

In Brief

Cross-border drug trafficking

Imphal: The coordinated action of a joint team of Behiang Police and Assam Rifles led to the arrest of four Myanmar nationals or their alleged involvement in drug trafficking in Churachandpur district of Manipur, state police informed on Wednesday. Acting on intelligence inputs, the team intercepted a motorcycle in the Behiang Police Station area and apprehended two individuals from Bualkot village after recovering 22 soap cases suspected to contain heroin. In a separate operation, two more persons were arrested from Behiang village, with 44 additional soap cases of suspected heroin seized from their possession. Police said the total quantity and value of the seized narcotics are yet to be determined, as the operations were carried out in remote areas.

Assam hospitality brand unveils Rs 800-crore NE expansion plan

Guwahati: Palacio Hospitality, a premium hospitality brand rooted in Assam, on Thursday announced the launch of its second property in Guwahati. The new property at Paltan Bazar has been designed to cater to a wide range of guest needs, featuring 83 rooms across categories; over 6,000 square feet of indoor banquet space; a 7,000 square feet rooftop venue and dedicated conference rooms and boardroom facilities. With this addition, the brand now operates three properties overall — two in Guwahati and one in Alipurduar — marking a steady expansion of its footprint in the region. Alongside the launch, Palacio Hospitality unveiled a Rs 800-crore expansion roadmap, with plans to develop 10 properties over the next decade, primarily focused on the Northeast while remaining open to opportunities across key markets in India.

Annual health check-up

Guwahati: In a move towards strengthening social security and occupational health, the Pan-India Annual Health Check-up Programme for insured workers aged 40 and above of the Employees' State Insurance Corporation's (ESIC) was launched yesterday. The national initiative was formally inaugurated by the Union Minister of Labour & Employment and Youth Affairs & Sports, Dr. Mansukh Mandavīya, from Delhi.

Fresh Violence in Manipur

Imphal: Fresh violence was reported from the border areas of Kamjong district in the early hours of Wednesday after suspected militants allegedly launched coordinated attacks on villages located near the Myanmar border. According to sources, the attacks took place around 2 am at Namlee Market and Choro village in Kamjong district. The assault is suspected to have been carried out by the KNA-B using drones, raising fresh concerns over the use of advanced tactics in the conflict-hit hill regions of Manipur. Sources said several houses were set on fire during the attack. However, no casualties had been officially confirmed at the time of filing this report.

Arms and Explosives in Silchar

Silchar: A joint operation conducted by the Assam Police and the Assam Rifles led to the arrest of a husband-wife duo from Manipur and the recovery of arms and explosives from a rented house at Tarapur 6th Block near Ramnagar in Silchar on May 7, officials said. Providing details of the operation, Additional Superintendent of Police (Crime) Rajat Kumar said the accused were tracked through mobile phone location data before being apprehended during an overnight raid.

Arunachal: 3 Held With heroin, Cash As East Siang Police Bust High-End Vehicle Drug Racket



Itanagar, May 7: In a major success under Operation Dawn 2.0, East Siang Police busted a drug peddling network using a high-end vehicle and arrested three persons with suspected heroin and cash at Silluk Village under Mebo Police Station on

thursday, 7/5/26. Digital News Platform Acting on intelligence inputs about narcotics being moved from Roing towards Mebo, a police team led by IC ADS Shri Ayup Boko, APPS, laid a naka at Silluk Market on May 6. The team included SI K. Tangha, ASI R. Lowang, and constables Nong Tayeng, Thomas Panyang, Phinjo Kigar, Pankaj Bharali, Lukpe Tally, Karyom Riram and Guyi Siram.

During the operation, the team intercepted a Toyota Hyryder. In the presence of Executive Magistrate Smti Toimi Tagi, CO Mebo Sub-Division, a body and vehicle search was conducted. Police seized 21.4 grams gross weight of an orange coloured powdery substance suspected to be heroin, four vials, two syringes, and cash amounting to Rs 75,700. The Toyota Hyryder used for transport was also seized. The con-

traband and other items were weighed, packed, sealed and documented as per legal procedure. The entire operation was videographed to ensure transparency and procedural compliance, police said. All three accused were apprehended on the spot. The seized items and the accused were handed over to Mebo Police Station for further legal action.

A case has been registered at Mebo Police Station under Section 21(b) of the NDPS Act read with Section 3(5) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. Further investigation is underway to trace backward and forward linkages of the network. Superintendent of Police, East Siang, Pankaj Lamba, IPS commended the police team for the operation and reiterated the district police's zero-tolerance policy against drug trafficking and related offences.

Four held in Manipur for alleged cross-border drug trafficking



Imphal, May 07: The coordinated action of a joint team of Behiang Police and Assam Rifles led to the arrest of four Myanmar nationals or their alleged involvement in drug trafficking in Churachandpur district of Manipur, state police informed on Wednesday.

Acting on intelligence inputs, the team intercepted a motorcycle in the Behiang Police Station area and apprehended two individuals from Bualkot village after recovering 22 soap cases suspected to contain heroin.

In a separate operation, two more persons were arrested from Behiang village, with 44 additional soap cases of suspected heroin seized from their possession. Police said the total quantity and value of the seized narcotics are yet to be determined, as the operations were carried out in remote areas.

The arrested individuals have been identified as Thangsawmung (56), Kamkhenmung (56), Jhonmung (31), and Haukhul (55), all residents of Chikha village in Myanmar.

Cases have been registered at Behiang Police Station under the Foreigners Act and the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act.

Further investigation is underway. Former Manipur Chief Minister N. Biren Singh lauded the security forces for the achievement while stating that the arrests once again highlight how Manipur is being infiltrated by foreign illegal immigrants actively involved in drug trafficking. "While two of the arrested individuals reportedly claim to be Indian citizens, all four are Myanmar nationals as per preliminary reports," Singh said.

Assam hospitality brand unveils Rs 800-crore NE expansion plan, opens second Guwahati property

Guwahati, May 07: Palacio Hospitality, a premium hospitality brand rooted in Assam, on Thursday announced the launch of its second property in Guwahati.

The new property at Paltan Bazar has been designed to cater to a wide range of guest needs, featuring 83 rooms across categories; over 6,000 square feet of indoor banquet space; a 7,000 square feet rooftop venue and dedicated conference rooms and boardroom facilities.

With this addition, the brand now operates three properties overall — two in Guwahati and one in Alipurduar — marking a steady expansion of its footprint in the region.

Alongside the launch, Palacio Hospitality unveiled a Rs 800-crore expansion roadmap, with plans to develop 10 properties over the next decade, primarily focused on the Northeast while remaining open to opportunities across key markets in India.

Strategically located in Guwahati's central commercial and transit hub, the Paltan Bazar property is designed to cater to the city's growing demand for quality accommodation, events, and curated dining experiences, driven by increasing business activity and tourism.

Speaking on the occasion, Anup Poddar, chairman, Poddar Group, said: "Hotel Palacio is a brand that has been built in Assam, and that is something we take great pride in. Over the years, we have seen the Northeast evolve significantly — with rising aspirations, better con-



nectivity, and increasing demand for quality hospitality experiences. Our focus has been to grow alongside this change in a thoughtful and consistent manner."

Our larger vision is to build Palacio into one of the most respected hospitality brands to emerge from Assam, while staying rooted in the region's identity and values."

"Guwahati has played a central role in our journey so far, and expanding within the city was a natural next step. Paltan Bazar, given its strategic location, allows us to cater to both transit and destination travellers, while strengthening our presence in the business and events segment," he added.

Ankit Poddar, Managing Director

and Chief operating Officer, Poddar Group, said: "Our Rs 800 crore expansion roadmap reflects a long-term, disciplined approach to growth. While the Northeast continues to be our primary focus area, we are also open to opportunities across other parts of India where we see the right alignment." "We are building a model that combines owned assets with hotel management agreements and lease structures, allowing us to expand in a flexible and sustainable way," Poddar said. "With our upcoming projects, including the Hyatt Regency Gangtok currently under development, we are working towards building a well-rounded hospitality portfolio across segments and markets," he added.

Annual health check-up initiative for workers launched in Guwahati

Guwahati, May 07: In a move towards strengthening social security and occupational health, the Pan-India Annual Health Check-up Programme for insured workers aged 40 and above of the Employees' State Insurance Corporation's (ESIC) was launched yesterday.

The national initiative was formally inaugurated by the Union Minister of Labour & Employment and Youth Affairs & Sports, Dr. Mansukh Mandavīya, from Delhi.

This nationwide rollout was observed simultaneously across 11 other ESIC hospitals, including the regional ceremony at ESIC Medical College & Hospital, Beltola, Guwahati. The Guwahati event was graced by Member of Parliament Bijuli Kalita Medhi as the Chief Guest, alongside G.D. Tripathi, Principal Secretary, Labour & Welfare, Government of Assam.

'State Has No Role In CUET Centre Allotment': Arunachal Minister Sona On Student Hardship

Itanagar, May 7: Arunachal Pradesh Education Minister PD Sona has raised concerns over CUET exam centres allotted to students from the state being placed outside Arunachal, including in Assam and Manipur, with social media reports even suggesting centres in Pakistan and Kathmandu. Digital News Platform

"Last time also our students faced trouble when centres were assigned in Assam. I had sent letters to the Government of India but we did not get any positive response," Sona said, adding that the state government will provide logistical support to students forced to travel outside Arunachal for the exams. He stressed that travel poses difficulties for financially weaker families and noted parental worries over centres in Manipur given the ongoing conflict there. Sona said he

had discussed the matter with Chief Minister Pema Khandu, who has also written to the Government of India to reinforce the request. "If it goes through the CM there will be more seriousness," he remarked.

The minister acknowledged that lack of facilities might be a reason for centres not being allotted within Arunachal, but reiterated that the state government had already offered to provide necessary infrastructure. With CUET exams approaching, he admitted it was too late to reassign centres this year, but expressed hope that the issue would be resolved in future. Clarifying that centre allotment is not under state jurisdiction, Sona said, "The public think it is done by the state government but the state government can't do anything in it, everything is decided by the central govern-

ment, Ministry of Education, only."



Nagaland University study proposes GIS-based roadmap to tackle soil erosion in Northeast India

Dibrugarh, Apr 07: A new study by researchers from Nagaland University has proposed a GIS-based scientific framework to address the growing threat of soil erosion in Northeast India, warning that unchecked land degradation could severely impact agriculture, water resources, and ecological stability in the region. Published in the peer-reviewed journal *Discover Geoscience*, the study focuses on the Siji watershed in Assam’s Gai River Basin, one of the most erosion-prone landscapes in the eastern Himalayan region. Researchers further called for the development of flood prediction systems and improved environmental monitoring mechanisms in the Northeast, warning that climate change and growing human interventions could intensify ecological degradation if timely measures are not adopted. Using the Revised Universal Soil Loss Equation (RUSLE) integrated with Geographic Information System (GIS)-based



modelling, the researchers mapped erosion hotspots and assessed sediment transport patterns across the watershed. The study highlights that steep slopes, intense rainfall, deforestation, shifting cultivation, mining activities, and infrastructure expansion are accelerating soil erosion across the Northeast, increasing pressure on fragile hill ecosystems. The researchers recommended an Integrated Watershed Management

(IWM) approach that combines sustainable land-use planning with conservation measures such as terracing, contouring, and increased vegetation cover to reduce soil degradation and improve water retention. “The recent study on GIS-based solutions for soil erosion marks a significant step towards addressing one of the most pressing environmental challenges in North-East India,” said Prof. Jagadish K. Patnaik, Vice-Chancellor of Naga-

land University. He said geospatial technology could help guide conservation planning while strengthening agricultural productivity and water resource management. M. S. Rawat said the watershed-based modelling approach aows researchers to identify erosion hotspots at a micro level and design location-specific interventions instead of applying uniform conservation measures across diverse landscapes. The study also underlined the wider applicability of the framework, stating that the model could be adapted to other environmentally sensitive regions facing similar topographical and climatic challenges. Manipur. According to the findings, areas with dense forest cover and gentle slopes recorded minimal soil loss, while croplands, barren terrain, and regions affected by road construction and mining showed extremely high erosion rates, posing serious risks to land stability and local ecosystems.

CSOs support the reconstruction of the Dimapur railway station

Guwahati, Apr 07: Civil society organisations (CSOs) in Dimapur have backed the proposed redevelopment of the Dimapur Railway Station into a world-class railway facility, while calling for an early resolution of the land disputes linked to the project. The support was expressed during a consultative meeting organised by the Naga Council Dimapur (NCD) with several CSOs and tribal organisations. Participants at the meeting strongly opposed any move to relocate the railway station outside Dimapur and reaffirmed their commitment to the redevelopment initiative. Speaking at the meeting, NCD president K G Kenye said the first phase of the project requires around 7.3 acres of land, but unresolved disputes involving 96 patta hold-

ers continue to pose a challenge. He noted that while land surveys for the first phase have already been completed, 38 patta holders have reportedly moved court, raising concerns that prolonged litigation could delay the project or force its relocation outside Nagaland. Kenye urged the Government of Nagaland to ensure a peaceful and time-bound resolution of the land disputes so that the redevelopment project can proceed smoothly.

He added that residents and CSOs in Dimapur would fully cooperate to ensure the railway station modernisation project is completed within the scheduled timeline. Kenye cautioned that unless the disputes are settled quickly, the railway modernisation project could face seri-

ous setbacks at an early stage. He said CSOs are planning to engage directly with the litigants and request them to withdraw their cases in the larger public interest. He also pointed out that the second phase of the project may face greater challenges, as it involves 109 additional patta holders along with issues related to undocumented encroachments. To tackle the matter, the NCD has formed several committees and sub-committees to hold discussions with landowners, railway officials and the state government. The council is also expected to meet non-tribal CSOs next week to build broader public consensus and counter misinformation regarding the alleged eviction of religious structures from the project site.

DA & DR raised to 60%, over 1 lakh employees pensioner

Imphal, Apr 07: On May 6, the Arunachal Pradesh government approved a 2% increase in dearness relief (DR) for retirees and dearness allowance (DA) for serving employees, raising the rate from 58% to 60% of basic pay and pension. The updated DA and DR will be paid in addition to monthly salaries and pensions starting in May 2026. The updated DA and DR will take effect from January 1, 2026, according to a statement released by the Chief Minister’s Office. On May 6, the Arunachal Pradesh government approved a 2% increase in dearness relief (DR) for retirees and dearness allowance (DA) for serving employees, raising the rate from

58% to 60% of basic pay and pension.

The updated DA and DR will take effect from January 1, 2026, according to a statement released by the Chief Minister’s Office. According to the administration, the revision will help 40,477 pensioners and 69,248 regular employees in the state.

This development is expected to cost the state exchequer Rs100.54 crore annually. The cash payment of arrears for the January–April 2026 period will result in an extra expense of Rs. 33.51 crore. Pema Khandu congratulated government workers and expressed hope that they would keep working hard for the state’s citizens’ well-being.

