Dangote Group shall immediately begin the process of redeploying the disengaged staff to other companies within the Dangote Group, with no loss of pay”. An internal company memo was reportedly sent last week confirming that affected staff were being recalled. A spokesperson for Dangote Industries said the workers had been reabsorbed into the company in different sectors within the firm, including salt, sugar and cement, and denied that they had been dismissed for union membership. He said: “We have free association and we respect it. “Unions can use any foul language to appeal to the masses that their rogue

[leadership] claim to protect. Such buzzwords attract headlines and try to mask their ineptitude. We don’t have problems with unions. “The picture is clear today. The same unions are extolling our industrialisation strategy and expressing positive sentiments over our vision for rescuing the country from perennial fuel shortage, long queues at the fuel stations, wasteful man-hours, sub-standard and dirty fuel imports.” Fossil fuels from the Gulf have effectively been at a standstill since 28 February, after the de facto closure of the strait of Hormuz shipping channel, through which a fifth of the world’s oil and gas flows. British refineries have already been asked to maximise jet fuel supply as part of government contingency planning, amid growing fears that planes will be grounded this summer.

There are four remaining refineries in the UK, after closures at Grangemouth and Lindsey in 2025: Fawley in Hampshire, owned by ExxonMobil; Humber in Lincolnshire, owned by Phillips 66;

Valero’s Pembroke refinery near Milford Haven; and Essar’s Stanlow site in Cheshire. Speaking over the weekend, the transport secretary conceded that the output from these refineries would not be sufficient and that other sources were being sought, but that she was confident that it would be a normal summer for the majority of holidaymakers. Alexander said: “We’re importing a lot more jet fuel from the US. We have also asked the refineries here to maximise production. We’ve got fuel for refineries that produce jet fuel here, we’ve got more oil, jet fuel coming from refineries on the west coast of Africa as well.” Matt Stanley, the head of market engagement at Kpler, said Dangote was producing aviation fuel to its maximum capacity after recent internal problems. He said: “In March, [the UK] bought 130,000 tonnes. There is 60,000 tonnes that is on the way now and should arrive [on Tuesday].

The main import hub for ... Heathrow is in the Isle of Grain. “With jet fuel, you will pay what you have to pay. I think the winners, if you like, those who will pick up market share, will be the US refineries, for sure, and Dangote. You go to whoever has got the barrels. It’s less about pricing, it’s about volume, and they just want to keep the wheels turning.” A government spokesperson said: “Since the closure of the strait of Hormuz, the government has been monitoring UK jet fuels stocks and working with airlines, airports, and fuel suppliers on the situation. “UK airlines are clear that they are not currently seeing a shortage of jet fuel. Aviation fuel is typically bought in advance and airports and their suppliers keep stocks of bunkered fuel to support their resilience.”

Zambia cancels the largest human rights and technology forum in the world

Lusaka: Days before it was scheduled to begin, the largest human rights and technology conference in the world was canceled when the Zambian government informed the organizers that it did not conform to “national values.” The government of Zambia had initially welcomed the RightsCon 2026 summit on “human rights in the digital age,” which was scheduled to take place in the country’s capital, Lusaka, from May 5–8. However, Thabo Kawana, permanent secretary for the Ministry of Information & Media, announced last week that the conference would not proceed in order to give time to make sure the meeting “aligns with Zambia’s national values, policy priorities, and broader public interest considerations.” Over 2,600 academics, technologists, activists, and legislators were anticipated to start traveling to Lusaka over the weekend. At a time when democratic, women’s, and LGBTQ+ rights are being fiercely attacked, the event aimed to address challenges of human rights in the digital age, including online hatred, internet shutdowns, AI, spying, the militarization of tech, and disinformation. The ruling, according to rights activists, is a clear example of censorship and part of a larger trend of stifling free speech. The unexpected move may have been the result of pressure from China, according to Zambian news sources. The conference was being hosted in a venue that China had donated, and numerous Taiwanese delegates were scheduled to attend. Last year, the conference, which is currently in its fourteenth year, took place in Taipei.

Linda Kasonde, a prominent Zambian lawyer and civil society activist who founded the LCK Freedom Foundation, said the decision showed a disregard for human rights. “When the current administration came into power, they were a government of rule of law and democracy. What we are seeing is a slow degradation of rights – of



freedom of expression and the right to assemble.” Kasonde suggested the move was linked to the forthcoming general election. “We go to the polls in August 2026,” she said. “In the run-up, the government has steadily been putting in place laws that make it easier to win and entrench power post-election. Political parties and civil society have been denied the opportunity to meet in public.” It was a blow for Zambia’s reputation, she added. “This was the first time RightsCon was being held in southern Africa and it was a showcase for our region. “It is highly unfortunate that it was cancelled at the very last minute for an extremely disingenuous reason, especially as the government had been involved in the planning process, which took over a year,” she said. “It really dents the image of our country.” In a statement issued on Friday RightsCon organiser, the New York-based organisation Access Now, said it had spent months liaising with government relationships to ensure transparency and mutual understanding around the conference. “We see this unilateral decision, and the way it was taken, as evidence of the far reach of transnational repression targeting civil society, and effectively shrinking the spaces in which we operate. At a time when this sector is already under immense financial and political strain, what we and our community forcefully experienced is unprecedented and existential,” it said.

Canada will attend the EPC conference as the first non-European country while Carney looks for partners



Ottawa: When Prime Minister Mark Carney attends the summit of the 48+ nations that make up the European Political Community on Monday in Yerevan, Armenia, Canada will become the first non-European nation to attend. Following the loss of US markets under Donald Trump, Carney has stated that he is committed to creating a new network

of diplomatic and commercial partnerships. At a time when Washington’s policy to Moscow’s adversaries, like Ukraine, is at best unclear, his visit will also serve as a demonstration of Western backing for Armenia’s attempts to break away from Russia. Suggestions that Ottawa would pursue EU membership have been denied by Canadian diplomats.

The impact of a protracted US-Iranian conflict on western economies and Trump’s intention to withdraw more than 5,000 troops from Germany over the course of the next year will be major topics of debate in Yerevan. Although Armenia and Iran share a border, Armenia has not reported Iranian missiles landing on its soil, in contrast to neighboring Azer-

baijan. In order to provide Armenia an opportunity to demonstrate its growing ties with Europe and so continue its gradual detachment from Russia, its previous ally, Yerevan was selected to host the EPC, an organization supported by French President Emmanuel Macron and which also includes the UK. Nikol Pashinyan, the prime minister of Armenia, has adopted a diversification strategy that, in reality, is gradually bringing his nation closer to Europe. His Civil Contract party is facing parliamentary elections in June, and is seeking a big win so he can continue efforts to make a peace with Azerbaijan. Pashinyan faces three opposition parties more sympathetic to Russia. Thomas de Waal, a senior fellow with Carnegie Europe specialising in the Caucasus region, said: “European leaders will have to walk

a fine line in Yerevan. As they hold what looks like a pre-election rally for Pashinyan, they must also have a bigger conversation about building a more robust and less polarised Armenia. “The country itself deserves full European attention. It is on the verge of a painful but transformative peace agreement with Baku that will lead to the reopening of its two long borders with Azerbaijan and Turkey, which have been closed since the 1990s. The country also has a historic opportunity to loosen its overdependence on Moscow as the war in Ukraine continues to distract and drain Russia.” The EPC, which was set up in 2022, brings together full members of the EU and the large constellation of countries outside the Brussels bloc, including the UK, Turkey, Norway, Switzerland, Iceland and Serbia.