Three rescued barking deer released at Keibul Lamjao National Park

Imphal, Apr 07: Three endangered barking deer, including a fawn, were rescued from residential areas across Imphal East and Imphal West districts. The species is protected under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, which prohibits hunting. Wildlife officials said habitat loss, fragmentation and poaching continue to threaten the animal’s population in the state.

The first rescue was carried out on Tuesday morning after an adult barking deer strayed into the residence of Thoudam Boinao at Uchiwa Mamang Leikai village near Loktak Lake in Imphal West district. Local residents Thoudam Ibomcha and Shagolsiem Dinesh safely secured the animal before handing it over to forest offi-



cials. Later, another adult deer entered the Uchiwa Santhel area near Loktak Lake, prompting local residents and volunteers of the Unique Wildlife Protection Committee, Manipur, to launch a rescue operation.

Md Muphijuddin, president of Pole Star Club,

Santhel Mamang Leikai, along with other local volunteers, helped rescue the animal without injury. In a separate incident on April 27, a team from Yaingangpokpi Police Station rescued a fawn from the Sanasabi area in Imphal East district after receiving information from local residents. Officials said the rescue was carried out to prevent the animal from falling prey to poachers. Teams from the Mayang Imphal Forest Beat Office, Kakching Range Forest, Hiyanglam Police Station and Keibul Lamjao National Park Range-II later reached the rescue sites. After administering first aid and examining the animals, forest officials released all three deer into Keibul Lamjao National Park.

Study documents 11 orchid species in Duwarmara reserve forest, raises conservation concerns

Doomdooma, Apr 07: A scientific study conducted in Assam’s Tinsukia district has documented the fragile state of orchid diversity in the Duwarmara Reserve Forest, while warning of mounting environmental threats to the region’s unique ecosystem.

Published on April 30, the research, titled *Assessment of Species Diversity and Distribution Pattern for Different Species of Dendrobium (Orchidaceae)* in Duwarmara Reserve Forest of Assam, India, was authored by botanists Dipika Rajput and Khyanjeet Gogoi. Conducted between 2021 and 2022, the study used scientific methods including line transect surveys and biodiversity indices to assess orchid distribution in the reserve forest located around 14 km



southwest of Doomdooma.

Researchers identified 11 species of *Dendrobium* orchids growing across four host plant species, marking the first comprehensive documentation of these orchids in the forest. The findings revealed that most species were rare and un-

evenly distributed, with only a few species such as *Dendrobium aphyllum*, *Dendrobium fimbriatum* and *Dendrobium moschatum* showing wider adaptability. According to the researchers, the forest exhibits moderate orchid diversity but also signs of ecological imbalance

influenced by microclimatic conditions, host tree availability and habitat structure. The study also highlighted growing threats to the ecosystem, including deforestation, agricultural expansion, infrastructure development and illegal orchid collection and smuggling. Researchers further noted that pesticide use in nearby tea gardens could be contributing to the decline in orchid diversity. Despite its relatively small size, the Duwarmara Reserve Forest was found to be a rich but vulnerable orchid habitat, underscoring the need for urgent conservation measures. The researchers said the absence of prior scientific documentation makes the study an important baseline for future biodiversity monitoring and policy intervention.

Meghalaya CM announces Rs 50 lakh for Synjuk office

Guwahati, Apr 07: Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma on Wednesday attended a programme of the Synjuk ki Rangbah Shnong of Ri Bhoi in Nongpoh, where he held a Mini CM Connect interaction and listened to concerns raised by local representatives. During the meeting, the Synjuk submitted a memorandum listing several demands, including the establishment of a government college in Nongpoh. The Chief Minister said the proposal would be examined. Addressing power-related issues, he informed that a 132 kV substation is being set up in Nongpoh to improve electricity supply in the area and nearby regions. He added that the government will also consider additional substations in phases and take temporary steps to strengthen manpower. On the demand for a dedicated pig market and improved infrastructure, Sangma acknowledged the rising need and said the government will study the feasibility of

creating a structured farmers’ market. He also assured that measures would be taken to monitor price fluctuations caused by external supply. Issues concerning areas along the Meghalaya–Assam border, including road connectivity, GPS mapping, security, electricity, and shortage of medical staff, were also raised during the interaction. The Chief Minister said the concerns would be taken up with the Assam government, while steps would be taken to review staffing at primary health centres and improve administrative response in border areas. He also announced financial support of Rs 50 lakh for the construction of the Synjuk’s office, to be provided through the Chief Minister’s Development Fund and the Meghalaya Basin Development Authority (MBDA). Sangma appreciated the role of the Synjuk ki Rangbah Shnong of Ri Bhoi in working with the government for the development of the district.

THRC flags sanitation, infrastructure gaps in two Agartala schools

Dibrugarh, Apr 07: The Tripura Human Rights Commission has observed violations of students’ rights in two Agartala based schools based on reports submitted by students of Tripura Government Law College interning with the Commission. As part of the internship, the students visited both schools and submitted a detailed report to the Commission on the infrastructure available for students in the institutions. The reports relate to Prachya Bharati Higher Secondary School and Bijoy Kumar Girls’ Higher Secondary School, where visits were conducted between April 18 and April 21 under an internship programme of the Commission. “Certain conditions prevailing in the above-mentioned

institutions appear to be in violation of the human rights of students,” the Commission said, describing the findings as serious and requiring immediate attention. The Commission held discussions with the Director of Subsequent reports from the departments and institutions were also examined. According to the findings, both schools are facing financial constraints affecting sanitation and maintenance. At Prachya Bharati Thakur vs Union of India and others delivered on January 30, 2026, which directed the provision of sanitary products, proper disposal systems and maintenance of sanitation facilities in schools, along with awareness programmes on menstrual hygiene.

Arunachal Pradesh: High-value Cordyceps mushroom discovered in East Siang

Dibrugarh, Apr 07: A highly valuable mushroom, Cordyceps, has been discovered in Arunachal Pradesh’s East Siang district.

The mushroom exploration programme was led by Senpon Ngomle, Assistant Professor at the College of Agriculture (CoA), Central Agricultural University (CAU), Pasighat, along with Yengkhom Disco Singh and P. Chattopadhyay.

Taking to X, Arunachal Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein wrote: “A groundbreaking discovery from Arunachal Pradesh is drawing global scientific attention. Researchers from Central Agricultural University, Pasighat have identified

the highly valued Cordyceps mushroom in East Siang, an occurrence that is both rare and scientifically significant due to its presence at a relatively low altitude.” The discovery was made during a mushroom exploration programme led by Dr Senpon Ngomle, Assistant Professor at the College of Agriculture, Pasighat under Central Agricultural University, along with Dr Yengkhom Disco Singh and P. Chattopadhyay.

“Widely known as ‘Himalayan Gold’, Cordyceps is prized for its powerful bioactive compounds like cordycepin and adenosine, with proven potential in boosting immunity, fighting

inflammation, supporting metabolic health, and even aiding cancer research.”

“This discovery not only highlights the immense and largely untapped biodiversity of the region but also opens new pathways for advanced research, sustainable cultivation, and livelihood generation. A step forward for science, conservation, and the bioeconomy of the region.”

Extensive pharmacological and biomedical studies have demonstrated its therapeutic potential in cancer management, metabolic disorders, immune dysfunction, chronic inflammatory diseases, oxidative stress, and tissue repair mechanisms.



Shillong airport runway expansion to boost Meghalaya tourism: CM Conrad Sangma

Shillong, Apr 07: Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma on Tuesday said the Centre has awarded the contract for expansion of the runway at Shillong Airport, a move expected to significantly improve air connectivity and strengthen Meghalaya’s tourism sector. Speaking at the Empowerment of Tourism Champions of Meghalaya programme held at Orchid Lake Resort, the Chief Minister said the runway expansion project is likely to be completed within 15 months and will enable larger aircraft to operate from Shillong. Describing the project as a “game-changer” for tourism, Sangma said improved connectivity is crucial for positioning Meghalaya as a preferred destination for domestic and international tourists. He said better transport infrastructure would help increase tourist arrivals while also generating employment and supporting local businesses linked to the tourism sector. The programme, organised by the state tourism department, brought together tourism entrepreneurs, artisans, students, village leaders, homestay operators and community representatives from different parts of the state. Sangma said Meghalaya’s tourism strategy focuses on creating an integrated ecosystem involving government agencies, transport operators, hospitality stakeholders and local communities to ensure safe and seamless travel experiences for visitors. Highlighting ongoing tourism initiatives, he said several major projects are under development, including the Shillong Ropeway, Mawdok Skywalk, Rain Museum at Mawsynram, the Living Root Bridge Museum, and tourism infrastructure projects in Sohra, Mandalgre and Siju. Tourism Minister Timothy D Shira said tourism has emerged as a key contributor to Meghalaya’s economy, with provisional estimates placing tourist arrivals in 2025 at nearly 18 lakh.

He said over 150 tourism-related projects are currently being implemented across the state with investments worth thousands of

crores and increasing participation from private investors. The minister also said Meghalaya is working towards developing Umiam into a global tourism destination through a dedicated Destination Management Organisation focused on sustainable tourism planning.

During the programme, the chief minister announced new beneficiaries under the Chief Minister’s Meghalaya Homestay Mission and recognised successful beneficiaries of the Chief Minister’s Homestay Scheme implemented under the Prime Minister’s Employment Generation Programme. Launched in September 2025, the mission aims to establish 3,000 homestays by 2028 and create more than 15,000 jobs across the state. Officials said 80 homestay applications have been approved so far, while 55 beneficiaries from Khasi, Jaintia and Ri-Bhoi regions received financial assistance amounting to Rs 3.85 crore. Sanction letters under the Community-Led Infrastructure Scheme were also distributed to support tourism-related infrastructure projects undertaken by villages, cooperatives and tourism societies.

Nagaland Inaugurates Indigenous Tribes Cultural Hub in Kohima

Kohima, May 07: K. Konngam Konyak, Advisor, Art and Culture and Treasuries and Accounts inaugurated the Nagaland Indigenuous Tribes Cultural Resource Centre in Kohima on Thursday. Addressing in the programme held at NT-CRC Hall, Kohima, special guest highlighted that, NIT-CR centre reflects a thoughtful and forward-looking vision, and stated that it has been developed not merely as a place to preserve the past, but as a living cultural space- where traditions can be actively practiced, shared, and carried forward to future generations. Konyak also said that one of the most significant aspects of the centre is that all sixteen tribes of Nagaland are represented in the centre and each community will be provided



a dedicated space to present and sustain its unique heritage, while also being part of a shared environment that promotes mutual respect, understanding and unity. The centre also brings together multiple functions under one roof- from exhibition and learning spaces to areas that support research, documentation and cultural activities. Further, he also highlighted that the pres-

ence of the District Cultural Office, Kohima will further strengthen coordination, enabling continuous engagement with communities and ensuring that the centre remains active and relevant. He said the centre is not only a place to safeguard cultural heritage, but also a platform where it can continue to evolve through interaction, learning, and community involvement. He also urged the

department to make this centre maintains with preservation and participation. While briefing technical report, Er. Kakheli Swu Executive Engineer Art and Culture, said that the project. "Nagaland Indigenous Tribes Cultural Resource Centre at Kohima" amounting to Rs 1283.08 lakh was funded by both the NLCP and the State Government. The project stands completed at a to-

tal cost of Rs. 1283.08 lakhs with Central contribution of Rs 583.54 lakh and State contribution of Rs. 699.54 lakh. The building is a G+2 storied RCC structure with a total floor area of 33,000 sq.ft. The building comprises of basement level, house of Cafeteria and Quarters for caretakers and maintenance personnel. Ground floor will be used for District Museum, District Library and District Cultural Officer's office. In the first floor, spaces will be allocated to each of the fifteen tribes of Nagaland to showcase their distinct identities through art, craft, music and storytelling. Earlier, special guest also unveiled the monolith. A short welcome note was addressed by Bodeno S. Collo, Commissioner and Secretary, Art and Culture.

Khonoma gets new Seed Bank and Community Learning Centre



Kohima, May 07: Salhouutuonuo Kruse, Minister for Women Resource Development & Horticulture, inaugurated the Seed Bank and Community Learning Centre at Khonoma on Thursday.

The project, titled "Empowering Women with Sustainable Livelihood in Khonoma, Nagaland," is supported by Oil India and implemented by Aaranyak in collaboration with Kevi Agri Allied Cooperative Society Ltd., Khonoma.

Addressing the gathering, Kruse said empowering women through sustainable livelihood initiatives was essential for strengthening families, communities and the economy.

She noted that the centre would focus on conservation of indigenous crop varieties, strengthening local seed systems and promoting sustainable agriculture practices.

The minister also highlighted Khonoma's traditional alder-based farming, garlic cultivation, weaving and food processing activities, while encouraging the community to enhance production and marketing for better economic opportunities.

The programme included unveiling of the commemorative monolith, presentations by Aaranyak and Oil India, folk song performances and interaction with villagers and officials.

Mizoram govt signs MoU with Jal Shakti Ministry for JJM 2.0

Aizawl, May 07: The Mizoram Government and the Union Ministry of Jal Shakti have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) in New Delhi on Wednesday for the implementation of Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) 2.0.

Union Minister for Jal Shakti, C. R. Patil, joined the programme virtually from his office.

Chief Minister of Mizoram Lalduhoma, along with Prof. Lalnilawma, Minister, PHE, Mizoram and officials from

the Public Health Engineering (PHE) Department, participated online from Aizawl. On behalf of the Government of Mizoram, the MoU was signed by Zodingpuii, Secretary to the Government of Mizoram, while Swati Meena Naik, Joint Secretary, signed on behalf of the Department of Drinking Water & Sanitation, Jal Shakti Ministry, Government of India.

In his virtual address, the Chief Minister stated that Mizoram is among the first states in India to success-

fully achieve 100 per cent implementation under the Jal Jeevan Mission, providing functional tap water connections to 1,33,060 households. All schools and Anganwadi Centres across the state have also been covered with functional tap water connections.

Out of 852 water supply schemes sanctioned, 849 have already been physically completed, achieving nearly 99 per cent completion. Additionally, 28 water testing laboratories have

been established across the state.

The Chief Minister expressed his satisfaction at signing the MoU for JJM 2.0 and emphasized that the mission will be effectively implemented in the state. He noted that it will play a crucial role in achieving the vision of a developed India (Viksit Bharat).

He also urged the Ministry to expedite the release of the pending Central share of funds for JJM, which has been due since December 2024.

Manipuri Couple Duo Arrested with Arms and Explosives in Silchar

Silchar, May 07: A joint operation conducted by the Assam Police and the Assam Rifles led to the arrest of a husband-wife duo from Manipur and the recovery of arms and explosives from a rented house at Tarapur 6th Block near Ramnagar in Silchar on May 7, officials said. Providing details of the operation, Additional Superintendent of Police (Crime) Rajat Kumar said the accused were tracked through mobile phone location data before being apprehended during an overnight raid. "By tracing their mobile locations, we apprehended both of them last night. The operation was jointly conducted by Assam Police and Assam Rifles," the officer said.