Fish farms in Norway are contaminating fjords with trash that is comparable to “raw sewage of millions of people”

Norwegian: According to a survey, fish farms in Norway are contaminating fjords and other coastal waters with nutrients equal to the raw sewage of tens of millions of people annually. The world’s greatest producer of farmed salmon is Norway, and fish feed excretes nutrients straight into coastal seas. According to a Sunstone Institute analysis, in 2025, Norwegian aquaculture released 360,000 tonnes of organic carbon, 13,000 tonnes of phosphorus, and 75,000 tonnes of nitrogen. According to the paper, the nutrients are comparable to those found in the untreated sewage of 17.2 million people for nitrogen, 20 million people for phosphorus, and 30 million people for organic carbon, raising concerns about potentially harmful algal blooms. According to Alexandra Pires Duro, a data scientist at Sunstone and the report’s author, “the output of aquaculture pollution in terms of these three nutrients is three to five times larger than the population of Norway, a small country of just 5.5 million people.” “Everything ends up in the water, including the urine, feces, and uneaten food.” In open-



net cages, fish raised for human consumption are given pellets of nutrient-rich feed. Using information from the National Fisheries Directorate and Veterinary Institute, the analysts determined the mass of nutrient inputs that stayed in the water. Researchers found feed consumption had increased by 14.6% over a six-year period, in line with industry expansion, producing nutrient pollution in 2025 that equated to levels expected in the raw sewage of a country about the size of Australia. In a separate analysis, the report authors found that seasonal variation aggravated the problem, with nutrient load highest in summer months when ecosystems are least able to absorb it. Fish sludge from nutrients can fertilise phytoplankton and lead to destructive algal blooms that deplete oxygen levels. Their

oxygen levels are already declining because of global heating. In Sognefjord, the country’s longest fjord, increased nutrient inflows – not just from fish farms – were held responsible for about two-thirds of the oxygen depletion, a study found last year, while warmer water was blamed for the other third. Oxygen levels in deep waters have also declined in the second-longest fjord in Norway, the Hardangerfjord, according to the country governor for Vestland. In March, officials rejected nine applications for fish farms in the fjord on account of the increased emissions they would cause. Tom Pedersen, an environmental adviser for the region who served as an expert reviewer on the Sunstone report, said the figures in its analysis were unsurprising and even “on the conservative side”.

Athens, Barcelona, Miami: the best beach cities for summer 2026



One of the biggest conundrums in vacation planning is whether to stay in the city or take a beach vacation. It's difficult to balance everyone's travel itineraries, but if you choose one of these three fantastic options, you won't have to make any compromises. Which one to pick is now the crucial question.

Barcelona, Spain

Spain's second largest city is undoubtedly its buzziest, thanks to its year-round Mediterranean climate, palm-tree lined streets, colourful Catalanian architecture and an off-the-scale food scene. The TUI-recommended Leonardo Boutique Hotel and Astoria place you in the cultural heart of the city – the former a short walk from La Sagrada Família, the world renowned basilica designed by Antoni Gaudí. The Unesco world heritage site might be considered an unfinished masterpiece (it's been under construction for more than 140 years) but its facade and its internal architecture are sights to behold. More of Gaudí's designs, including the flamboyant Casa Batlló and lesser-known Palau Güell, can be found dotted around the municipality. The hour walk from Barri Gòtic (the Gothic quarter) to Poblenou (an old industrial district transformed into a trendy arts neighbourhood) captures how Catalanian culture, old and new, lives side by side today.

You'll find Barcelona's inviting coastline – and

10 family-friendly beaches – to the east of the city. The most famous, Barceloneta, is an enjoyable walk from the popular H10 Marina Barcelona. To the south, Platja de Sant Sebastià is best for beach sports, with surf lessons, paddleboarding and scuba diving on offer. The wheelchair accessible golden sands of Platja de la Nova Icària, with its seasonal beach bars (xiringuitos), is the more relaxed option.

From contemporary Michelin restaurants to humble family-run bodegas, diving into the Catalan culinary scene is a must. Thanks to the region's close proximity to the mountains and Mediterranean Sea, Catalans love to combine ingredients from both in dishes – a style known as mar i muntanya. Don't miss the flavoursome pork and beef meatballs with cuttlefish and peas (mandonguilles amb sipia i pèsols) and chicken and lobster cooked in a variety of ways (pollastre amb llagosta). The sweet and savoury tastes of spinach with raisin, pine nut salad and escudella i carn d'olla – a centuries-old meatball broth with chickpea, seasonal vegetables and fideus noodles – are typical, and delicious, menu staples.

Miami, US

Chilled-out Miami naturally exudes that postcard-perfect holiday vibe. South Beach (known locally as SoBe) runs parallel to the famous Ocean Drive and its sidewalk restaurants and bars. Elegant Essensia is a local favourite for

seasonal Mediterranean cuisine and homemade cocktails created with locally sourced ingredients. South Pointe Park, by contrast, is a laid-back nine-mile stretch of sand that's ideal for families. Think: splash zones, picnic areas, snorkelling by the jetty or the Jose Cuervo (artificial) Reef, and importantly, lifeguards.

Yet it's only when you step away from the strip that you realise there's far more to Miami than meets the eye. Nature lovers will appreciate peaceful Biscayne Bay, where you can explore the mangrove-lined shoreline in a kayak or by snorkelling. Look out for shore birds, pelicans, stingrays, sea turtles and reef sharks. Even manatees have been spotted in these protected, nutrient-rich waters. Over on the far south of Key Biscayne, tranquil Cape Florida beach is the place to go to escape the crowds. Combine prime beach time with exploring the city's iconic art deco heritage with a stay at the delightful 1930s-built Viajero Miami, situated on Collins Avenue. Wander the string of pastel-coloured storefronts that decorate the blocks from Ocean Drive to Washington Avenue. The laid-back Iberostar Waves Miami Beach, over on the main strip, puts you front and centre for Miami Art Week in early December, where an estimated 20 fairs are held simultaneously across the city, including the local version of Art Basel.

In the Little Havana neighbourhood, guided food tours wander the streets that have long housed the city's Cuban community. Tastings of mouthwatering guava pastries and croqueta de jamón, washed down with freshly roasted coffee, are not to be missed on the tours. And in vibrant Wynwood, elaborate murals and explosive street art decorate the walls. You can even have a go at some graffitiing. Spend a few nights at the laid-back Arlo Wynwood to explore this arty corner of the city. Diverse dining options showcase the best of Florida's produce – the inspiring team at Dinners in Paradise in Homestead is a must, providing delicious farm-to-fork dining experiences sourced from regenerative Miami farms.



Greece

Yes, the Greek capital is celebrated for its unparalleled ancient landmarks, but did you know that its beaches are as cherished by locals as those in places like Mykonos and Paros? Even better, Athens' warm spring and autumn climate means a trip to this under-recognised beach destination doesn't have to be restricted to the summer.

With TUI-recommended hotels, Acropolis Hill and Wyndham Grand Athens as your base, you can almost stroll out of your room and on to a local walking tour. These tend to begin in

Monastiraki, which sits in direct view of the Acropolis. This historic neighbourhood – actually, "historic" would be an understatement – is the place to trace some of Athens' iconic sites from the Ancient Agora, once the focus of political, commercial and social activity, to the Tower of the Winds, an octagonal marble tower built in the 1st century BC. Plaka, with its bougainvillea-lined paths and cosy cafe culture, is one of Athens' most picturesque neighbourhoods, as well as being one of the best places to sample some traditional local delicacies.

Try the crispy cod with garlic dip (skordalia bakaliaros) at one of the mysterious bakaliarzikos (basement bars). If you feel like exploring the city's more bohemian side, Exarcheia is home to a clutch of buzzing wine bars and tavernas serving up modern Greek fare for an all-hours crowd, while charming Kypseli is the current tip for Athens' in-the-know foodies – perhaps because it is rumoured that some of the best souvlaki in town can be found there.

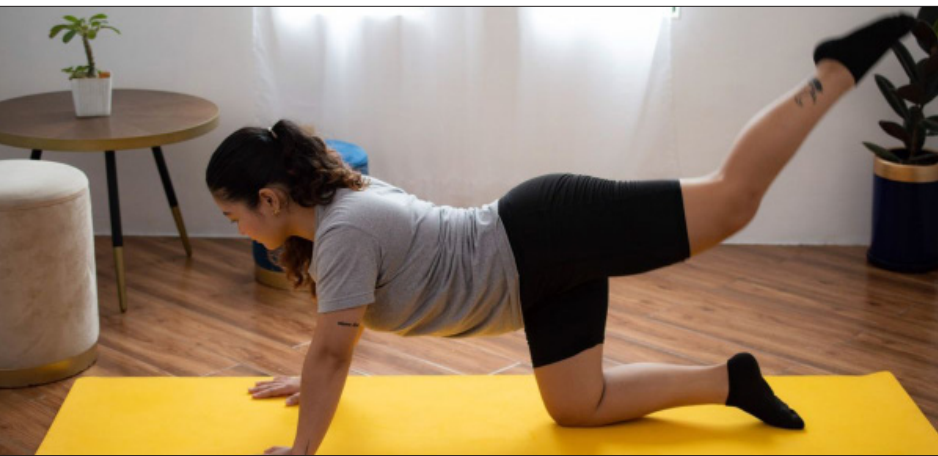
To the south of the city, Palace Hotel Glyfada holds a prime spot on picturesque Glyfada beach, with nearby Ladoikis Street filled with stylish cafes and restaurants. The farmers' market comes alive on Thursday mornings, as local producers set up shop with the Mediterranean's most mouth-watering ingredients. Farther south, Kavouri beach – with its ample space and shallow waters – is ideal for younger families. And with a host of traditional fish tavernas overlooking the sea, it gives off small-town vibes despite being on the outskirts of the Greek capital. For an even more local feel, head to the Paleo Faliro seafront and Flisvos beach, a favourite with Athenians of all ages, loved for its string of sleek bars and seafood restaurants. The nearby promenade is the spot to watch the sunset, and it rarely feels busy.

The eight-minute morning ritual to lessen back discomfort throughout the day

Do you wake up feeling tight and stiff? If you're one of the estimated 619 million people globally with lower back pain, that early morning discomfort is more than an annoyance. The first movements of the day play a significant role in how your back feels as the day unfolds. Yet most people try to push through the stiffness rather than addressing it with care. Within minutes of getting out of bed, they move through poorly supported, forward-bending positions — leaning over a sink, slouching over devices, bending to get dressed — without first restoring a stable functional range of motion. Starting the day from a foundation of compromised movement can lead to increased risk of injury and worsening tension as the day progresses. A brief, intentional morning mobility routine interrupts that cycle. Spending just a few minutes to relieve tension and restore alignment prepares your body for upright, weight-bearing movement and full motion to tackle daily demands. Over time, using a corrective exercise routine every morning also can help address underlying drivers of chronic back pain and posture problems. You don't need an intense workout or stretching session. Eight minutes of gentle, focused mobility can help you move more comfortably throughout the day and stay ahead of tension rather than reacting to it.

Why mornings matter for your back

Overnight, while your spine is largely unloaded as you sleep, it undergoes a rehydration process to replace spinal fluid that was naturally forced out of the discs during daily movement. The rehydrated discs occupy slightly more space within the spinal joints first thing in the morning, making your spine feel stiffer and less adaptable upon waking. That increased stiffness is one reason movement can feel harder early in the day. The rigidity also explains why the spine is especially sensitive to how movement is reintroduced after sleep. If the first moves of your day are poorly aligned, rushed



or extreme — such as bending forward deeply to touch your toes — your nervous system, sensing spinal rigidity, may react with acute protective muscle tension as a guarding mechanism. This response is often the explanation behind the familiar story of "my back locked up while I was just reaching down to put on my shoes." Gentle movement paired with slow, intentional breathing helps calm your nervous system and ease your spine back into movement. The goal of a morning routine is to allow joints and tissues to regain safe, functional motion before being asked to stabilize or bear load. An 8-minute sequence to support your spine. This routine is designed to be done on a yoga or exercise mat on the floor before breakfast. Move slowly, breathe through each position and avoid forcing any range of motion. After completing it, you should feel more fluid and stable, not overstretched or fatigued. Before beginning this or any exercise program, consult your doctor or physical therapist. Stop immediately if you experience pain.

Start with breath-led decompression (90 seconds)

Begin lying on your back with your knees bent

and feet hip-width on the floor. Hold a yoga block or folded pillow between your knees. Place both hands on your lower ribs to feel and guide their movement as you breathe. Using a 5-7-3 breathing pattern, inhale through your nose for a count of five, exhale slowly for a count of seven, then pause for a count of three before your next breath. Take six total breaths, allowing the lower ribs to expand outward with each inhale and gently draw inward with each exhale.

Restore pelvic alignment and deep core engagement (90 seconds)

Maintain the same 5-7-3 breathing rhythm while lying on your back with your feet on the ground and your knees bent. Gently tilt your pelvis forward as you inhale, creating a tiny arch with your lower back. With your lower back flattening toward the floor, use your deep core muscles to help tilt your pelvis back as you exhale. Move softly and slowly, coordinating your breath with each pelvic tilt for a total of six breaths. This exercise strengthens core support while reintroducing safe, moderate motion to the pelvis and lumbar spine without any weight. Pause in a neutral, balanced, and comfortable stance after taking six breaths.

Gently release hamstrings and wake up ankles (1 minute)

Maintain the same 5-7-3 breathing rhythm while lying on your back with your feet on the ground and your knees bent. Gently tilt your pelvis forward as you inhale, creating a tiny arch with your lower back. With your lower back flattening toward the floor, use your deep core muscles to help tilt your pelvis back as you exhale. Move softly and slowly, coordinating your breath with each pelvic tilt for a total of six breaths. This exercise strengthens core support while reintroducing safe, moderate motion to the pelvis and lumbar spine without any weight. Pause in a neutral, balanced, and comfortable stance after taking six breaths.

Gently release hamstrings and wake up ankles (1 minute)

To perform the exercise, remove the pillow or block and straighten one leg toward the ceiling while keeping the opposite foot on the floor. Hold this position where you feel a mild stretch in the hamstrings without bending the knee. While holding the leg, spread your toes and perform slow ankle circles for about 30 seconds before switching sides. This exercise helps release tension in the hamstrings, aiding pelvic alignment and reducing low-back strain, while also preparing the ankles and feet for support during standing and walking.

Initiate glute activation and release tight hip flexors (2 minutes)

Return to a bent-knee position with a block or pillow between your legs. Exhale while tilting your pelvis back to flatten the lower back against the floor, which helps release the hip flexors. Before inhaling, press through your feet to engage your glutes and lift your hips 3 to 4 inches off the floor, avoiding lower back strain. Hold for three breaths, then lower with control. Repeat for a total of nine breaths. This exercise prepares the glutes to support the spine and alleviates tension in the hip flexors, reducing lumbar compression.