IIT Guwahati Launches New M.Tech Programme in Robotics and Artificial Intelligence

Guwahati, May 07: Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati has launched a first-of-its-kind M.Tech programme in Robotics and Artificial Intelligence aimed at both fresh graduates and working professionals seeking expertise in AI-driven robotic systems. The programme, offered by the School of

Interdisciplinary Studies and Sustainability, will be conducted in hybrid mode, combining online classes with on-campus laboratory sessions and final examinations at the IIT Guwahati campus. The initiative is designed to bridge multiple engineering disciplines and support advancements in sectors

such as agriculture, defence, manufacturing, healthcare, transportation, and smart infrastructure. The application portal for the inaugural batch has been opened, with the last date for submission of applications set for July 15, 2026. Classes are scheduled to begin from August 10, 2026.

Fresh Violence Reported in Manipur's Kamjong District

Villages Near Myanmar Border Attacked

Imphal, May 07: Fresh violence was reported from the border areas of Kamjong district in the early hours of Wednesday after suspected militants allegedly launched coordinated attacks on villages located near the Myanmar border.

According to sources, the attacks took place around 2 am at Namlee Market and Choro village in Kamjong district. The assault is suspected to have been carried out by the KNA-B using drones, raising fresh concerns over the use of advanced tactics in the conflict-hit hill regions of

Manipur. Sources said several houses were set on fire during the attack. However, no casualties had been officially confirmed at the time of filing this report.

Security agencies are reportedly monitoring the situation closely, while details regarding the extent of damage and the identities of those involved are still awaited. The latest incident comes amid continuing tensions in Manipur's sensitive border districts, where sporadic attacks and armed clashes have repeatedly been reported over the past several months.

Arunachal Pradesh Govt Hikes DA, DR to 60% of Basic Pay for Employees and Pensioners from January 2026



Itanagar, May 07: In a significant move aimed at supporting its workforce and retired personnel, the Government of Arunachal Pradesh has officially announced a 2% increase in Dearness Allowance (DA) for active employees and

Dearness Relief (DR) for pensioners. This revision raises the current rate from 58% to 60% of the basic pay or pension. Approved under the leadership of Chief Minister Pema Khandu, the decision aligns with the Central Government's

recent adjustments for its own employees, following office memoranda issued in late April 2026. The hike is being implemented with retrospective effect from January 1, 2026, ensuring that beneficiaries receive the benefits covering the be-

ginning of the year. Beneficiaries and Implementation: The enhancement is broad in its reach, covering several categories of personnel: Regular State Government Employees: All full-time staff under the state administration. All India Service (AIS) Officers: Personnel serving within the Arunachal Pradesh cadre. Deputationists: Central Government employees currently posted to the state. Pensioners & Family Pensioners: All retired individuals and their eligible family members. Financial Impact and Logistics: According to official state data, the revision will impact a total of 109,725 individuals, comprising 69,248 regular employees and 40,477 pensioners. To facilitate this, the state has outlined a clear financial roadmap: Category Annual Estimated Cost Dearness Allowance (DA) Rs 83.31 Crore Dearness Relief (DR) Rs 17.24 Crore Total Annual Implication Rs 100.54 Crore Including the Rs 33.51 crore required for arrears (the back-pay for January through April 2026), the total financial commitment for the state stands at approximately Rs 117.30 crore. Starting from May 2026, the revised rates will be

integrated into regular monthly salaries and pension disbursements. The arrears for the first four months of the year will be paid out in cash. A Call for Dedicated Service: Chief Minister Khandu congratulated the state's workforce on the hike, emphasizing that the financial adjustment is a recognition of their service.

He urged employees to maintain their commitment to the state's development, specifically highlighting the goal of "Antyodaya"—ensuring that government schemes and benefits effectively reach the last person in the queue.

Arrangements for swearing-in ceremony of new Assam govt reviewed

Guwahati, May 07: Assam Chief Secretary Dr Ravi Kota has chaired a comprehensive review meeting with the DGP, Assam to assess preparedness for the forthcoming visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to attend the swearing-in ceremony of the newly elected Council of Ministers.

The ceremony is scheduled to be held on May 12 at the Veterinary Field, Khanapara, and is likely to be attended by the Chief Ministers and Deputy Chief Ministers from several States, Union Ministers, and other dignitaries.

"Reviewed in detail the arrangements relating to security, traffic management, venue readiness, protocol, and inter-departmental coordination. Emphasised the need for seamless execution, strict adherence to established protocols, and close coordination among all stakeholders," the Chief Secretary said. He directed all concerned departments to maintain the highest level of preparedness to ensure that the ceremony is conducted smoothly, securely, and in a manner befitting the significance of the occasion.

Arunachal deputy CM attends workshop on Buddhist tourism circuit in NE

Itanagar, May 07: Arunachal Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein has attended the inaugural session of the Regional Workshop on Development of the Buddhist Tourism Circuit in North-east India at Tawang.

Speaking on the occasion, he pitched for developing an integrated tourism circuit linking key Buddhist destinations in the north-eastern states for a seamless spiritual and cultural experience for visitors.

He said that the collaborative effort by roping in neighbouring states and countries should be branded 'Tawang Initiative' to give it a distinct global identity.

Calling for a 'professional and collaborative' ap-

proach to the development of tourism, Mein said the proposed circuit should link key Buddhist destinations in the region.

Participants from Nepal, Bhutan, and Sri Lanka also attended the workshop to strengthen regional cooperation and build a vibrant Buddhist tourism circuit rooted in shared heritage and spiritual connections.

"I sincerely appreciate Prof. Ms. Veena Sikri ji, Founding Trustee and Convener of the South Asia Women's Network, and her associates for their initiative in organising this important workshop. Their continued efforts in fostering regional dialogue and collaboration are truly commendable," he said. Arunachal Pradesh holds

a unique place in the Buddhist world. From the ancient monasteries of Tawang, the birthplace of the Sixth Dalai Lama, to the sacred landscapes of Bomdila, Dirang, Mechuka, and Tuting in the west, and the thriving Theravada tradition in Namsai in the east, our State reflects the diversity and depth of Buddhist culture.

"We are committed to developing a comprehensive Buddhist circuit that connects these spiritual centres with major destinations across Northeast, mainland India and neighbouring countries.

This effort will not only promote tourism but also preserve our rich cultural and spiritual legacy," Mein added.

Governor's Unit Citation 2026 Presented to Security Forces in Manipur

Imphal, May 07: Ajay Kumar Bhalla on Wednesday attended the Investiture Ceremony for the Governor's Unit Citation 2026 held at the Manipur State Film Development Society in Imphal, where outstanding units of the armed and police forces were honoured for their exemplary service in the State.

During the ceremony, the Governor presented Governor's Citations to units of the Army, Assam Rifles, CRPF, BSF, BTRF, and Manipur District Police in recognition of their contributions towards maintaining peace and stability in the State.

Among those present at the event were Yumnam Khemchand Singh, Deputy Chief Minister Losii Dikho, and Ministers Konhoujam Govindas Singh and Khuraijam Loken Singh.

The recipients of the Governor's Unit Citation 2026 included 19 Garhwal Rifles, 17 Assam Rifles, 38 Assam Rifles, 40 Assam Rifles, 2 Mahar Regiment, 25 BTRF, Kakching District Police, Senapati District Police, Churachandpur District Police, 10 BSF, and 143

CRPF.

Addressing the gathering, Governor Bhalla described the occasion as a moment of reflection, gratitude, and recognition rather than merely a ceremonial event. He praised the dedication, courage, and exemplary service of the armed forces and security personnel who have continued to work under difficult circumstances to uphold peace and stability in Manipur.

Referring to the challenges faced by the State in recent years, the Governor said the security forces acted as pillars of strength while maintaining law and order and restoring a sense of security among the people.

He also acknowledged the sacrifices made by the families of security personnel, stating that their support remains integral to the service of the forces. Emphasising the significance of the Governor's Unit Citation, he said the award recognises collective excellence, discipline, teamwork, and commitment to duty.

The Governor further stressed that the true strength of security forces lies in the restrained

and judicious use of force, adding that their conduct has helped strengthen public confidence and restore normalcy in the State. He also highlighted the importance of continued coordination between security agencies and the civil administration.

Speaking on the occasion, Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh commended both Central and State security forces for their humanitarian efforts and their role in saving lives across communities. He acknowledged the crucial contribution of the forces in maintaining law and order and restoring peace in Manipur.

The Chief Minister also appealed for public support and cooperation to strengthen harmony and bonding among different communities in the State.

The ceremony was attended by Members of Parliament, MLAs, and senior civil, military, and police officials, and concluded with a reaffirmation of the commitment of all stakeholders towards maintaining peace and supporting the continued development of Manipur.

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The Decline of Neighbourhood Culture

Neighbourhoods were once spaces of close social interaction and mutual support. People knew their neighbours, shared community ties, and participated in local activities. Today, fast-paced urban lifestyles and digital engagement have weakened these connections. Many individuals live in the same buildings or localities without meaningful interaction. The decline of neighbourhood culture contributes to isolation and reduces the sense of collective responsibility within communities. Rebuilding local connections requires community initiatives, shared spaces, and greater social participation. Strong neighbourhoods create stronger societies.

Rethinking Rooppur in the Solar Age

Last week, uranium fuel loading began at the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant in Pabna, a moment Bangladesh’s scientists and engineers have awaited since plan to build a nuclear power plant was first conceived in 1961. According to Prothom Alo, this milestone makes Bangladesh the 33rd country in the world to operate nuclear power and the third in South Asia after India and Pakistan. The achievement is real and deserves acknowledgment. Yet as the nation celebrates entry into this exclusive club, a harder question demands an answer: how did Bangladesh arrive at a point where a \$12.65 billion debt-financed reactor became the primary answer to its energy crisis, when solar energy could be significantly more affordable? The Rooppur plant, built by Russia’s Rosatom, will eventually generate 2,400 megawatts across two units and is expected to meet around 10 percent of Bangladesh’s electricity demand. The Daily Star reports that initial grid supply of around 300 MW is anticipated by late July or early August this year, with full capacity reached gradually over the next two years. Considering Bangladesh’s chronic electricity deficit and high annual demand growth, this energy development is truly significant. But the financial architecture of Rooppur should propel every Bangladeshi to pause and think for a moment. Russia extended \$11.38 billion in export credit for the Rooppur project. As the taka depreciates against the dollar, Prothom Alo reports that actual expenditures have risen by Tk 260 billion above contractual amounts, with total outlays now approaching Tk 1.39 trillion. Debt service on a foreign-currency obligation of this scale, especially for a country already burdened with LNG import costs and coal procurement payments, is energy bondage with a long amortisation schedule. Compounding the fiscal concern, Bangladesh’s Anti-Corruption Commission has initiated a formal investigation into allegations of financial irregularities in Rooppur’s procurement process. The full scope of those allegations remains under active investigation, and the public deserves a transparent accounting before the debt repayments that will burden the national budget for the next two decades are simply accepted as the cost of doing business. These grievances would have been more tolerable had Bangladesh simultaneously invested in domestic renewable energy. Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA) reports that Bangladesh installed only 245 MW of rooftop solar capacity in the entire 17-year period from June 2008 to June 2025. For a tropical nation receiving 4-5 kilowatt-hours of solar irradiance per square metre daily, this figure is indefensible. The Financial Express reports that within Dhaka alone, approximately 375 MW of installed rooftop solar sits almost entirely idle because no functioning net metering system exists and no government plan integrates this capacity into the distribution grid. Bangladesh mandated solar panels on new buildings in 2012 and then never built the regulatory infrastructure to use the power those panels generate. The argument that solar is unreliable or insufficient does not survive scrutiny. Germany, at 51 degrees north latitude, receives a fraction of Bangladesh’s sunshine but has an impressive solar capacity. Vietnam deployed more than 20 gigawatts in five years through decisive feed-in tariff policy. Morocco now exports solar electricity to Europe. However, despite strong sunlight, Bangladesh has produced only a bit over 1 GW of solar power after 20 years of policy efforts. The reason is not entirely technical but political too. Importing LNG generates lucrative procurement contracts. Importing nuclear technology and fuel generates commissions accessible to politically connected intermediaries. Domestic solar, by contrast, is decentralised, transparent, and difficult to extract rent from. The sun does not require a middleman. This structural misalignment between the public interest and the interests of energy procurement syndicates has cost Bangladesh dearly—in foreign exchange, debt accumulation, and in the foregone clean energy that could have powered millions of homes at zero recurring fuel cost. A \$5 billion investment in distributed rooftop solar and utility-scale ground arrays, less than half the Rooppur debt, could have delivered 5,000 to 8,000 MW of domestic capacity with no fuel import cost, no foreign-currency loan, and no geopolitical dependency. According to IEEFA, Bangladesh now needs to deploy approximately 760 MW of new renewable energy annually between 2026 and 2030 just to achieve its modest goal of 20 percent renewables by that date. The FY2025-26 national budget allocates no specific incentives to the renewable energy sector. The gap between stated targets and budgetary commitment is itself an indictment. Rooppur will generate electricity we need. But Bangladesh must understand that a single \$12.65 billion nuclear plant—financed by a geopolitical creditor, repayable in foreign currency over 20 years, vulnerable to sanction disruption—is not an energy strategy. It is a monument to the failure to develop what was free, domestic, and abundant.