Perfect Padua and a Greek theatre in Sicily



The narrative details various travel experiences in Italy, emphasizing alternative destinations and activities. From Padua, a cost-effective base for exploring Venice and other Italian cities, to the historical charm of Susa with its Roman architecture, the writer highlights unique sights like the Arch of Augustus and the Sacra di San Michele. In Rome, Metro Line C enhances access to historical sites, while Levanto serves as a hub for cycling trips to the Cinque Terre. The adventure extends to Vulcano Island for kayaking and home-cooked meals, and Grottammare offers relaxing beaches and vibrant old towns. In Syracuse, Akrai archaeological park provides a tranquil escape, contrasting with bustling Florence, where local life thrives along the River Arno. The narrative concludes in Milan at Villa Necchi Campiglio, showcasing modernist architecture. Each location captures a blend of cultural and scenic beauty, appealing to travelers seeking rich, lesser-known experiences in Italy. Italy is mostly associated with ancient architecture, but the high point of our recent trip to Milan was the 1930s Villa Necchi Campiglio. The Italian rationalist villa is a fascinating mix of elegant, spacious modernism and more elaborate 18th-century styled rooms – two radically different architects were employed at separate stages.

The trailer for Sanjay Dutt’s Aakhri Sawal is stuck with the censor board

Mumbai: Even though Sanjay Dutt’s Aakhri Sawal, which is based on the history of the Rashtriya Swayam-sevak Sangh (RSS), is set to open in theaters on May 8—just one week away—the trailer has not yet been made public. The trailer is still awaiting approval from the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC), as India Today has exclusively learned. Industry insiders claim that the trailer was submitted to the board a few days ago, but clearance is still pending. Trailer certifications are normally completed in three business days. But in this instance, there has been no response for four days. “The lack of clarity and the CBFC’s lack of responsiveness have prevented the makers of Aakhri Sawal from releasing the trailer. According to the regulations, a response should be provided within three working days, but it has been four days already, according to a source. The trailer has been changed and resubmitted twice, yet there is still a wait. According to sources, the board has not yet given the filmmakers any firm feedback. “The trailer



has undergone two revisions by the makers, but there is still no official word. The producers and the entire crew are worried about what to do because of this ambiguity,” the person continued. Aakhri Sawal, directed by Abhijeet Mohan Warang, is a courtroom drama that traces a century-long history of the RSS. The film engages with politically sensitive themes, including the Babri Masjid demolition. The film was first submitted to the board on April 20, with its screen-

ing taking place on April 27. Industry practice dictates that screenings may take time to schedule, as board members must be notified and a mutually convenient time is arranged. While the makers have already unveiled the film’s first look and an official teaser, neither the trailer nor the film itself has received certification so far. With the theatrical release date fast approaching, the lack of clearance has raised concerns within the production team.

Deepika Padukone skips the 2026 Met Gala after Priyanka Chopra

Mumbai: This year’s esteemed event will not feature Deepika Padukone, who is well-known for her dress choices at the Met Gala. According to sources, the actress, who will soon become a mother for the second time, is primarily focused on her film profession, with important projects like King and Raaka requiring her time. Even if fans might miss her famous red carpet appearances, Deepika’s dedication to her role is more significant. According to reports, Deepika plays a significant part in the movie Raaka, which features a major action scene with Allu Arjun, and she makes a spectacular entry in the movie King. According to reports, Deepika Padukone will not attend the 2026 Met Gala, which is scheduled to take place at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City on May 4, 2026 (May 5, 3:30 AM IST). According to the source, she is currently focused on finishing the filming of King, which will be released at the end of this year, and Raaka, which will be released next year. The news was released after it was revealed by sources that Priyanka Chopra will not be attending the 2026 Met Gala. The second season of the actress’s action thriller series Citadel, which premieres on May 6, is presently being promoted. Additionally, she



will go to Los Angeles for the Gold House Gala, where she will receive the Global Vanguard Award for the second year in a row. King, Shah Rukh Khan’s eagerly awaited movie, promises to be an exciting, action-packed event. The movie, which is being produced by Red Chillies Entertainment and Marflix Pictures, will be released on December 24, 2026. SRK will play a harsh, gray-shaded part in King,

which is directed by Siddharth Anand. Apart from Deepika, the cast also includes Suhana Khan, Anil Kapoor, Abhishek Bachchan, Raghav Juyal, Rani Mukerji, and others. Recently, SRK and Deepika’s pictures and videos from King’s South Africa schedule leaked online. Reacting to it, director Anand urged media and fans to refrain from posting footage from the sets of King. The team is working round the

clock to ensure the best cinematic experience for everyone. Let us wait for the surprise on the big screen.” He also urged fans to wait for the assets to be revealed as the team of King originally intended and thanked them for love, support and cooperation. Speaking about Raaka, it is an upcoming Indian pan-Indian sci-fi action thriller starring Allu Arjun and Deepika Padukone, directed by Atlee.

The National Commission for Women will hear from Nora Fatehi



New Delhi: Bollywood actress Nora Fatehi was summoned due to the alleged obscene depiction of women in the song Sarke Chunar, and she will appear before the National Commission for Women (NCW) on Thursday. In relation to the issue surrounding the song from the movie KD The Devil, actor Sanjay Dutt also made his appearance before the NCW last month. He apologized in writing for any “unintended” harm he may have caused to society. Fatehi had already disassociated herself from the Hindi rendition of the song, claiming that she had recorded the Kannada version and that the Hindi version did

not have her consent. Actor Nora Fatehi, who has been summoned in relation to the song Sarke Chunar, will appear before the National Commission for Women tomorrow at 11:30 am, according to the Commission. Earlier, Fatehi had failed to appear before the Commission, stating that she was abroad, and had sought a fresh date for the hearing. The rights panel questioned Dutt’s intent, awareness, and accountability during her appearance before the Commission, which was chaired by NCW Chairperson Vijaya Rahatkar. The panel expressed concerns about the song’s purported vulgarity and indecent portrayal of women.

The Courtroom Drama System starring Sonakshi Sinha and Jyotika will debut on Prime Video

New Delhi: The world premiere of Prime Video’s upcoming Prime Original courtroom thriller System, a high-stakes drama that explores the intricate relationship between justice and power, is scheduled for May 22. The movie, which was released on May 6, is directed by Ashwiny Iyer Tiwari and produced by Pammi Baweja, Harman Baweja, and Smitha Baliga under the Baweja Studios banner. The system will only be available in Hindi on Prime Video in India and over 240 other nations and territories. System, which is positioned as a compelling courtroom thriller, delves into a world of luxury and entitlement where justice is frequently decided by facing difficult realities rather than just verdicts. The story follows Neha Rajvansh, played by Sonakshi Sinha, a public prosecutor who forms an unlikely alliance with Sarika Rawat, a courtroom stenographer portrayed by Jyotika. Coming from starkly different social backgrounds, the two women join forces to expose buried injustices, even as they take on powerful adversaries. The film also stars Ashutosh Gowariker in a key role, alongside an ensemble cast including Preeti Agarwal, Adinath Kothare, Aashriya Mishra, Gaurav Pandey and Sayandeep Gupta. Speaking about the project, Nikhil Madhok, Director and Head of Originals at Prime Video India, said, “System is a powerful and thrilling drama that explores themes of ambition, justice and ethics. With Ashwiny Iyer Tiwari at the



helm and backed by Baweja Studios, System will surprise you at each stage, making for compelling viewing. Led by power-packed performances by Sonakshi Sinha and Jyotika, we believe the film has the potential to resonate strongly with audiences across the world when it releases on Prime Video on 22 May.” Producer Harman Baweja added, “System is a gripping legal drama that brings together two headstrong women from contrasting worlds, bound by their own ideas of justice. Brought to life through powerful performances by Sonakshi Sinha, Jyotika and Ashutosh Gowar-

iker, the film reflects our shared vision of telling meaningful, cinematic stories. We are thrilled to collaborate with Prime Video and Ashwiny Iyer Tiwari on this project, a collaboration that has enabled us to bring this narrative to life with scale and authenticity. We look forward to delivering this genre-bending story to audiences in India and beyond.” Written by Harman Baweja, Arun Sukumar, Ashwiny Iyer Tiwari, Tasneem Lokhandwala and Akshat Ghildial, System promises a layered narrative that combines legal drama with social commentary.