West Bengal’s political transition and its effects on the region

BJP’s victory in the West Bengal assembly elections has been widely described as a tectonic shift—only the second change in power in the state in the last 50 years. Both transitions are significant: the first ended 34 years of rule by the socialist Left Front, while the second has now replaced the centrist Trinamool Congress (TMC) with the right-wing BJP, a party rooted in Hindutva politics. Although broadly secular forces governed West Bengal after India’s independence, the state was also home to the early seeds of Hindutva-based politics. BJP’s ideological forebear, Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, who was associated with the Hindu Mahasabha and Jana Sangh, hailed from West Bengal. It is, therefore, unsurprising that BJP’s state leadership marked its victory by paying homage to him, underscoring the symbolic significance of this political shift. According to data from the Election Commission of India, the BJP secured 45.84 percent of the vote, improving upon its roughly 40 percent share in the previous three elections, while the TMC’s vote share declined to 40.80 percent. Muslims constitute about 27 percent of the state’s population, and nearly one-third of constituencies have substantial Muslim electorates. In 2021, the TMC won 84 out of 88 Muslim-majority seats, reflecting strong consolidation behind Mamata Banerjee. While early indications suggest that the TMC retained considerable Muslim support in this election, minor inroads by smaller Islamic groups were noted in some areas. The BJP, meanwhile, appears to have offset this through broader Hindu consolidation, aided by its electoral strategy. A high voter turnout—reported to be more than 92 percent—further reflected the intensity of the contest. Ironically, Mamata Banerjee herself had earlier facilitated the



BJP’s entry into the state’s political landscape through an alliance during the Atal Bihari Vajpayee era, a partnership that has now come full circle. The deletion of around 2.7 million voters under the controversial Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls added another layer of complexity. While its precise impact on the outcome remains debated, preliminary analyses suggest that in at least 49 constituencies, including Banerjee’s own, the margin of defeat was smaller than the number of removed voters. Nonetheless, incumbency fatigue, allegations of corruption, and concerns over law and order, particularly involving alleged party-linked elements, contributed to public discontent. BJP’s promise to expand social protection programmes with a larger financial outlay also resonated with sections of the electorate. Above all, the party’s rhetoric of change appears to have found a receptive audience. Critics argue that the SIR disproportionately affected poorer

and minority voters, especially Muslims and migrant communities in border districts. Yet, the scale of BJP’s rise cannot be attributed to this factor alone. For many observers, it represents the delayed political consolidation of a legacy long associated with Shyama Prasad Mukherjee. Notably, his opposition to Article 370 and subsequent death in detention in 1953 in Jammu and Kashmir has acquired renewed political symbolism, especially after the provision’s abrogation in 2019. Celebrating the victory, India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi emphasised that it was “a time for change, not revenge.” His campaign centred on transformation, though a dominant theme was the issue of so-called “infiltration,” portrayed as a root cause of problems such as unemployment, crime, cross-border smuggling, and security threats. These concerns were frequently linked to migration across the eastern border with Bangladesh. BJP has pledged to curb such “infiltration” and expel those it

identifies as “illegal migrants.” One of the key policies of the BJP government on this issue is to grant citizenship to those who belong to all other faiths except Islam, and Bangla-speaking Muslims are the most vulnerable to possible deportation, as there have been several reports of such deportation of Indian nationals to Bangladesh in recent times. The controversial SIR that dropped 2.7 million people from the voter rolls means they are now feared to lose citizenship and face risks of being deported. A logical question arises: to where will they be sent? Given the recent admission by BJP’s Himanta Biswa Sarma, chief minister of Assam, another northeastern state in India, that he pushes Bangla-speaking Muslims into Bangladesh under the nighttime darkness, there is every reason to fear a repetition of similar tactics by another state run by his party. If any such coordinated operation is mounted from three surrounding BJP-run states (the third being Tripura), then Bangladesh will face a serious humani-

tarian crisis. Sarma’s statement last month warranted the summoning of the acting high commissioner of India at the foreign ministry in Dhaka to express its displeasure and concerns. It was the first occasion of an unpleasant diplomatic development since a newly elected BNP government led by Prime Minister Tarique Rahman took office. Delhi, it may be recalled, welcomed his election, expressing hopes of a reset in strained relations. Dhaka-Delhi bilateral relations dipped to a low level following the ouster of Sheikh Hasina as the interim government led by Prof Muhammad Yunus sought her repatriation, and reciprocal visa bans adversely impacted trade, road, and rail transportation as well as jointly undertaken projects. For decades, Kolkata has been portrayed as a centre of intellectual and cultural progressivism in the subcontinent. BJP’s sweeping victory challenges that perception, suggesting a shift in the state’s political and cultural identity. Mamata Banerjee’s efforts to promote a distinct Bangalee identity—symbolised by slogans like “Joy Bangla”—appear, in this context, to have produced unintended consequences. Dhaka has largely refrained from publicly commenting on the rise of religion-based politics in India, even as Indian discourse often frames Islamist politics in Bangladesh as a security concern. However, the growing prominence of religious polarisation in the region risks fuelling reciprocal dynamics across borders. With unresolved bilateral issues, including water sharing, border management, and trade imbalances, such developments could complicate efforts to maintain regional stability. The hope remains that political leadership on both sides will act with restraint and foresight to preserve harmony in the region.

Nigel Farage might become the face of the UK’s precarious union as a result of Labour’s national collapse

Keir Starmer has neither a heartland nor a stronghold. That is the picture likely to emerge once all the votes in this week’s local and devolved elections have been counted. Council seats in Labour’s traditional northern-English working-class base will fall to Reform UK. Parts of inner London, where the electoral map has been red for decades, will go Green. The Scottish National party will still be the biggest party at Holyrood, thwarting Labour’s hopes of ending its banishment from power there. If opinion polls are not mistaken and Plaid Cymru becomes the largest party in the Senedd, it will bring an epic run of Labour dominance in Welsh politics to an end. The party hasn’t been in opposition since the formation of a devolved assembly in 1999. And that record reflects a cultural primacy dating back a lot further. Northern Ireland and Scotland already have first ministers whose parties are opposed to union with England. Wales will join that number if Plaid’s nationalist leader, Rhun ap Iorwerth, forms the next government at Cardiff Bay. That wouldn’t sound a death knell for the UK, but it would be a symbolic fracture. Downing Street will look ridiculous trying to pretend that such results are an expression of normal midterm turbulence. Even in the best-case scenarios available to Labour from current polling, Starmer will look like the caretaker leader of a party that struggles to say who its core voters are or where they might live. (Manchester, maybe.)



The Conservatives are not faring much better. Their electoral base has been partitioned along a Brexit faultline. Reform appeals to angry, disillusioned leave voters. The Liberal Democrats are consolidating their hold over the remainder belt in what used to be true-blue Tory suburbs and shires. The two-party duopoly that defined British political competition in the 20th century has broken down everywhere, except the Palace of Westminster. Labour and the Tories are still the big beasts in the chamber where laws are made and ministers are held to account, but that constitutional primacy looks like a relic from another era. Zack Polanski, leader of the Greens, is not an MP. Reform’s Nigel Farage notionally represents Clacton in the Commons, but his time and energy are mostly spent elsewhere. In that respect, England is following trends that are well established in the devolved nations. Labour’s first “red wall” to fall, years before that metaphor was applied to Boris Johnson’s post-Brexit march through

the Midlands and northern England, was in Scotland. It was demolished by the SNP. Some of that terrain was recovered in Starmer’s landslide 2024 general election win. That only makes it more galling for Scottish Labour to be facing another term of opposition in Edinburgh; to see the SNP, weighed down by failures and scandals accrued over many years in office, somehow defy political gravity. It helps the SNP to have a bedrock of supporters for whom independence is a cause to trump all others. It helps even more that the pro-union vote is fragmented and that the Westminster government is hated. Anas Sarwar, Labour’s leader in Scotland, has repudiated Starmer but the national brand is still an albatross round the Scottish party’s neck. Eluned Morgan, Wales’s first minister, has the same problem compounded by double incumbency. Under Tory prime ministers, blame for whatever went wrong in Wales could be deflected on to wicked Tory rule in Westminster.

Starmer’s arrival in Downing Street withdrew that device. Change was promised and not delivered. For Welsh voters of a leftist disposition who are fed up waiting, Plaid Cymru offers a multi-use electoral tool: try something new; punish Labour; prolong Tory exile; block the forces of Faragism. That confluence of motives doesn’t amount to a surge in demand for independence and Plaid’s leadership know it. The prospect of ending union with England is buried in the manifesto as part of an “ongoing national conversation about the options” on the future, with a vague commitment to a white paper that might one day raise the constitutional question that used to be the party’s defining purpose. But a Welsh nationalist government could still effect the kind of systemic drift that has made Scottish politics feel increasingly remote from the rest of the UK, without drastic alteration to the constitution. Plaid, like the SNP, will be able to govern from a stance of perpetual opposition. They can frame every

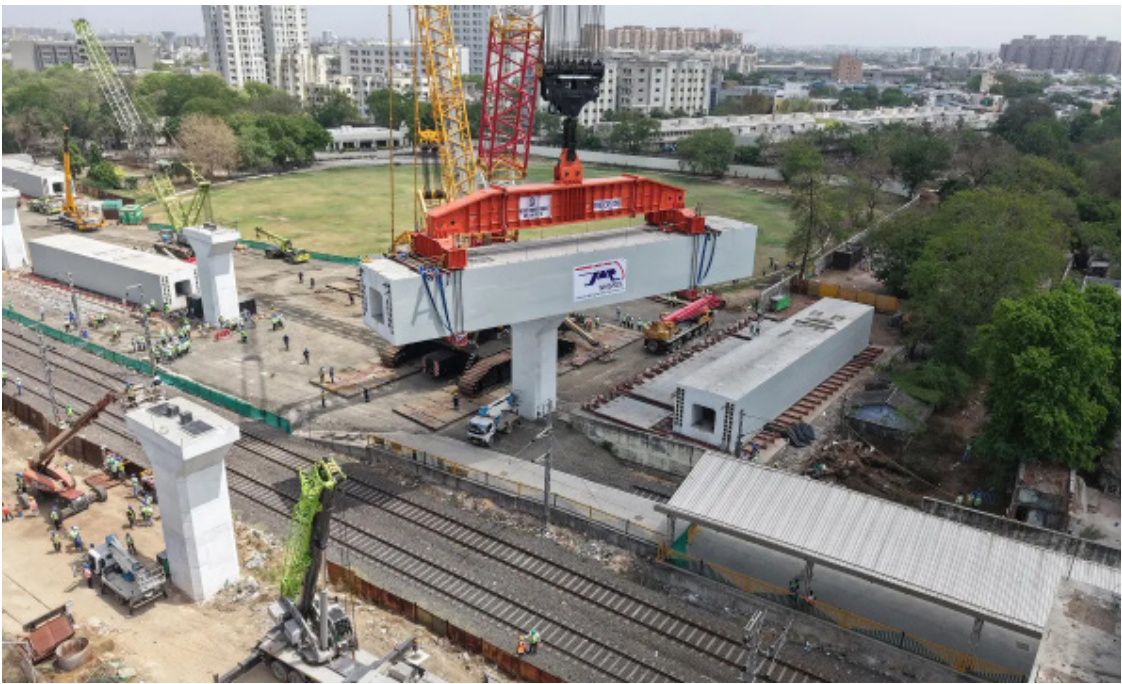
UK-wide debate as a question of who can be trusted to stand up for Wales without conflicting allegiance. The lesson from Scotland is that opposition leaders, operating in the shadow of English parent parties, find it very hard to wrestle control of the agenda back once it is set in those terms. The challenge could be even greater if Farage becomes the standard bearer for unionism. His party is poised to come second in Wales and might do the same in Scotland. Reform’s Scottish and Welsh supporters mostly care about the same issues that have driven the party’s growth in England – immigration, economic insecurity, general antipathy towards Westminster politics. Constitutional structures are not much on their radar. That won’t necessarily prevent the union question getting sucked into a feedback loop of polarisation and mutual radicalisation. Not if Faragism sets the tone of resistance to Welsh and Scottish independence movements. Reform’s anglocentric, Brexit-coded, racially inflected mode of British nationalism is a pungent brew that could give undecided, moderate voters in the devolved nations a taste for rupture from England. A sharpening of pro-independence demands will then animate the resentful streak in English nationalism that sees the existing constitutional setup as a scam, siphoning resources from an enterprising motherland to ungrateful Celtic dependants. There is a precedent for these dynamics in the breakup of another asymmetrically weighted, multinational state. The collapse

of the USSR started with secession demands on the periphery, but it became inevitable once Russia itself – rallying to Soviet Russia’s ambitious national president, Boris Yeltsin – moved for dissolution of the union. The comparison is flawed in countless ways. The UK is not an authoritarian, one-party communist regime with hardline generals plotting to resist liberal reform. Our traditions of pluralism and democracy have deep roots. The economy is troubled but not in anything like the condition of abject failure that made the Soviet system unviable. Any likeness in the two cases is a matter of historical rhyme, not analytical rigour. Continuing for a moment in that spirit, it is possible to glimpse in Starmer a hint of Mikhail Gorbachev – the reforming apparatchik who underestimated the scale of the challenge before him, lost control of centrifugal forces and ended up stranded as leader of a country that didn’t exist any more. Meanwhile, back in the realm of evidence, the votes have not even been cast in this Thursday’s ballots. The vagaries of the different electoral systems in play make a wide spectrum of outcomes available. But a safe prediction is that the map of British politics, shaded by party representation, will be a more Technicolor mosaic after these polls than it is now. There will still be patches of red, but it will be hard to make a coherent pattern of them. Britain will still have a Labour government with a huge majority in parliament. But Starmer will lead a party with no place to call home.

Bullet Train milestone: NHRCL installs 5 massive beams over active tracks

Mumbai: Here is the latest on the Bullet train project – the NHRCL indicated that it has entered the final readiness phase and achieved a significant engineering milestone. Five heavy portal beams have been installed over active Indian Railways tracks in Maninagar, Ahmedabad. This is part of the Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail project, and the entire operation was completed in 22 days, the National High Speed Rail Corporation (NHSRCL) announced.

As per the company’s statement, the beams were launched sequentially on April 8, 13, 19, 24, and 29, 2026. The heaviest, placed on April 8, weighed approximately 1,360 MT, making it one of the heaviest lifts ever carried out over operational railway lines in India. The remaining four beams ranged between 1,170 MT and 1,360 MT each. The site at Maninagar presents particular engineering constraints. The bullet train alignment crosses the existing Ahmedabad-Vadodara corridor, which carries up, down, and third lines, at an elevated, skewed angle, with a span of roughly 30 to 34 metres between piers. Portal beams were chosen for their rigidity and load-bearing capacity, which min-



imises deflection and helps maintain track geometry over a heavily trafficked route, NHRCL said in a statement. Each beam measures 34 metres in length with a 5.5 by 4.5 metre cross-section, precast at the site before being lifted into position. Collectively, the five beams represent one of the most substantial structural operations undertaken on

railway infrastructure in India, as per NHRCL. The primary equipment used was a 2,200 MT crawler crane, deployed over Indian railway tracks for the first time in the country. Each lift was completed in approximately 3.5 hours, down from the nine-hour traffic blocks that had been the earlier benchmark. The operation was conducted in close

coordination with Indian Railways, with continuous monitoring throughout. Overhead electrification lines and the confined working space added to the complexity of each launch. The Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail corridor is India’s first bullet train project, covering approximately 508 kilometres between the two cities.

NSE introduces electronic gold receipts New way to buy

Mumbai: Gold investors in India have a new investment option called Electronic Gold Receipts (EGRs), complementing existing methods such as purchasing physical jewellery, gold coins, and investing in gold exchange-traded funds (Gold ETFs). The National Stock Exchange of India (NSE) has announced the launch of Electronic Gold Receipts (EGRs), tradable on its EGR segment, like stocks and bonds, and backed by physical gold, which can be redeemed at any time. What Is an Electronic Gold Receipt?

Simply put, an EGR is a digital proof of gold ownership. With the introduction of NSE’s EGR platform, the Gold Exchange, which SEBI first announced in 2022, has finally seen the light of day. The Gold Exchange is a national platform for buying and selling Electronic Gold Receipt (EGR) in India. The stock exchanges can either set up a new stock exchange for the trading of EGR or launch EGR in the existing exchange infrastructure, but in a separate segment. On the NSE, Electronic Gold Receipts will be traded on the EGR Segment. What’s New for Investors

As a holder of an Electronic Gold Receipt, the investor will participate in gold ownership. The gold is safely stored in a vault, your ownership is recorded in your demat account, and you can convert it to physical gold at the time of redemption. On the EGR Segment of NSE, there are two purity options: ‘EGR – 999 Purity’ and ‘EGR – 995 Purity’. One can start small —



denominations range from 100 milligrams to 1 KG for both options, making it accessible to a wide range of investors. Technically, EGR is an electronic receipt issued by the Vault Manager against the gold deposited with them. Each of the EGRs is backed by physical gold, which is stored with the Vault Managers.

It is entirely the buyer’s choice whether to take physical delivery of gold or not. The buyer can continue to hold the EGR in a demat account for further trading or take physical delivery of gold from the Vault Manager. Note that the Vault Manager can levy charges for the withdrawal of gold. EGRs are traded on NSE’s dedicated EGR segment from Monday to Friday, between 9:00 a.m. and 11:30 p.m. The extended trading window allows Indian investors to take advantage of international market movements. Settlement on NSE’s EGR segment occurs on a T+1 basis, meaning transactions are finalised the next working day.

SkinKraft maker IncNut Digital for Rs 321 crore



New Delhi: Emami has acquired a majority stake in the beauty and wellness startup IncNut Digital. In an exchange disclosure, Emami said that it has acquired a 60 percent stake in the parent company of beauty and wellness brands Vedix and SkinKraft. The company said that the transaction is valued at Rs 321 crore, including performance-linked adjustments over a 24-month period. The company added that it would acquire the remaining stake in IncNut Digital within the next 4.5 years, in two tranches, from the current closing, at a consideration to be determined in accordance with the agreed matrix based on future performance. IncNut Digital brand portfolio

IncNut Digital is a Hyderabad-based company founded in 2011 that specializes in personalized beauty, wellness, and parenting content and products. The company offers customized D2C products through its two brands, Vedix and

SkinKraft. Emami is investing heavily in the acquisition of new-age companies as it gears up for the next phase of expansion. The company is chasing startups that have made a name for themselves through unorthodox strategies and products. The company has already acquired men’s grooming startup The Man Company and part stakes in pet care brand Fur Ball Story and nutrition company Tru Native. “Vedix and SkinKraft will strengthen our Beauty and Personal Care portfolio by adding personalised, science-led offerings across Ayurveda and dermatology. Alongside The Man Company and Brillare, this acquisition strengthens our presence across high-growth BPC segments, aligns with our strategy of building a future-ready, consumer-centric portfolio, and positions us to capture the next phase of consumer demand.” Harsha Vardhan Agarwal, Vice Chairman & MD of Emami said in a statement.

The share price of Credit Access Grameen rises 10% despite market downturn

Mumbai: CreditAccess Grameen share price today: Shares of microfinance company CreditAccess Grameen defied weak market trends today, rallying more than 10 per cent in trade on heavy volumes. The smallcap stock opened on a positive note at ₹1,332.90 on the National Stock Exchange (NSE), extending its gains for the sixth consecutive session. The counter hit an intraday high of ₹1,463.80. As of 12:30 PM, CreditAccess Grameen shares were up 9.3 per cent at ₹1,446. A total of 2.5 million shares of the microfinance firm changed hands, significantly higher than the previous session’s total traded quantity of just 0.16 million.

In comparison, the benchmark Nifty 50 index was down 0.66 per cent. On the BSE, the counter was trading 10 per cent northward at ₹1,450 with spurt in volume by more than 13.09 times. CreditAccess Grameen shares have outperformed the broader market over the past year. According to NSE data, the stock has gained 15 per cent so far in 2026, compared with a 4.8 per cent decline in the Nifty index. In one year, the scrip

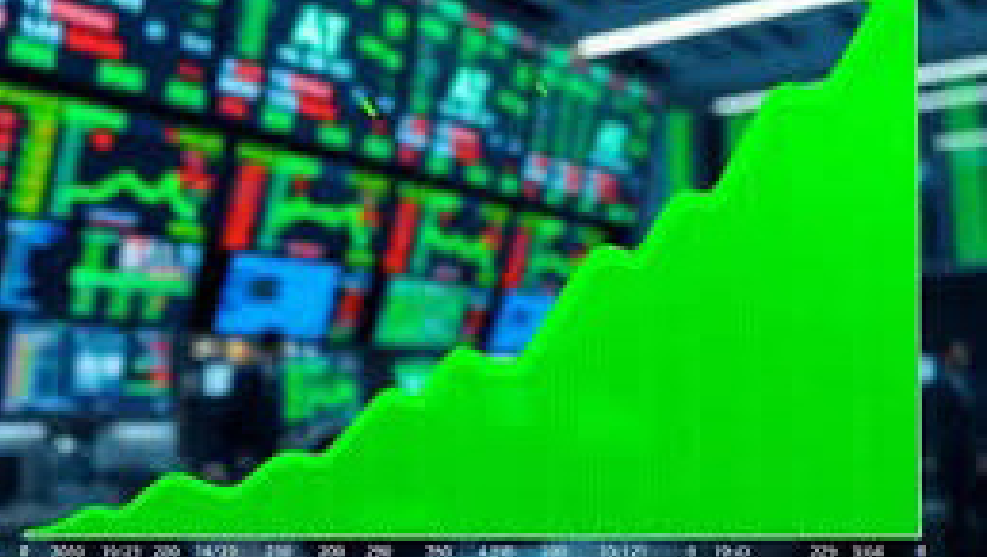


has surged 24 per cent, while the benchmark index has advanced 2.5 per cent. Commenting on today’s price action, Harish Jujarey, AVP head - technical equity research, Prithvi Finmart, said that the stock has shown a solid recovery from its March lows around ₹1,113. It recently crossed its 200-day moving average near ₹1,300 and

is now holding firm around the ₹1,450 mark, indicating improving momentum. An inverted Head and shoulder pattern was formed on daily charts of which the target comes near ₹1,470 levels, the analyst said. The previous multiple tops are seen near ₹1,490 levels indicating some profit booking near ₹1,470-₹1,490 zone.

“A decisive breakout above ₹1,490 would be fresh break out for further rally towards the ₹1,550 -₹1,580 zone,” he added. CreditAccess Grameen Q4 results date Meanwhile, CreditAccess Grameen has informed exchanges that a meeting of the board of directors is scheduled on May 8 (Friday) to consider and approve the results for the quarter and financial year ended March 31, 2026. While sharing the Q4FY26 business update last month, CreditAccess Grameen had said that its gross loan portfolio (GLP) stood at ₹29,590 crore, up 14 per cent from ₹25,948 crore in the year-ago quarter. In the December 2025 quarter (Q3FY26), the company reported GLP of ₹26,566 crore. Disbursements in the March quarter were at ₹8,313 crore, up 28 per cent Y-o-Y. The total disbursements for FY26 increased 24 per cent Y-o-Y to ₹24,860 crore, according to the company. CreditAccess Grameen is a microfinance institution headquartered in Bengaluru, focused on providing micro-loans to women customers, mainly in rural areas. The company operates across 450 districts in 16 states.

Sensex and Nifty forecast Expect tions for stock market strategy



Mumbai: Sensex, Nifty: Domestic equity benchmarks ended the holiday-shortened week on a positive note with BSE Sensex and NSE Nifty edging up 0.32% and 0.41%, respectively. On Thursday, the 30-pack index closed at 76,913.50, and the 50-pack index settled at 23,997.55.

Both declined about 0.7% in the last session to end in the red. Nifty futures on the NSE International Exchange were up 82.5 points, or 0.34%, to trade at 24,229.5, hinting at positive opening on Monday, May 4. On the home front, the immediate catalyst would be the outcome of key state elections, with investors watching to see if the Centre’s ruling party,

BJP, can capture West Bengal and make in-

roads into Kerala and Tamil Nadu, said Hariprasad K, SEBI-registered research analyst and founder, Livelong Wealth. “Persistent FII outflows, mixed earnings trends, and currency weakness continued to weigh on sentiment,” said Ajit Mishra – SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd. “Additionally, India’s FY26 trade deficit widened on an annual basis, although the March deficit narrowed to \$20.67 billion, offering partial relief,” Mishra said, adding “on the domestic front, the Q4 FY26 earnings season will gather pace, with several key companies across sectors scheduled to report results.” Globally, the prolonged disruptions over the Strait of Hormuz continue to inject volatility into the markets, with Brent crude continuing

to surge and the UAE’s exit from OPEC and escalating US-Iran tensions, analysts say. Sensex: “Sensex is currently trading within the 76,900–77,200 range, reflecting a range-bound movement with a cautious undertone amid ongoing market volatility,” Ponnudi said. He placed immediate resistance for the 30-share pack in the 77,500–78,000 band, while the 76,300–76,000 range is expected to serve as immediate support. Strategy Mishra advised, “With global uncertainties persisting and domestic cues remaining mixed, investors should maintain a cautious and selective approach.”

“Pharma and healthcare appear promising after an extended corrective phase. Additionally, metals and energy remain on the radar, along with themes such as capital markets and select CPSE stocks,” Mishra added. While, Ponnudi suggested, “Traders should remain agile, avoid aggressive leverage, and adhere to disciplined risk management practices.

“Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) remained net sellers throughout the week, extending the selling trend seen in recent months. Cumulative FII outflows for April have crossed Rs 70,100 crore,” said Ponnudi R, CEO - Enrich MoneyKey levels to watch Nifty: Outlining the index’s behaviour, Mishra noted,

“From a technical standpoint, the 24,000 level continues to act as a magnetic zone, with price consolidating around this region in line with options data.” Analysts widely agree that the index is operating within a range of 23,800 to 24,300. “On the upside, the 24,400–24,800 zone is expected to act as a strong resistance band,” Mishra noted.

NFRA issues stringent rules for Big Four firms; auditor



Mumbai: The National Financial Reporting Authority (NFRA) has come out with “stringent” norms that’s going to force top firms to fix gaps in their audit practice within a specified period. According to the new norms issued by the NFRA, audit firms are mandated to submit a plan within 90 days to fix lapses as flagged by the regulator in its annual inspection reports on these firms. This is a major shift in NFRA’s stance which, until recently, was asking the firms to take corrective steps basis its inspection reports but never called for a “remediation plan”. “Because the inspection reports have been largely dealt with adequate seriousness by the large audit firms,

I don’t merit in putting strict timelines for taking remedial actions. The 180-day

deadline is limited to demonstrate effective implementation of a plan,” said senior partner at another Big Four firm. The regulator has also asked the firms to comply with all the findings contained in the detailed inspection report within the timelines prescribed in the report or below 180 days from the issuance of the report. Comparing Global Standards A partner at Big Four firm told FE that these guidelines are far more stringent than the global norms. “NFRA’s counterpart in the US – PCAOB – gives a full one year to take corrective measures. While there’s no harm in being stringent, but these are initial years of inspection, and NFRA must provide flexibility to the firms while facilitating compliance. Once the ecosystem matures, strict guidelines can be introduced,” she said.

Trump claims that the pope's position on Iran is “endangering a lot of Catholics”

Europe: Pope Leo is “endangering a lot of Catholics” because “he thinks it’s fine for Iran to have a nuclear weapon,” according to Donald Trump’s latest rhetorical assault. The comments are made two days before US Secretary of State Marco Rubio to meet with Leo at the Vatican in an attempt to defuse the tension caused by Trump’s earlier criticism of the Chicago-born pope for denouncing the US-Israeli attack on Iran. Trump stated that the pope “would rather talk about the fact that it’s OK for Iran to have a nuclear weapon, and I don’t think that’s very good” in an interview with Hugh Hewitt, a well-known conservative radio talk show host on the US-based Salem News network. The president said, “I think he’s endangering a lot of Catholics and a lot of people.” “However, I suppose the pope believes that Iran’s possession of nuclear weapons is acceptable.”Leo has consistently called for ceasefires and talks in opposition to the attack on Iran and the ensuing intensification of the crisis in Lebanon and the larger Middle East, but he has never stated that Iran should possess nuclear weapons.The US ambassador to the Holy See, Brian Burch, stated on Tuesday that he anticipated a “frank” discussion



between Leo and Catholic Rubio in the Apostolic Palace on Thursday morning. “Nations have disagreements, and I think one of the ways that you work through those is ... through fraternity and authentic dialogue,” Burch told reporters, adding that he thought Rubio was coming to the Vatican “in that spirit, to have a frank conversation about US policy, to engage in dialogue”.Burch said he did not accept the idea that there was “some deep rift” between the US and the Vatican, saying that Rubio was coming so that each side could “better understand each other, and to work through, if there are differences, certainly to talk through that”.The trip, which coincides with the first anniversary of Leo’s papacy, was organised after Trump lashed out at the pope in April, calling

him weak and saying he was not doing a very good job as pontiff. Trump also shared an AI-generated image depicting himself as a Jesus-like figure, before deleting it and saying it had actually been a portrayal of him as a doctor. Rubio later denied his trip to the Vatican was designed to “smooth things over” between Pope Leo and Trump, and tried to downplay the rift.“It’s a trip we had planned from before, and obviously we had some stuff that happened and no, look, there’s a lot to talk about with the Vatican,” he said. The US secretary of state will also endeavour to patch things up with the Italian government after Trump berated its prime minister, Giorgia Meloni, previously one of his closest allies in Europe. She had criticised his remarks

against Leo, rebuking her government for not supporting the strikes on Iran and threatening to withdraw US troops from Italy as a result. Rubio will also meet the Vatican’s secretary of state, Pietro Parolin, before meeting Meloni and the Italian foreign minister, Antonio Tajani, on Friday morning. The US vice-president, JD Vance – a Catholic convert – has also criticised the pope, saying the Vatican should “stick to matters of morality” and that Leo should be careful when it came to talking about theology and war.Rubio and Vance attended the pope’s inauguration in May last year and had a private audience with him the day after, during which they handed him an invitation from Trump to the White House that Leo has not yet taken up.