Vicky Kaushal in Aamir Khan’s 3 Idiots sequel



Mumbai: Aamir Khan’s film 3 Idiots is returning with a sequel, potentially introducing a fourth character, possibly played by Vicky Kaushal. This sequel will reportedly take a 10-year narrative leap and aims to include original cast members Sharman Joshi and R Madhavan. Discus-

sions between Vicky, Aamir, and director Rajkumar Hirani are ongoing, with Vicky verbally agreeing to the role, pending schedule alignments. Vicky Kaushal is currently committed to other projects, including Mahavatar and Love & War, before starting work on the sequel.

Orlando Bloom and Priyanka Chopra Jonas will co-star in the survival thriller “Reset”

Mumbai: Priyanka Chopra Jonas will co-star with Orlando Bloom, a Hollywood actor, in Matt Smukler’s upcoming survival thriller Reset. According to Deadline, the movie’s production will start in August. Reset tells the story of a lady who wakes up days away from civilization in the bush and has no idea how she got there. Trusting a charming stranger who might not be who he says he is is her only chance to survive. “I was looking for a pairing where attraction and mistrust could effortlessly coexist,” Smukler stated in reference to the casting. Priyanka and Orlando have a “uncanny ability to make you believe both at once,” the director continued.] There is no denying their chemistry. The film is written by Jordan Rawlins and will be produced by Jon Hoeber and Erich Hoeber under Fratricidal Films, Michael Lazarovitch for Chemically Altered, and Matthew Rhodes of Rhodes Entertainment, along with Chopra Jonas’ Purple Pebble Pictures and Bloom’s Amazing Owl. Producers Jon and Erich Hoeber said, “Jordan Rawlins and Matt Smukler have created a gripping story of survival, romance, suspense, and deceit, replete with shocking twists, and we’re



thrilled to have partnered with Priyanka and Orlando to bring it to the screen.” Priyanka was last seen in The Bluff and previously starred alongside Idris Elba and John Cena in Heads of State. She will next appear in Season 2 of Citadel, and has S.S. Rajamouli’s Varanasi in the

pipeline. Bloom was most recently seen in The Cut, which he also produced through Amazing Owl. He was also seen in the action comedy Deep Cover. He will next star opposite Rooney Mara and Kate Mara in Bucking Fastard directed by Werner Herzog.

Salman Khan and Kareena Kapoor will co-star in a superhero movie



New Delhi: According to reports, actor Kareena Kapoor Khan is in negotiations to appear alongside Salman Khan in Raj Nidimoru and Krishna DK’s untitled superhero movie, Raj & DK. Salman Khan’s first superhero project and his first on-screen reunion with Kareena since their 2015 smash Bajrangi Bhaijaan will occur if the agreement closes. Variety India reports that Kareena is in talks to play the lead part in the movie, although she hasn’t signed the contract yet. According to the report, negotiations are going well and she has embraced the position. It is also thought that Salman personally contacted her, which has advanced the discussions. The announcement follows earlier rumors in the industry that Samantha

Ruth Prabhu, an actor, will play the female protagonist. However, current sources indicate that Kareena is the primary candidate for the high-budget movie, despite the lack of confirmation. If everything goes according to plan, this will be Salman and Kareena’s fifth movie together and their first since Kabir Khan’s thriller Bajrangi Bhaijaan in 2015. They have previously worked together on Bodyguard (2011), Main Aur Mrs. Khanna (2009), and Kyon Ki... (2005). Atul Agnihotri and Mythri Movie Makers are producing the untitled superhero movie. It is being planned as a major theatrical production. Salman Khan is portrayed in the narrative as an aging hero who is pulled

back into action by unanticipated events, departing from typical superhero clichés. For Raj & DK, the film will mark a return to the big screen after their work in the streaming space with titles such as The Family Man and Farzi. It will be their first major theatrical release since 2017’s A Gentleman. Pre-production is already underway, with a strong focus on visual effects and technical scale. The film is expected to go on floors in October or November 2026. Salman is currently busy with Vamshi Paidipally’s action drama, often referred to by its working title SVC63, which is slated for an Eid 2027 release. His other project, Maatrubhumi, has seen several delays and is still awaiting a confirmed release date.

David Warner’s Acceptance of a “Reckless, Foolish” Drunk-Driving Decision

New Delhi: According to his attorney, former Australian Test cricketer David Warner will take responsibility for his “reckless” and “foolish” choice to get into his car after having a few glasses of wine, which led to a mid-range drunk driving charge. After stopping short of a roadside test in Sydney’s east on April 5, the former Test opener was charged with mid-range drunk driving after reportedly exceeding more than twice the legal limit in a random breath test. When his case was originally brought up in Waverley Local Court on Thursday, he was not obliged to show there. Bobby Hill, his attorney, informed the court that police had received representations and asked that the case be postponed until late June so that the police could review and react. His issue will come back. His lawyer Bobby Hill told the court representations had been made to police and requested the case be adjourned until late June for police to consider them and respond. His



matter will return to court on June 24. “He knows what he did was wrong. He accepts that was a reckless decision, a foolish decision to get in his car instead of taking an Uber. He had enjoyed three glasses of wine at a friend’s apartment

before making that decision,” Hill was quoted by cricket.com.au. “It’s not a crime to have a glass of wine on the day of the lord’s resurrection. In fact, some would consider that completely appropriate. His crime is ... choosing a foolish plan

A instead of a plan B,” he told reporters. Hill further mentioned that Warner’s last drink had been 11 minutes before he was pulled over by police, who are accused of taking 52 minutes to administer the second breathalyser.

“The cricket star is remorseful, which is why he will ask for leniency but expects to be punished as any other NSW citizen would be,” Hill explained. Warner’s future as captain of Sydney Thunder came under scrutiny after the veteran opener was charged with a drink-driving offence. Cricket NSW chief executive Lee Germon after his arrest had said whether Warner remains as Thunder captain following the charge will be ‘worked through’ at a later date. Warner was arrested while he was on an Easter trip home from the subcontinent, where he captained the Karachi Kings in the Pakistan Super League. However, the former returned to Pakistan after being charged to resume his PSL campaign.

Congress is still split over the nomination of Kerala’s chief minister

Thiruvananthapuram, May 10: The impasse surrounding the selection of the next chief minister of Kerala persisted as the Congress party struggled to choose among three candidates. AICC observers Mukul Wasnik and Ajay Maken arrived in Thiruvananthapuram, calling for a Congress Legislative Party meeting to assess the perspectives of the 63 legislators. Key leaders, including Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and Lok Sabha Opposition leader Rahul Gandhi, are expected to communicate with the legislators. The three contenders—AICC general secretary K.C. Venugopal, outgoing Assembly leader V.D. Satheesan, and CWC leader Ramesh Chennithala—were actively lobbying for support. Members of Satheesan’s camp urged the high command to prevent Deepa Das Munshi, a close aide of Venugopal, from participating in crucial meetings with the observers. Chennithala traveled to New Delhi to seek a meeting with Sonia Gandhi but returned without an appointment, ultimately writing to her to assert his suitability for the role. Despite Venugopal’s backing from 52 MLAs, speculation suggests some may support Satheesan during individual consultations with the observers. The observers plan to return to Delhi after discussions with the 63 MLAs, 14 MPs, and prominent party figures, submitting their findings to Rahul and Kharge. A final decision by the Congress leadership is anticipated by Sunday, with plans for the swearing-in ceremony of the new government early the following week, commencing with the chief minister and allied leaders, followed by Congress ministers.