The Essex campaign is a test of Reform UK’s professionalization apps, activists, and a “air war”



London: Halfway through his tour of Waltham Abbey, Nigel Farage heard the booming sound of a hunting horn on the pedestrianized high street of the Essex market town. “Oi oi!” cried Rob Chillingworth, the proprietor of Ouch Tattoos, setting down the instrument and extending a kind hand to the Reform UK leader who was approaching.This was the most recent stop on Farage’s weeklong tour of six Essex towns where over a million county council votes are up for grabs. One of Reform’s greatest accomplishments in Thursday’s votes would be moving from having a single councillor here to gaining power, barring developments in Wales and Scotland. While interactions like the one between Chillingworth and Farage show how supportive many people are of Reform, the Essex campaign also serves as a test of Reform’s self-described professionalization in terms of making sure the party receives more votes.The party’s new infrastructure and organization may help mobilize fervent core supporters in historically low-turnout polls and replicate a “blue ocean” approach of reaching out to new voters and those whom other parties may have given up on. Reform sees this round of elections as a showcase for a more modern, slick strategy that combines the energy of an army of activists with new technology and a methodical approach to handling voter data, which is being harvested with the next general election in mind. Farage-led predecessor parties like Ukip frequently faltered.This includes a “air war”—a word used to describe attempts to utilize advertisements to obtain media attention and coverage—involving mailshots, leafleting, and targeted Facebook advertising, with almost £100,000 spent on the latter in the previous 30 days, according to Meta’s Ad Library. For the first time in a

major election, the ReformGo app will aid thousands of the party’s activists as they knock on doors. While other established parties have long used their own versions to collect data on voters, Reform is only just catching up.“It’s a very comprehensive app and we can see week by week it’s improving, data refinement, ease of usability on it,” said one branch official in Essex. “People can see the doors they need to knock, list responses – anywhere from ‘I’m voting for you’ down to ‘go away’ or ‘I’d like a garden board please’.”Activists hope data gathered during the local elections will prove invaluable in shaping Reform’s campaign strategy for the next general election. “The capture of that voter intention data is going to help us going forward,” the branch official added. Other Reform targets such as Birmingham city council would represent significant wins on Thursday, but few places would be as politically emblematic as Essex, which until recently has been considered Tory heartlands.At a council level, a win would mark the capture of a local authority where the Conservatives have primarily been the party of power since the body’s foundation in 1974. Aside from controlling a council with a £1.2bn budget, it would give Reform another political foothold – allied to Farage’s Westminster seat in Clacton – in a part of the UK that had some of the highest votes for Brexit. Victory here would also lay the ground for a possible general election cull of Essex Tory frontbenchers including Priti Patel, James Cleverly, Alex Burghart and even Kemi Badenoch. In Reform’s gleaming new office in Millbank Tower, volunteers from around Britain are taking turns to staff phone banks. Their call list is informed by another app, ReformPro, which

is used by senior activists pounding the streets of Essex, Birmingham and northern towns and is more plugged into electoral register data.“We have to broaden our vote and the app is a big step towards doing that,” Farage said, pausing in Waltham Abbey after a visit to a pie and mash shop before a meeting that night with 80 local candidates.Reform has previously been compared to Italy’s Five Star Movement, a pioneer of digital, anti-establishment populism, but Farage has recently pointed to an unlikely source of campaign inspiration: the Liberal Democrats.“They’re really, really good at picking an area and saying ‘right, this is good for us,’ and then they’re very ruthless about their data, how they manage it, how they protect it,” Farage said. “It’s the Paddy Ashdown school of thought. When you win significant local representation, you build upon that and then target areas for the general election.” Gawain Towler, a Reform board member, said the party was learning from past mistakes. “If things are not working well then it’s getting picked up much faster. In a place I was in recently, the Labour letter was arriving two days late for postal voters. We used to make that error,” he said.But critics of the notion that Reform has professionalised point to the elephant in the room: the failures of the party’s vetting process. There has been a drip-feed of allegations of candidates making racist or offensive comments in the past.The latest batch of Reform candidates singled out by Hope Not Hate included one in Gateshead who had called for a “white Britain” and said Keir Starmer should be shot. “The amount we have found has astonished us,” said Joe Mulhall, the organisation’s director of research. “Despite what they say about their professionalisation, clearly they continue to have a systematic problem.”Reform may know more about which voters to target, but gaps remain once they get to the doorstep. Candidates are able to answer questions about immigration policy but are less up to speed on health policy, not helped by the lack of a frontbench spokesperson on the topic.“They’ve beefed up their press team and are good at making a splash,” said a spin doctor from a rival party. “But when it comes to, for example, negative stories about their candidates, it’s not clear what they are doing. Sometimes they seem to want to rebut allegations. At other times they only eventually get there, or try to pretend it’s not happening.”

How conflict returned as a result of Trump’s effort to reopen the Strait of Hormuz

Iran: Greetings for the morning. The Middle East is once again plagued by uncertainty. After Donald Trump started a program known as “Project Freedom” to assist thousands of sailors trapped in the Gulf due to the conflict in crossing the Strait of Hormuz, the tense ceasefire between the US and Iran threatened to fall apart.The announcement was viewed as a cynical provocation by Iran. Fighting broke out again as Iran tried to hold onto the vital route out of the area.Overnight, however, the US president announced on social media that his initiative had been “paused for a short period of time” to see if a deal with Iran could be reached, but he also stated that the port blockade would still be in effect. For today’s First Edition, I spoke with Julian Borger, the Guardian’s senior international correspondent, about Trump’s strategy and the likelihood of a return to war. But first, this morning’s headlines. Five big stories UK politics | Zack Polanski falsely claimed to be a spokesperson for the British Red Cross while campaigning for the Green party leadership, the charity has said.Fuel shortages| Two million airline seats have been cut from this month’s schedules as airlines redraw their operations because of soaring jet fuel prices amid the Middle East conflict.UK news| A British crew member who became ill after a suspected outbreak of hantavirus on luxury cruise ship the MV Hondius is to be medically evacuated, officials have said.Tax | An increased windfall tax should be imposed on the UK’s largest banks, say trade union leaders, after the big four lenders reported almost £14bn in first-quarter profits, partly fuelled by market turbulence amid the Iran war.Society | People from black backgrounds in England are twice as likely to experience strokes as their white counterparts, while also being less likely to receive timely care, according to the largest study of its kind.Since the conflict began in late February, an estimated 20,000 sailors have been trapped in the Gulf, unable to pass through the strait of Hormuz into the open ocean. Concerns about their physical and mental health are growing as they face the prospect of enduring a blistering Middle Eastern summer while at anchor waiting for peace. Food and essential supplies are feared to be running low on some trapped vessels.On Sunday, Trump announced the launch of Project Free-



dom, a presidential initiative, which would see the stranded 850 vessels pass through the southern section of the strait of Hormuz under the protection of the US military. Trump presented the plan as a humanitarian endeavour “meant to free people, companies, and countries that have done absolutely nothing wrong – they are victims of circumstance” in a post on Truth Social.But Iran did not buy it. They have imposed a blockade on foreign shipping since US-Israeli attacks on 28 February – and maintaining the closure is a key part of their negotiating position. Iran fired missiles at the UAE – a reminder to the world that a return to war is close. In a spate of claims and counterclaims, the US military said that they had destroyed six Iranian small boats carrying missiles and drones.Both sides appear keen to avoid a return to fighting. On Tuesday, the US’s top general Dan Caine clarified that Iran had not broken the ceasefire despite clashes over the strait.Now the US has backed down on the effort to guide stranded ships out – for now. Posting on Truth Social late on Tuesday, Trump said he had made the decision based “on the request of Pakistan and other Countries, the tremendous Military Success that we have had during the Campaign against the Country of Iran and, additionally, the fact that Great Progress has been made toward a Complete and Final Agreement with Representatives of Iran”.But unease remains, with no direct response yet from Iran and a lack of clarity over whether Trump could reinstate his latest mission. And observers fear another round of violence is not far away. Trump’s Project Freedom was aimed at undermining Iran’s capacity to maintain its blockade of the strait, says Julian Borger.“Iran’s strength is its ability to keep the strait closed – and if that gets challenged then that’s an important card that Iran would have lost. That’s why it’s so important for them to keep it closed,”

he says. “Even though Iran is being careful not to engage with the US navy directly, it is keen to keep up a sense of threat around going through the strait.”Just two vessels passed through the strait during Trump’s short-lived project. The US route passes through Emirati and Omani waters, which are more difficult to navigate through than the Iranian side of the passage due to coral reefs and other hazards. But the sheer length of time that ships have been stranded in the Gulf means that some will probably risk the route, says Julian.“For shipowners and crews, you’ve got to remember how desperate they are. They have been stuck there for weeks and weeks with no end in sight, so it is tempting for some to at least try to get out,” he says. “The owners will be watching to see what happens with the first trickle of ships.” After the initiative was announced, a South Korean flagged vessel was struck by what President Trump said was an Iranian attack, and missiles were fired at the UAE by Iran. The Iranians later apologised – but the volley highlights the challenge of convincing shipowners that it is safe to pass through the strait, especially with Iran’s decentralised military doctrine, which permits its military commanders significant freedom to operate independently of its country’s rulers.“Before the war, part of Iran’s defence doctrine was based on the expectation that their leadership would get decapitated. So, local commanders were given a lot of leeway in how they chose to carry out their operations and could inflict as much damage on the enemy as possible,” says Julian. “In a delicate situation like this, it’s difficult for the decentralised Iranian system to collaborate as much as they might want. This might be the reason you had those strikes on the UAE and then an expression of regret.”Markets were unconvinced by the move from Trump, with oil hovering about \$115 a barrel.

All of Gibraltar’s untreated sewage is dumped into the Mediterranean

Europe: The British overseas territory of Gibraltar lacks a wastewater treatment plant and has never had one, thus raw sewage from almost 40,000 individuals and companies is being poured directly into the sea.The southern extremity of the peninsula at Europa Point, where the Gibraltar government claims there are “high levels of natural dispersion,” has been leaking untreated sewage into the Mediterranean for decades.Lewis Stagnetto of the Nautilus Project, a local environmental charity, stated that although the region is meant to be protected for animals, there are frequently “wet wipes and plastic pollution entangled in algae and all over the rocks.” Toxic algal blooms that deplete the water of oxygen and suffocate aquatic life can be caused by raw sewage pollution. also exposes fish and mammals to a variety of chemicals and plastics that can harm health and interfere with reproduction, and also puts humans at danger by dispersing diseases and genes resistant to antibiotics. In contrast to Britain, Gibraltar’s drinking water is desalinated and its sewage system uses seawater. The salinity “historically created challenges that are not present in other wastewater treatment plants around

the world,” according to the Gibraltar government. Wet wipes “that appear occasionally on our beaches have... come from outlets in nearby Spain,” according to the statement. In 2017, the European court of justice ruled that the UK was in breach of wastewater law by failing to treat Gibraltar’s sewage, but the European Commission lost any power to take action after Brexit.Attempts to fix the problem have repeatedly collapsed. In 2018, Gibraltar’s government awarded a contract to a joint venture between NWG Commercial Services (Northumbrian Water) and Modern Water to design, build and operate a treatment plant, only for the deal to fall apart after a Modern Water subsidiary went into liquidation.“This had a significant impact on the delivery of this vital project,” a Gibraltar government spokesperson said. Preliminary talks with the European Investment Bank also “fell through as a direct result of the UK leaving the European Union”, they added.In June 2025, the Gibraltar government awarded a 25-year contract to Eco Waters to build a wastewater treatment plant at Europa Point. Advanced works have begun on the design and geotechnical aspects of the plant and a planning application

was submitted in March 2026.Northumbrian Water, which partnered with the government from 2003 until 2024 through a joint venture called AquaGib, was keen to distance itself from the sewage failures. It said operations “centred on the provision of drinking water” and that it was not responsible for day-to-day operations.“Northumbrian Water was never responsible in any way for wastewater operations in Gibraltar,” a spokesperson said. Its “involvement was as a shareholder and strategic partner, not as the operator or regulator. All decisions in relation to wastewater management were taken by the government of Gibraltar.”AquaGib said it operated a number of pumping stations that pump sewage from low-lying areas into Gibraltar’s main sewer but it “is not responsible for the main sewer or any wastewater treatment”.The sewer itself appears to be in poor shape. Last year, the opposition Gibraltar Social Democrats (GSD) party described “popular tourist hotspot areas ... embarrassingly subjected to the stench of raw sewage”, with waste “directly seeping through the city walls ... causing damage to the marine ecosystem”. The government blamed decades of underinvestment for the problem, in-

cluding years when the GSD held power. The government said there was an “ongoing major project to lay new sewerage mains in phases: a £15m investment in Gibraltar’s sewer infrastructure” as well as “various relining projects which ... have resulted in the main sewer being reinforced and improved within the city walls”.As for the beaches, the government said: “Bacteriological water quality is routinely measured in all of Gibraltar’s beaches ... and the latest results indicate that all bathing areas in Gibraltar attain excellent bathing water quality.”Last year, England’s water companies released untreated sewage into rivers, lakes and seas nearly 300,000 times, despite having wastewater treatment plants in place. Hugo Tagholm, the director of the charity Oceana UK, said: “The public are outraged that our rivers and seas are treated as a dumping ground. It’s an environmental and economic injustice, with the fingerprints of big business all over it.”The government must get its act together at home and abroad – our seas need proper protection from sewage and plastic pollution. It’s high time they end the outrage and stop the pumping of untreated sewage into the Mediterranean Sea.”

Adolescence appears to last far longer than once thought

Society has tended to describe adulthood as starting at around 18 to 21. And most people may appear fully adult by then. But such looks can be deceiving. The brain won't reach its adult form until more than a decade after that, a new study finds. At a minimum, its data offer a new interpretation of what it means to be an adolescent.

These data are part of a much larger analysis of when and how often the brain undergoes major changes. The findings appeared November 25, 2025, in Nature Communications.

When thinking about the defining feature of adolescence, many people focus on body changes in preparation for adulthood. What isn't visible from the outside, though, are the many rewiring changes underway in our brains. The new study investigated these. And its findings show that the brain doesn't attain its adult architecture until much later than scientists had realized —

around age 32. Neuroscientists Alexa Mousley and Duncan Astle led the research. Both work at the University of Cambridge in England. Their team studied brain scans from more than 4,000 people. They ranged in age from birth to 90. These scans had originally been collected as part of other studies. In poring over those scans, the researchers identified when and how brain connections changed. Such brain-connectivity changes — rewiring of the neural circuits — occur across our lifespan. They reflect “changes in the way brain regions communicate with each other,” says Lucia Uddin. And, she notes, the timing of the changes seems to “accompany major life-stage transitions.” These tended to occur around ages 9, 32, 66 and 83. A cognitive neuroscientist at the University of California, Los Angeles, Uddin did not take part in the new work. But she does find it “a very exciting study.” The human brain contains some 86 billion neurons. These nerve cells “talk” to one another, sharing information. Each neuron has a long arm, or axon, that reaches out toward other neurons. Insulating cells wrap around the axons. These help neural signals travel faster. Because the insulating cells are fatty, they look white, so we call them the brain's white matter. The neurons' cell bodies make up



the brain's gray matter. The number of neurons in the brain doesn't change much over our lifespan. But how the cells connect to each other does. Unused connections get “pruned” or wither away. At the same time, new ones form and useful ones grow stronger. Axons that send frequent signals can get more insulation — a thicker jacket of white matter. Although scientists knew these kinds of changes happen, it wasn't clear if there were particular times for when they take place, at least after early adolescence. The new study finds there are five eras — or “epochs” — of brain development emerged from the analysis. Each spanned a time during which the brain reorganizes in specific ways. The first epoch runs from birth until around age 9. The next phase — adolescence — kicks off then and continues to around age 32. Two more epochs, adulthood and early aging, ended around 66 and 83, after which the late-aging phase kicked off. Those last two epochs were a bit of a surprise. Scientists had largely expected that after early adulthood, the brain's structure stayed roughly unchanged. A baby's brain has lots of connections. Not all are useful. So the body prunes away many of these as a child grows. During this time, more insulation wraps around axons to strengthen links that do prove useful.

Around age 9, adolescence starts. Brains now begin to change in ways that help different regions communicate.

“Neural efficiency is, as you might imagine, well connected by short paths,” Mousley explained in a statement issued by the University of Cambridge. And, she adds, “the adolescent era is the only one in which this efficiency is increasing.” Those increases continue on into our early 30s — much longer than scientists had realized. Brain connections largely stabilize between ages 32 and 66. Then, as people grow older, they begin to lose white matter, and their brains lose efficiency. This happens in the so-called early aging (through age 83) and late aging eras.

Understanding that the brain doesn't change steadily over one's life can be helpful, Astle said in the Cambridge University statement. How the brain is wired may be linked to a number of mental health and other conditions. “Differences in brain wiring predict difficulties with attention, language, memory and a whole host of different behaviors,” Astle said. So the new findings “will help us identify when and how its wiring is vulnerable to disruption.”

The study “is a new and refreshing way to think about [brain] organization,” says Richard Cytoptic. He's a neuroscientist at George Washington University in Wash-



ington, D.C. The new data, he says, confirm that “we change in leaps and bounds, rather than step by step.” It also means that the end of adolescence remains difficult to determine. And, he adds, it leaves open the question of how white matter matures as we age.

So what does this mean for teens?

Researchers, politicians, media and others “have been talking about how people reach adulthood later than they used to,” says Hillary Schwarb. This cognitive neuroscientist works at the University of Nebraska—Lincoln.

While the Cambridge study “is important,” she says, “it only looks at one part of the brain, called white matter.” What it doesn't do, she cautions, is “explain how thinking or behavior changes” over time. As such, it's the first of many steps needed to better understand how connections

inside the brain affect thinking and feeling over our lifespan. Concludes Schwarb, when it comes to how the brain functions, there's still much to learn.

adolescence: A transitional stage of physical and psychological development that begins at the onset of puberty, typically between the ages of 11 and 13, and ends with adulthood. People undergoing this transition are known as adolescents.

adolescent: Someone in that transitional stage of physical and psychological development that begins at the onset of puberty, typically between the ages of 11 and 13, and ends with adulthood.

axon: The long, tail-like extension of a neuron that conducts electrical signals away from the cell.

behavior: The way something (often a person or other organism) conducts itself or acts towards others.

brain scan: A technique to view structures inside the brain, typically with X-rays or a magnetic resonance imaging (or MRI) machine. With MRI technology — especially the type known as functional MRI (or fMRI) — the activity of different brain regions can be viewed during an event, such as viewing pictures, computing sums or listening to music.

circuit: A network that transmits electrical signals. In the body, nerve cells create circuits that relay electrical signals to the brain. In electronics, wires typically route those signals to activate some mechanical, computational or other function.

cognitive: A term that relates to mental activities, such as thinking, learning, remembering and solving puzzles.

development: (in biology) The growth of an organism from conception through adulthood, often undergoing changes in chemistry, size and sometimes even shape.

epoch: A span of time over which some dramatic changes have occurred.

function: The specific role some structure or device plays. (in math) A relationship between two or more variables in which one variable (the dependent one) is exactly determined by the value of the other variables.

gray matter: One of two main types of tissue found in the brain and spinal cord. It consists mainly of nerve cell

bodies.

host: (in biology and medicine) The organism (or environment) in which some other thing resides. Humans may be a temporary host for food-poisoning germs or other infective agents.

information: (as opposed to data) Facts provided or trends learned about something or

mature: (adj.) Connoting an adult individual or full-grown and fully developed (non-juvenile) form of something. (verb) To develop toward — or into — a more complex and full-grown form of something, be it a living thing, a technology or an idea.

mental health: A term for someone's emotional, psychological and social well-being. It refers to how people behave on their own and how they interact with others. It includes how people make choices, handle stress and manage fear or anxiety. Poor mental health can be triggered by disease or might reflect a short-term response to life's challenges. It can occur in people of any age, from babies to the elderly.

nerve: A long, delicate fiber that transmits signals across the body of an animal. An animal's backbone contains many nerves, some of which control the movement of its legs or fins, and some of which convey sensations such as hot, cold or pain.

neuron: The main cell type of the nervous system — the brain, spinal column and nerves. These specialized cells transmit information by producing, receiving and conducting electrical signals. Neurons also can transmit signals to other cells with chemical messengers.

neuroscientist: Someone who studies the structure or function of the brain and other parts of the nervous system.

society: An integrated group of people or animals that generally cooperate and support one another for the greater good of them all.

transition: The boundary where one thing (paragraphs, ecosystems, life stage, state of matter) changes or converts into another. Some transitions are sharp or abrupt. Others slowly or gradually morph from one condition or environment to another.

white matter: One of the two main tissue types found in the brain and spinal cord. It consists mainly of bundles of nerve fibers.

Prehistoric ‘sea’ monster also lurked in rivers, data show

Mosasaurs — a fearsome group of ancient predators — once ruled the seas. Now researchers have turned up a 66-million-year fossil tooth from one. And the big surprise: It came from a site that wasn't part of the ocean. As such, this tooth is rewriting the aquatic reptile's history. Some mosasaurs ruled the rivers, it suggests. The tooth came from a genus known as Prognathodontini (Prog-NAH-thow-don-TEE-nee). These enormous animals could span up to 11 meters (36 feet) — or about the length of a telephone pole. The lizard-like creatures showed up during the Late Cretaceous, some 100 million years ago. Then, like nearly all of their dinosaur cousins, mosasaurs went extinct when a massive asteroid hit Earth 66 million years ago. Ancient dinos roamed the land. Mosasaurs prowled the water. More closely related to lizards and snakes than dinos, these giants had shark-like tails and paddle-shaped fins. These helped them glide through water to surprise their prey.

With powerful jaws, this lurking predator “could bite through big turtles, fishes and reptiles [including dinosaurs]. It was terrifying,” says Melanie During. She works at Uppsala University in Sweden. A paleontologist, she uses fossils to learn about ancient life.

In 2022, a team from the North Dakota Geological Society was

digging for fossils in a former river floodplain. The North Dakota site is known as the Hell Creek Formation.

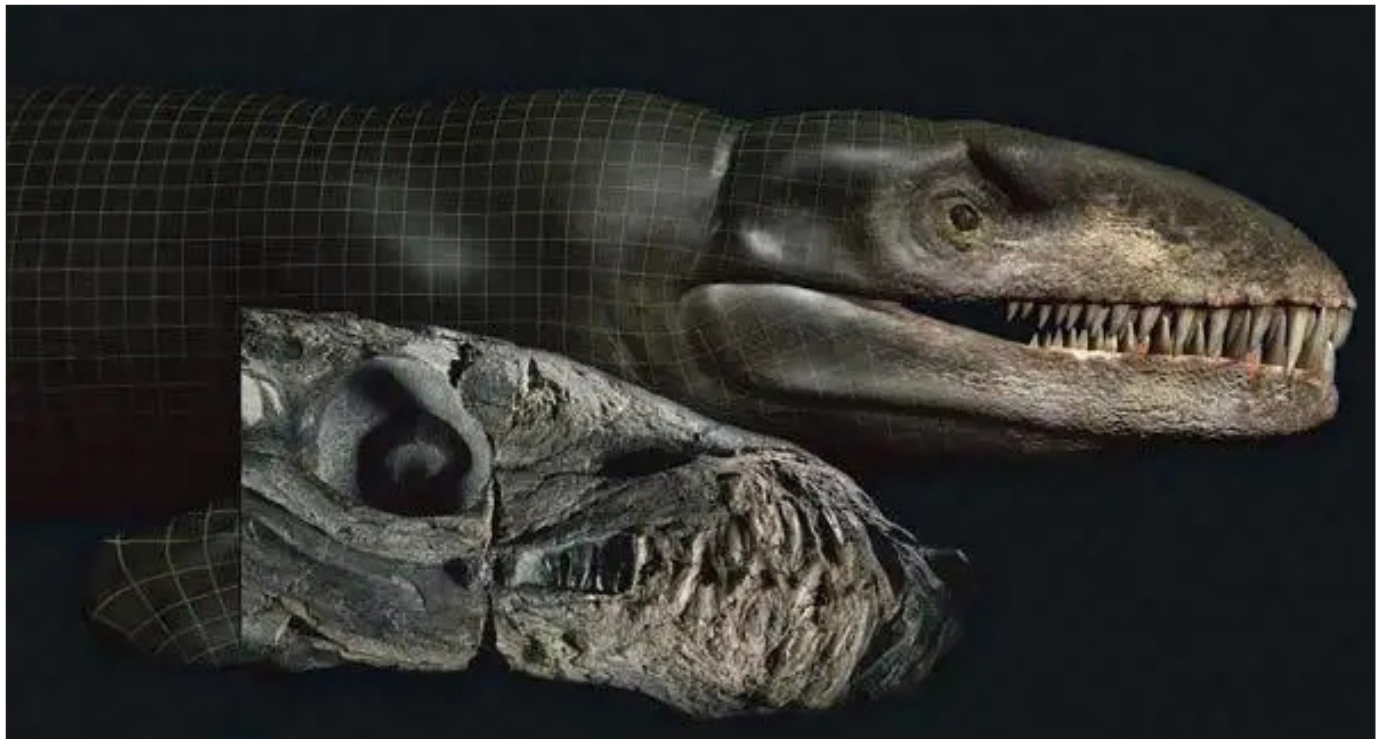
In one football-shaped piece of rock, the team found three fossils: a Tyrannosaurus rex tooth, an ancient crocodile jawbone — and a mosasaur tooth.

That last one was unexpected. What was a sea reptile doing with a croc and a dinosaur? “We were already surprised when a mosasaur tooth was in Hell Creek. We tried everything to prove that the tooth was from a marine reptile,” says During. But that's not what the evidence showed.

Before giving up, the team compared the new fossils to ones at Vrije University Amsterdam, in the Netherlands. Here, they turned to a chemical technique called isotope analysis. Isotopes are atoms of the same element that have different numbers of neutrons. Isotope patterns can reveal parts of an animal's life history, such as where it lived and what it ate.

Because all fossils at Hell Creek were 66 million years old, the researchers could compare them. They focused on isotopes of three elements: oxygen, strontium and carbon.

Oxygen isotopes pointed to what type of water the mosasaur lived in. Living in salt water, a mosasaur would have built up more of a heavier oxygen isotope. Yet the oxygen in the Hell Creek



mosasaur tooth had more lighter isotopes than expected. Strontium and carbon isotopes showed a similar pattern.

The results point to the tooth's owner having lived and died in freshwater. It was not merely a sea denizen that washed into a river.

Such data suggest scientists will have to reconsider what they know about mosasaur lifestyles, the researchers say. They shared their new findings in BMC Zoology on December 12, 2025. “It's a remarkable example of a

species apparently adapting to a habitat,” says Barry Albright. He's a paleontologist at the University of North Florida in Jacksonville who didn't work on the study. “It was entirely unexpected,” he says. “The reptiles were long considered to be exclusively marine.”

Nicholas Longrich works at the University of Bath in England. “In the sea, [mosasaurs] evolve a range of jaw shapes and tooth shapes, body forms and sizes,” this paleontologist says. “But now, we're seeing them occupy other

habitats,” he says. “It indicates they were diverse and thriving before the asteroid struck,” killing off much of Earth's life 66 million years ago.

Diverse predators at the top of the food web imply diverse prey, Longrich points out. So what drew mosasaurs into rivers? Here's one idea. During the Late Cretaceous, shallow tropical seas covered Earth. One of them — the Western Interior Seaway — split in half what is now North America. The rich ecosystems of this sea were

full of fish and other prey for mosasaurs to eat. Later, as the continent uplifted, the sea underwent major changes.

One change was that its salt levels fell. Seaway mosasaurs might have adapted enough to be able to venture into freshwater. That could have included the river channels at Hell Creek.

“It's possible that mosasaurs were following prey upriver,” says Femke Holwerda. She's a mosasaur expert at Utrecht University in the Netherlands.

Mosasaurs had been hardly the only ocean predators. They had rivals for food. Adapting to life in a river may have helped the Hell Creek mosasaurs occupy a new ecological role. Here, they might have competed less for food, Albright thinks. It wouldn't be the first time aquatic life left the ocean. Amazon river dolphins adapted to live in murky rivers. Other ancient marine reptiles have been found in riverbeds, too.

“There is no reason why mosasaurs would have been constrained to only marine environments,” says Kiersten Formoso. A vertebrate paleobiologist, she works at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, N.J.

“It would be interesting to see more mosasaur fossils,” says Formoso. “Was this just a curious mosasaur?” she asks. Perhaps a pioneer for its species?

To gather more data, During's team hopes to return to Hell Creek. Finding the skeleton of this mosasaur would be like winning the jackpot. By finding the entire body, “we could see how it adapted,” says During.

Indeed, Longrich says, mosasaur bones in the area might have been misidentified before — or even ignored. After all, researchers weren't looking for them in riverbeds. “I can't help but wonder if there are [somewhere, unidentified freshwater mosasaur] teeth and bones sitting in museum drawers.”

Aamir Khan performs Aati Kya Khandala alongside Kapil Sharma and Sadia Khateeb

Mumbai: Bollywood actor Aamir Khan recently went to a special screening of Kapil Sharma and Neetu Kapoor’s film Daadi Ki Shaadi. Aamir was spotted hanging out with the actors and crew of the movie after the screening, taking part in a fun evening that included singing and music. Videos from the event are now available on the internet. In one of the videos, Kapil Sharma was seen singing the beloved Aaj Jaane Ki Zid Na Karo to everyone. Aamir Khan, Neetu Kapoor, and the others were seen applauding and applauding him, clearly thrilled. In a different clip, Aamir sang Aati Kya Khandala from his movie Ghulam with Sadia Khateeb. As the gang enjoyed the musical



evening together, the actor and Kapil were also spotted singing along to Papa Keh-te Hain.

There seemed to be a lot of lighthearted moments, laughter, and music at the event. Aamir was also spotted posing for the photographers with the movie’s star cast fol-

lowing the exclusive screening. Aamir had disclosed earlier in 2025 that he has been studying classical singing for the previous two years. The actor revealed that singing is a kind of meditation and that he truly enjoys it. The comedy-drama, which is directed by Ashish R Mohan, features

important roles for Kapil Sharma, Sadia Khateeb, Neetu Kapoor, R Sarathkumar, and Teju Kolhapure. In the teaser, Kapil’s family was shown to be concerned about his marriage until discovering what seemed to be the ideal match in Sadia’s character, who is smart, attractive, and a good fit for a joint family. But when Neetu Kapoor’s character, Sadia’s grandmother, decides to marry herself, things take an unexpected turn. Sadia’s relatives are ordered to prevent the grandmother’s wedding or risk losing their alliance with Kapil, which causes upheaval within the family. Riddhima Kapoor Sahni makes her Bollywood debut in the movie. She essays

the role of Neetu Kapoor’s daughter, who opposes her mother’s decision to remarry R Sarathkumar’s character. The movie is slated to hit theaters on May 8. Aamir Khan is presently anticipating the premiere of his next film, Lahore 1947. Sunny Deol, Preity Zinta, Shabana Azmi, Karan Deol, Ali Fazal, and Abhimanyu Singh play important roles in Rajkumar Santoshi’s film.