AIADMK Says “Everything Is OK” Following Resort Buzz About “Pro-TVK” MLAs

Chennai, May 10: More than a dozen recently elected AIADMK lawmakers were moved to a resort in Puducherry on Thursday, sparking new political drama in Tamil Nadu and rumors of a divide within the party over extending support to actor Vijay’s TVK to form the next government. Videos of AIADMK MLAs at a resort in Puducherry were obtained by NDTV. The All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) State Secretary for Puducherry, Anbazhagan, can be seen on the phone in one of the videos. Reports of any uprising have been denied by the AIADMK, which maintains that “everything is well” within the party and asserts that the MLAs were only moved to stop purported TVK poaching attempts. The misunderstanding over sections supporting the TVK, according to AIADMK officials who spoke to NDTV, resulted from party president Edappadi K. Palaniswami’s initial silence on Vijay’s support when the superstar actor’s group emerged as the single-largest party in last month’s election. Sources acknowledged that this silence fueled rumors that certain people were rooting for Vijay. According to the same sources, EPS has now made it clear that the party does not support



the TVK, and all party MLAs have agreed with his ruling. The previous story was that EPS was being pressured to back the TVK by the 12+ MLAs in the Puducherry resort, which is located roughly 120 kilometers from a resort where the TVK had sequestered its MLAs. The Puducherry stay had allegedly been arranged by senior AIADMK leader and ex-minister CV Shanmugam, though he later denied engineering any such move. The AIADMK, meanwhile, has also clarified that the TVK has not approached it for support. “TVK has not sought AIADMK’s support,” Shanmugam said, adding, “The party has to decide.” Senior leader KP Munusamy echoed that line, saying, “AIADMK has not extended any support to the TVK. With the approval of party chief EPS, I am announcing this.” The political churn comes after the

AIADMK suffered its fourth consecutive electoral setback following the death of former Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa - in the 2019 Lok Sabha election, the 2021 Assembly election, the 2024 Lok Sabha poll, and now the 2026 Assembly election. The scale of that churn was underlined by the TVK’s huge win; the party, contesting in its debut election, won 108 of the state’s 234 seats. However, it finished agonisingly short of majority. Vijay needs 10 more seats, 11 once he resigns the Trichy East seat to hold on to Perambur. He has already secured the support of the Congress’ five MLAs after the national party decided to extend conditional backing to TVK. And he has sought support from the two Left parties - the CPI and CPIM, who have four seats between them - and DMK ally VCK, which has two seats. The Left parties are expected to take a call on the outreach today. However, TVK sources have insisted Vijay is not keen on seeking support from the AIADMK because of its alliance with the BJP, which he has repeatedly described as his ideological rival. Sources also said TVK fears any arrangement involving AIADMK could open the door for BJP influence in a future TVK-led government.

Samrat Choudhary’s cabinet enlargement will be attended by the PM and the home minister

New Delhi, May 10: The first cabinet expansion ceremony of the Samrat Choudhary-led administration in Bihar is scheduled to take place on Thursday at Patna’s Gandhi Maidan, where Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah are expected to attend. The BJP hopes to make this a major political event. Such a large-scale cabinet enlargement is uncommon and is perceived as Modi and Shah’s attempt to portray the BJP’s expanding power throughout eastern India in light of its recent political victories, particularly in Bengal. The expansive Gandhi Maidan is typically the preferred location for a government’s inauguration. Choudhary, the BJP’s first chief minister in the Mandal heartland state, was sworn in on April 15 at a low-key ceremony held at the Governor’s House in Patna, with Modi and Shah not in attendance. Two ministers from ally JDU had also taken oath along with Choudhary. The subdued nature of the event was widely seen as a calibrated move to avoid giving the impression that the BJP was celebrating the exit of JDU veteran Nitish Kumar, who stepped down after taking oath as a Rajya Sabha member. The extension of the cabinet was postponed till after the elections in Bengal. Now that the party has secured what it refers to as the “last frontier,” the BJP seems to have chosen to highlight its strong hold on both Bengal and Bihar with a lavish political display. Modi is anticipated to conduct a road show in the city prior to the official program, and two sizable platforms are being built at the Gandhi Maidan for the event. Nitish, Union ministers, and senior NDA leaders are anticipated to attend. On Wednesday, Choudhary went to the Maidan to look over the arrangements. NDA allies are seeking for a larger stake in the cabinet during the intense deliberations taking place in Patna. Shah, along with BJP president Nitin Nabin, was expected to arrive in the city in the evening to hold final consultations with alliance partners before the list of ministers is fi-



nalised. There is a strong buzz in Patna that Nitish’s son Nishant Kumar could take oath as a minister. Sections in the JDU said Nishant had initially declined to become a deputy chief minister, insisting on focusing on strengthening the party organisation, but appeared to have relented under pressure from loyalists and family members. “Most likely he will take oath as a minister in the Samrat Choudhary government on Thursday,” a JDU MLA said. Another senior JDU leader, however, refused to confirm this. “We are trying to convince Nishant to join the government, but so far he is in two minds and hasn’t given his nod,” the leader said. “It would be good for the party if he agrees because we want him to gain administrative experience and establish himself as Nitishji’s political heir,” the leader added. Nishant, 50, is now on a Sadbhav Yatra across the state. The Patna show comes ahead of a significantly larger political event scheduled at Calcutta’s Brigade Parade Grounds, where Bengal’s first BJP government will be sworn in on Saturday. Bihar BJP president Sanjay Saraogi described the cabinet expansion as a “historic event”, directly linking it to the party’s Bengal triumph. “The historic event will be held at Gandhi Maidan. It will be attended by PM Modi along with Amit Shah... after

a landslide victory in Bengal,” he said, adding that party workers were preparing a grand welcome for the Prime Minister. The Patna event also comes against the backdrop of the BJP’s return to power for a third consecutive term in Assam. BJP leaders view the high-profile Patna event as an attempt to consolidate its hold over the eastern belt — referred to by Modi and Shah as “Anga, Banga and Kalinga” — encompassing Bihar, Bengal and Odisha. Together with Assam, these states account for 117 Lok Sabha seats, making them central to the BJP’s electoral strategy. Party leaders have stressed that the path to victory in the 2029 general election runs through this region. The last time Gandhi Maidan witnessed a similar political gathering was on November 20 last year, when Nitish took oath as the Bihar chief minister for a record tenth time after the NDA’s sweeping victory in the Assembly polls. Modi and top NDA leaders had attended the swearing-in. Less than six months later, the political landscape shifted dramatically, as Nitish announced his move to the Rajya Sabha, citing his “long-held desire” to serve in the Upper House. The development paved the way for the BJP to install its first chief minister in Bihar, having emerged as the largest party in the NDA with 89 seats, followed by the JDU’s 85.

PSG defeats Bayern Munich to go to the UEFA Champions League Final

New Delhi: Holders Paris Saint-Germain secured a 6-5 aggregate victory on Wednesday with a 1-1 second-leg draw at Bayern Munich, setting up a Champions League final versus Arsenal. Less than three minutes into the match, PSG surged on the counter, and Ballon d’Or winner Ousmane Dembele gave Luis Enrique’s team a two-goal lead in the match. Despite Harry Kane’s goal in stoppage time, PSG was mainly successful in containing Bayern’s attacking threat. Desire Doue, a forward for PSG, told Canal Plus, “It was an exceptional match, another magical night in Munich against a great team.” “We’ve wanted to play these kinds of games since we were young. We’re going to have fun together now.” Returning to Munich’s Allianz Arena, the site of their biggest victory over Inter Milan in the previous year’s final, PSG once again highlighted their superiority in a championship they had long desired but failed to win. When the French powerhouses play Premier League leaders Arsenal on May 30 in Budapest, they will be the favorites to win the title for the second straight year. They want to become just the second team to win back-to-back since 1990, behind Real Madrid. Although some of the first-half refereeing calls infuriated Bayern, they lacked the strength they displayed in their 5-4 first-leg defeat in Paris. Since defeating PSG in the 2020 Lisbon showpiece, the six-time European champions have yet to go to the final. “I can’t stay disappointed for very long,” stated Vincent Kompany, the coach of Bayern. “Of course, in the end we lost two



very, very tight games against a very good opponent.” Not including the Club World Cup from last summer, both teams were playing their 52nd game of the season across all competitions, but only the hosts appeared worn out. Bayern were shockingly stodgy after being so dangerous in the first leg; Michael Olise in particular had a bad night. Bayern’s fourth loss across all competitions in the midst of a record-breaking season will hurt a team that will be left wondering what may have been. With Bayern already Bundesliga champions and PSG also on track for the Ligue 1 title, both sides heavily rotated their line-ups in the weekend’s league fixtures. But both teams only made one change to their starting XIs compared to last week’s spectacle in Paris. Only PSG’s was forced, with Fabian Ruiz in for the injured Achraf Hakimi. The high-octane first leg was widely lauded as among the best matches in the competition’s history and Wednesday’s game offered more of the same early. Ruiz, starting his first European match since January, set Khvicha Kvaratskhelia down the left flank with an excellent through ball. The Georgian latched onto

the pass, blazed past his marker before cutting back for the perfectly placed Dembele to slam home. Bayern conceded after just 36 seconds against Real Madrid in the quarter-finals and fought back to win but seemed stunned by the early goal this time around. Olise, Kane and Joshua Kimmich all mislaid passes in the opening half-hour, ending promising attacks. Bayern surrounded referee Joao Pinheiro claiming a penalty on the half-hour mark when Vitinha’s clearance hit Joao Neves’ outstretched arm in the box, but their appeals were waved away. The home players had already been left incensed when PSG full-back Nuno Mendes was not shown a second yellow card for handball. PSG went inches from scoring a second but Manuel Neuer tipped a close-range Neves header just wide of the post. The home team rediscovered their rhythm just before the break, with Jamal Musiala forcing an excellent low save from PSG goalkeeper Matvey Safonov and blasting over the bar. PSG showed a more measured side to their game in the second half, sitting back to absorb Bayern pressure while never losing their own threat on the counter.

India is ranked first in the ICC T20I

New Delhi: India, the three-time World Cup winners, held the top spot in the ICC T20I rankings on Tuesday. England and Australia came in second and third, respectively. In March, when they co-hosted the T20 World Cup with Sri Lanka, India made history by becoming the first side to successfully defend their championship and win it for a record-extending third time.

According to the ICC’s website, “the most recent rankings rate all matches played since May 2025 at 100% and those of the previous two years at 50%.” “Australia are positioned closer to England at third place with 258 points, while India sees their lead over England trimmed by just one point at 275 points,” it continued. While two-time winners England have 262 rating points, one-time champions Australia have 258 points. In all, there is no change in ranking for the top seven teams in the ICC T20I rankings



with New Zealand (247), South Africa (244), Pakistan (240) and the West Indies (233) remaining at the following spots. However, Sri Lanka (221) have lost six rating points and subsequently slipped to the ninth position while Bangladesh (225) have moved up one place to be at eighth.

Afghanistan (220) are at 10th with a close margin of gap with Sri Lanka. Zimbabwe and Ireland are ranked 11th and 12th respectively. “Crick- et’s rising force in North America, the USA have leapfrogged two spots after gaining six points, and see themselves rise to the 13th place, over-

taking Netherlands and Scotland who are at 14th and 15th ranks respectively,” the ICC said.

“Namibia was unchanged at 16th place while Nepal (17th) and Oman (19th) jumped a spot each, overtaking UAE (18th) and Canada (20th) respectively.”

The ICC informed that the number of teams being ranked are down from 102 to 98. “The number of teams in the rankings is down from 102 to 98 as Fiji, Gambia, Greece and Israel didn’t make the cut as they did not play the requisite eight T20Is in the past three years,” the ICC said.

Omar Abdullah rejects claims of NC split



ed that the BJP had been planning to target Jammu and Kashmir for a year, though he denied any attempts to destabilize the National Conference. The BJP aims to strengthen its position ahead of the 2024 Assembly elections following a controversial delimitation that added seats in Hindu-majority areas.

Srinagar, May 10: Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah has dismissed rumors of MLAs leaving the National Conference, attributing the speculation to the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)’s misinformation. He highlighted that the PDP had previously allied with the BJP, even aiding them in securing a Rajya Sabha seat, as evidenced by an RTI response. Omar asserted that no MLA from the National Conference would desert the party to support the BJP. Opposition leader Sunil Sharma suggested

Cristiano Ronaldo scored the Saudi Pro League’s 100th goal

New Delhi: Al-Nassr defeated Al-Shabab 4-2 on Thursday to take a five-point lead at the top of the table, while Cristiano Ronaldo scored his 100th goal in the Saudi Pro League. With fifteen minutes left, the 41-year-old attacker scored his 971st goal of his career by converting a Sadio Mané cross at the near post. Additionally, it was his 26th league goal of the year. “Ronaldo is always dangerous going forward, and we saw that again today,” remarked Jorge Jesus, the coach of Al-Nassr. After joining from Chelsea in July, João Félix scored three goals for the top team in the league. The win took



Al-Nassr to 82 points from 32 games, five ahead of Al-Hilal, which has three matches, one more than Nassr, left to play. Al-Hilal meets Al-Khlood on Friday and faces Nassr on Tuesday in what could be

a title decider against its Riyadh rival. “Now we have a derby match against our rival, which is a difficult encounter,” Jesus said. “We are fully aware of its importance, and we are dealing with it with complete focus

as we know that small details could decide the result.” Ronaldo, a five-time Ballon d’Or winner, has yet to secure a major trophy in Saudi Arabia since signing with Al-Nassr in December 2022.

Spain’s Carvajal is vying to be included in the FIFA World Cup 2026 squad

De la Fuente

New Delhi: Dani Carvajal has not been ruled out of Spain’s World Cup team by manager Luis de la Fuente, but he has stated that the right back needs to demonstrate his form and fitness after the Real Madrid captain sustained a right foot injury during training last week. Dani Carvajal has not been ruled out of Spain’s World Cup team by manager Luis de la Fuente, but he has stated that the right back needs to demonstrate his form and fitness after the Real Madrid captain sustained a right foot injury during training last week. On Wednesday, De la Fuente told reporters, “Carvajal is a very important figure in our dressing room.” “I know what’s going on because I really spoke with him yesterday. He doesn’t have a catastrophic injury, but it will take some time for him to return to his normal level. We’ll see whether he actually gets the chance and puts on the performances in the remaining games. Carvajal, who only played for Spain once in 2025, would understand if he wasn’t included in the squad



for the World Cup, which will take place in the US, Canada, and Mexico from June 11 to July 19, according to De la Fuente. Carvajal, 34, is approaching the final weeks of his contract with Real and has struggled for

game-time this season amid competition from Trent Alexander-Arnold. Spain begins its World Cup campaign against Cape Verde on June 15 and also faces Saudi Arabia and Uruguay in Group H.

India’s U-15 boxers demonstrate their domination in Tashkent by winning 27 medals at the Asian Championships

New Delhi: At the Asian Boxing U15 & U17 Championships 2026 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, India’s youth boxers have officially secured an incredible 27 out of 30 medals in the U-15 category. The U-15 girls’ team demonstrated complete domination by winning 14 of the 15 potential medals, and the U-15 boys almost equaled the accomplishment by winning 13 of the 15 medals, paving the way for the nation’s unprecedented overall podium result.

The Indian guys put on another day of brutal performances after this huge medal confirmation, which was characterized by a rush of RSC (Referee Stops Contest) triumphs. Leading the aggressive attack were Sastha Vasanth Ashok Kumar (37 kg) and Parshant (49 kg), who both used RSC to stop their respective UAE opponents, Mohammed Albannai and Mayed Alyammahi, in the opening round.

India’s attacking power was again demonstrated by Nitin (40 kg) and Harshvardhan Jeena (55 kg), who defeated Sayat Mengdibay of Kazakhstan and Muhammad Fozilov of Tajikistan in the second-round RSC, respectively. Yash Kumar (33 kg) and Rohit Pothina

(35 kg) defeated Tajikistan’s Rasuljon Karimov and Mongolia’s Temuulen Munkhbayar via hard-fought 4:1 split decisions in the hotly contested fights. The squad also registered a series of flawless unanimous decisions, asserting their technical superiority. Samir Bohra (43kg) outclassed Thailand’s Chutinan Yaram 5:0, and Nongpoknganba Meitei Oina (46kg) delivered a similarly convincing 5:0 win over Mongolia’s Munkh-ochir Ganzorig. Rounding off the perfect day, Mohd Yasser (58kg) impressed the judges to secure a 5:0 victory against Kazakhstan’s Meirlan Beissekhan.

With 27 medals officially in the bag and the boxers displaying unmatched power and skill across weight divisions, the Indian contingent has firmly established its supremacy in the grassroots ranks of Asian boxing as the championships progress.

Earlier in the U-15 boys’ competition, Nongpoknganba Meitei Oina (46kg) secured a convincing 5:0 victory over Kazakhstan’s Abdurakhman Vushanlo, while Parshant (49kg) mirrored the result with a dominant 5:0 win against Bakdaulet Akhmet. Mohd Yasser



(58kg) stood out with a commanding performance, sealing his bout via RSC in the first round against Kyrgyzstan’s Akbarzhan Nabidzhanov.

Nivesh Pal (54kg) also impressed with a 5:0 victory over Kazakhstan’s Adilet Galiyev, while Ranveer (66kg) progressed after a walkover win against

Chinese Taipei’s Ying-Chieh Chen. In other bouts, Lilmani Singh Lukram (61kg) went down via RSC in the third round against Uzbekistan’s Azizbek Egamberganov, and Mehul Rana (70kg) suffered an RSC loss in the opening round against Kazakhstan’s Ayan Bauyrzhan.

Bayern Munich is “already motivated” for their upcoming Champions League match



New Delhi: As he processed Bayern Munich’s close semifinal loss to defending champion Paris Saint-Germain, coach Vincent Kompany stated he was “already motivated” for a run at the Champions League next season. With a 1-1 tie in Munich on Wednesday, PSG qualified 6-5 overall, holding onto their one-goal advantage from the exciting first leg in Paris and setting up a matchup with Arsenal in Budapest. Following the game, Kompany declared that his disappointment would not last long and that he was preparing to compete in the tournament again. “I’m already inspired for the upcoming season. The 40-year-old remarked, “I understand how difficult it is to win this prize and how much depends on details.” As he processed Bayern

Munich’s close semifinal loss to defending champion Paris Saint-Germain, coach Vincent Kompany stated he was “already motivated” for a run at the Champions League next season. With a 1-1 tie in Munich on Wednesday, PSG qualified 6-5 overall, holding onto their one-goal advantage from the exciting first leg in Paris and setting up a matchup with Arsenal in Budapest.

Following the game, Kompany declared that his disappointment would not last long and that he was preparing to compete in the tournament again. “I’m already inspired for the upcoming season. The 40-year-old remarked, “I understand how difficult it is to win this prize and how much depends on details.” In a reflective interview following a recent match, the head

coach of Bayern Munich expressed optimism about the team’s future, underscoring his commitment to an aggressive style of play as they prepare for the next season. This marks only his second season in charge of such a prestigious club, following his experiences with a previously relegated team, Burnley. The current campaign has brought significant achievements, showcasing the coach’s ability to navigate the intricate club politics that had previously challenged renowned coaches like Thomas Tuchel and Julian Nagelsmann.

The recent match saw Ousmane Dembele of PSG score almost immediately after kick-off, setting the tone for a matchup where defensive discipline was as critical as offensive prowess. Although Harry Kane

managed to equalize late in the game, Bayern’s resurgence came too late, resulting in a defeat. Despite the loss, the team has only suffered three defeats out of 52 games this season, with Joshua Kimmich, a veteran of the team’s 2020 treble win, asserting that this iteration of Bayern is the strongest they have had, even surpassing their triumphant treble season. The urgency for a Champions League victory is palpable, particularly given the ages of key players like Harry Kane and captain Manuel Neuer.

The club’s recent substantial investments, including the 70 million euro acquisition of winger Luis Diaz and the signing of Kane for a record 100 million euros, signal a ‘win now’ mentality. However, despite the pressing timeline suggested by the team’s veteran roster, Kimmich was one of the few starters aging over 30 in their latest match, indicating a thoughtful balance in the squad’s composition. Bayern’s recent successes include clinching back-to-back Bundesliga titles and standing on the verge of a German Cup victory, yet the ultimate measure of their success remains their performance in the Champions League. Kane reiterated that the team should not be judged solely on this match outcome, emphasizing their strong season overall and the potential to achieve great heights, maintaining aspirations of winning all available trophies despite the disappointments of the current campaign. He reflects a sentiment of pride in their accomplishments thus far, while harboring ambitions for future glory on the European stage.

KKR’s Varun Chakravarthy shines with three wickets

New Delhi: Varun Chakravarthy, despite suffering a foot injury while attempting to stop a straight drive, is optimistic about his recovery. His performance, which included three wickets, was pivotal for the Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR), particularly as he has improved after an initial struggle in the IPL. He noted that spinners often face challenges early in the tournament due to flat wickets, but as it progresses, they tend to become more impactful. Angkrish Raghuvanshi emphasized that KKR’s approach to chasing the



166-run target could have been better for their net run rate had they used fewer deliveries. He acknowledged that as the ball aged, batting condi-

tions worsened, making the strong start provided by Finn Allen and Ajinkya Rahane during the Powerplay essential for their success.

Ben Stokes is “100% ready to bowl” when he returns to cricket

New Delhi: For the first time since England’s catastrophic Ashes campaign, Ben Stokes is due to bat and bowl for county team Durham. The England captain’s second level County Championship encounter against Worcestershire is scheduled to begin on Friday. While coaching academy players in February, the all-rounder was struck in the face by a ball during a net practice, resulting in an unusual injury. Stokes, 34, need reconstructive surgery after straining his groin during England’s recent 4-1 Ashes humiliation in Australia. In the absence of West Indies fast bowler Kemar Roach, Stokes might start the bowling at New Road, according to Durham coach Ryan Campbell. “He will definitely be bowling for us,” Campbell stated to the British news agency Press Association. We’re

thinking that he might even use the new ball in one of the innings. “We won’t expect him to bowl a million overs; the game will likely be between 20 and 25 overs, but once he gets into a fight, it’s difficult to get him out of it.” On June 4, England will begin their international season with a three-Test series at Lord’s against New Zealand. Last year, Stokes had a comeback as a bowler in Test matches, collecting 33 wickets at a rate of just over 23 per wicket. England has struggled to fill the position of opening bowler since the retirements of James Anderson, Stuart Broad and Chris Woakes but Stokes’ recent injury record counts against using him in that slot. Campbell underlined his plan was designed to benefit Durham rather than England.