The movie, which is set against the backdrop of India’s 1947 Partition, was originally slated for release in January 2025 but was postponed because of post-production work. It will now open in theaters on August 13, 2026, over the weekend of Independence Day.

The IPL caused Samantha Ruth Prabhu’s next movie, Maa Inti Bangaaram, to be delayed



Mumbai: Fans of Samantha Ruth Prabhu are waiting even longer for her next movie. And cricket is the cause.

The actor’s film Maa Inti Bangaaram has been delayed from its May 15 release date. On June 19, 2026, it will now

be released globally.

The decision was made in order to prevent a conflict with the ongoing Indian Premier League (IPL) season. According to the creators, this action has been performed so that Sunrisers Hyderabad supporters in Telugu states can devote all of their attention to cheering on their side. The family action drama Maa Inti Bangaaram is directed by Nandini Reddy and produced by Samantha, her husband, filmmaker Raj Nidimoru, and Himank Duvvuru.

Alongside Sree Mukhi, Gautami, Anand, Lakshmi, Srinivas Gavireddy, and Manjusha, it also has Diganth and Gulshan Devaiah in significant parts.

Bollywood racism is revealed by Dibyendu Bhattacharya

Mumbai: Bollywood actress Dibyendu Bhattacharya has discussed racism in the film industry, describing it as a pervasive issue that still influences casting choices. The actor revealed a personal story in a recent interview to show how prejudice based on skin color persists in the business. In an interview with Bollywood Bubble, Dibyendu disclosed that a few days prior to the shoot, he was substituted in an advertisement. “This is a problem, and it is deeply ingrained,” he stated. I was cast for a commercial a few days ago, and after four to five days of discussions, the shoot was scheduled to take place three days later. I then said, “Are we doing the shoot or not?” “Nahi Dada, aapko replace kiya kyunki aap kaale ho aur kaala actor nahi chahiye,” they exclaimed. He went on to say that the creators used these precise words and that since he is at ease with who he is, he was not particularly impacted by the remark. He did, however, note that such occurrences are indicative of a more serious issue with the system. He claims that the problem is related to how people are conditioned from an early age and extends beyond personal experiences. “It’s very unfortunate par aap kuch nahi kar sakte ho,” he remarked. Jab Aapki bunियाad hi, social ethics and conventions are introduced in primary education, but you can’t really do anything. This cannot be accomplished if social ethics and norms are not introduced from the very beginning, during basic education. He contrasted this with nations like Korea and Japan, where the educational systems, in his opinion, instill empathy and discipline in young children. Dibyendu went on to say that rather than being strengthened by education, such values are frequently dependent on upbringing at home in India. He claimed that although society as a whole does not always play that role, a youngster can grow up to be well-mannered provided the values at home are solid. The most recent appearance of Dibyendu was in Undekhi Season 4, which debuted on SonyLIV on May 1. The musical, which has gotten mixed reviews, is directed by Ashish R. Shukla and features important roles for Harsh Chhaya, Surya Sharma, Ankur Rathee, and Gautam Rode. Prior to this, he starred in the critically acclaimed Netflix series Maamla Legal Hai 2. Ravi Kishan, Naila Grewal, Nidhi Bisht, Anant Joshi, Tanvi Azmi, and Kusha Kapila were among the actors that had significant roles in the show.

Rajiv Rai, the maker of Dhurandhar, is being tried for allegedly using Tirchi Topiwale without permission

Mumbai: The Delhi High Court was informed on Wednesday that the dispute between the producers of Dhurandhar and Trimurti Films about the purported unapproved use of the song Tirchi Topiwale has not been resolved through mediation. Rajiv Rai of Trimurti Films filed a lawsuit against Jio Studios and B62 Studios for allegedly utilizing the song from his movie Tridev without permission in Dhurandhar 2. The Delhi High Court had first requested that the parties mediate a settlement. Bar and Bench stated that the court was notified that mediation had failed on Wednesday when the court met again. The judge has scheduled the trial for Friday, May 8. Rajiv Rai’s 1989 film Tridev had the song Tirchi Topiwale, which was composed by Kalyanji-Anandji and sung by Sapna Mukherjee and

Amit Kumar. The song was a chart-topper and has continued to be well-liked for more than thirty years. The song was featured in the conclusion of Dhurandhar: The Revenge, which was released in March. Rakesh Bedi’s character was shown recounting something to Ranveer Singh’s character. The film’s composer, Shashwat Sachdeva, reworked the new song, Rang De Lal, which includes new lyrics and vocals. It is also included in the soundtrack of Dhurandhar 2. Following the release of Dhurandhar 2, Trimurti Films filed a lawsuit against the film’s producers, alleging that the music was utilized in the movie without the necessary licenses or authorization. Trimurti claimed control and/or ownership of the pertinent rights in the sound recording and the musical composition. The production company



has claimed that the use, which includes unapproved copying and public dissemination of the work, constitutes copyright infringement. In an interview, Rajiv Rai clarified that the storyline as a whole was more important to him than the song’s usage on the soundtrack. “This is a theft. Yeh poori chori ban jaati hai. Aap isko dusri photo mein dalte hai alter kar ke, toh woh double chori hai (this turns into

a theft case). It is double theft to utilize a music that has been altered in another movie.

In my opinion, this is stealing,” the director declared. Aditya Dhar’s Dhurandhar 2, which is currently showing in theaters, was later ordered by the Delhi High Court to refrain from publicly accusing the defendants while the matter was under judgment. Rang De Lal is still included in the soundtrack.

Amidst the India-Pakistan crisis, Ranbir Kapoor became concerned when Neetu Kapoor shot for Daadi Ki Shaadi

Mumbai: Bollywood star Neetu Kapoor is getting ready for the premiere of her next movie, Daadi Ki Shaadi. Recent discussions about the movie have uncovered some fascinating behind-the-scenes details. In a promotional conversation, Neetu remembered how, at the height of the India-Pakistan crisis at the time, her son Ranbir Kapoor became worried about her safety while she was filming in Shimla. Co-actor Kapil Sharma revealed that a number of unforeseen circumstances emerged during the film’s development. “So many things happened during the making of this film,” he remarked. At that point, the situation had grown extremely dire and the conflict had begun. Ranbir may have given you a call. Neetu attested to this and described her son’s response to the circumstance. “Yes, Ranbir called me and said, ‘Mumma, please come back,’” she recalled. “This is the safest place right now, nobody is going to drop bombs here,” I told him. No one spoke when the conflict began. Everyone agreed that we would keep working. Everyone was giddy with anticipation for the movie and its surroundings. No one desired to depart. The film’s star, Riddhima Kapoor Sahni, also talked about the mood on set. According to her, there was

Saif Ali Khan and Kareena Kapoor overwhelmed Soha with gifts while she hosted lunch



Mumbai: Saba Pataudi, a jewelry designer and sister of actor Saif Ali Khan, celebrated her 50th birthday on May 1st with a small family get-together at her house. A few days later, Saba wrote a touching statement thanking her family and friends for making the milestone birthday unforgettable and posted pictures from the event on social media. Saif and Soha Ali Khan, her siblings, and their families attended the festivities. Saba posted a number of pictures and videos from the birthday celebration on Instagram on Wednesday. The house was adorned with vibrant balloons, including a massive “50” balloon arrangement and a display that said “Saba’s 50th Birth-

day.” For the occasion, Saba looked stunning in a black flowery dress. Soha chose a chic blue co-ord combination, while Saif and Kareena Kapoor Khan were spotted twinning in white shirts and blue jeans. Kunal Kemmu, dressed casually, joined the festivities as well. The event also included a number of Saba’s close friends. Saba posted a video of herself cutting two birthday cakes while Saif and Soha mocked and joked with her. The highlight of the event was undoubtedly the relationship between the siblings. Saba included a lengthy thank-you note with the pictures. “May 1st, 2026! Family. 50th....Lovin it!” she wrote. Although there is still more to come, this was

a unique start to a wonderful adventure. +++ I am grateful to Soha for hosting this lunch. She also talked about the kind presents and well wishes she got from relatives. She wrote, “Bebo for the fantastic balloons, card, and gift. bhai too!” to thank Kareena. The voice note from Jeh Baba and the Inni card were treasures! Thank you all for making it unique. This year got off to an amazing start! I missed the boys. Jeh Tim Iggy and Sara, of course! Amma, too! I adore you all! Thank you very much.

The next film starring Saif Ali Khan is Pulkit’s Kartavya. Rasika Dugal, Sanjay Mishra, Saurabh Dwivedi, and Zakir Hussain play important parts in the movie, which is supported by Red Chillies Entertainment. On May 15, the movie will be available on Netflix. Additionally, he is working on Haiwaan, which will be co-starring Akshay Kumar and directed by Priyadarshan. Meghna Gulzar’s upcoming film, Daayra, will include Kareena Kapoor Khan. Prithviraj Sukumaran also appears in the movie, though the release date has not yet been disclosed.

Netflix will start streaming Kartavya on May 15



Mumbai: The teaser for the new crime drama Kartavya, which stars Saif Ali Khan, has been released on Netflix. The movie, which was produced by Gauri Khan and directed by Pulkit under the Red Chillies Entertainment banner, will debut on Netflix on May 15. A morally complex world where responsibility, power, and interpersonal strife collide is presented in the trailer. Saif Ali Khan portrays Pawan, a police officer who is under tremendous scrutiny for failing to shield a journalist who is shot while he is on duty. Senior officials put increasing pressure on Pawan, leading to a high-stakes manhunt that reveals a network of deceit and manipulation. His personal life starts to fall apart in tandem with the inquiry when a disagreement with his brother puts his family in danger. The narrative follows Pawan as he battles to strike a balance between his commitments to his family and his career, with each choice having dire repercussions. Saurabh Dwivedi, Manish Chaudhari, Zakir Hussain, Rasika Dugal, and Sanjay Mishra all play significant roles in the movie. “Pawan is a man constantly negotiating with himself—

between what he believes is right, what is expected of him, and what he must protect,” Saif Ali Khan said in reference to the movie. I was drawn to Kartavya because it doesn’t provide simple solutions, puts you in awkward circumstances, and makes you consider what you would do if every decision had a personal consequence, according to a press release. “Working with Pulkit and the entire cast made this journey even more compelling and thrilling,” he continued. Working with Red Chillies Entertainment on a multi-layered project for the first time has been really thrilling,” the press release stated. The film is an investigation of moral ambiguity and human strife, according to director Pulkit. In the gray world of Kartavya, every decision has a price and certainty is never attainable. “We set out to create a grounded, emotionally charged story that explores the human conflict at its core, looking beyond the surface of crime,” he stated. “All the actors have brought immense depth to their characters, and Saif Ali Khan has brought remarkable restraint to a deeply conflicted role, the film invites audiences to reflect on what justice really means when personal stakes are involved,” he continued. We are thrilled to share this narrative with viewers around the globe, and my second partnership with Red Chillies Entertainment and Netflix has been immensely rewarding.”

Kartavya, which is described as a character-driven criminal drama, examines issues of justice, morality, and consequence in the context of a suspenseful investigation.

Netflix will start streaming Kartavya on May 15.



a great sense of camaraderie among the team members, making it hard for anyone to think about quitting in the middle. She claimed that the picture was made with a great deal of affection, which was evident in the way the staff and actors collaborated throughout the schedule. Neetu also emphasized how Shimla’s special shooting conditions helped the team come together. She disclosed that vanity vans, which are typically a staple element on movie sets, were not available on location. The team stayed in cottages rather than hotels because of space limitations, Kapil continued. Because of this

arrangement, the cast was able to spend more time together, which improved their relationship and increased their enjoyment of the process. Produced by RTake Studios and BeingU Studios, Daadi Ki Shaadi is a family comedy-drama directed by Ashish R Mohan. Sadia Khateeb, Teju Kolhapuri, and R. Sarathkumar also play significant parts in the movie. In it, Riddhima Kapoor Sahni makes her Hindi film debut as Neetu Kapoor’s on-screen daughter, who disagrees with her mother’s choice to get married again. On May 8, which is Mother’s Day, the movie is set to open in theaters.

The Varanasi to Kolkata expressway has been approved by the Environment Ministry’s expert panel

New Delhi, May 07: More than 103 hectares of West Bengal’s reserved and protected forest area must be diverted in order to build a 235-kilometer greenfield expressway that connects Varanasi and Kolkata, according to a panel of experts from the environment ministry.A portion of the ₹9,250 crore National Highways Authority of India project, which calls for building a four-to six-lane motorway, will also go through a tiger landscape. The 444th meeting of the expert panel, also known as the expert appraisal committee,



took place between April 23 and April 24 and covered the project’s specifics. According to the meeting minutes, 40,000 trees

in non-forest regions and 10,000 in forest areas will need to be felled as part of the project, which will span the districts of Purulia, Bankura, Pashchim Med-

nipur, Hoogli, and Howrah.”The elephant corridors are crossing the present highway alignment at different location” despite the fact that the Jangal Mahal Elephant Corridor is situated 7.75 kilometers south of the project. ”The committee was of the view that wildlife crossing structures shall be strictly as per recommendations of the DFO including the recommendations for 300 metres span and no underpass shall be of the span lesser than that prescribed by the DFO,” as per the minutes of the meeting.Additionally, according to the EAC, animal underpasses must be eight to ten meters high.

In Yamuna, UP’s Hamirpur, a boat capsizes, drowning five children and a lady; an 11-year-old is missing



New Delhi, May 07: A boat capsized in the Yamuna River here, killing five people, including four children, and leaving an 11-year-old kid unaccounted for, according to authorities on

Thursday.They claimed that nine individuals, excluding the boatman, were returning from a river island on Wednesday night in Kutubpur Patiya hamlet under Bhauli gram panchayat in the Kurara police station area.Around 7 p.m., the boat lost its equilibrium in the middle of the river and capsized, according to the police. Vishnu, Rinku, and Parul were all saved by boatman Dheeru.Akanksha (9), Rani (9), Brijrani (25), Labhyansh (5), Mahesh (6), and Aditya (11), the remaining six—five children and a woman—went missing, according to the authorities.Rescue crews found the dead of Akanksha, Labhyansh, Mahesh, Rani, and Brijrani later on Thursday.

According to SHO Brijesh Kumar, personnel are having trouble with the rescue effort because of the intense rain that has been falling

since the morning. Aditya is still unaccounted for, and efforts are underway to find him.Teams from the State Disaster Response Force and the National Disaster Response Force were conducting the search, according to District Magistrate Abhishek Goyal.”We will ensure compensation to the affected families in accordance with the rules and submit a report to the chief minister on the incident,” stated Manoj Prajapati, a BJP MLA from Hamirpur. Chief Minister Adityanath has acknowledged the incident and instructed the district government to look into the accident’s cause and implement practical solutions to stop similar incidents in the future. Senior district authorities were also given instructions by the chief minister to personally oversee the search efforts and make sure the impacted families received all aid possible.

Gautam Gambhir is the target of shocking allegations



New Delhi: Gautam Gambhir is still a divisive figure in Indian cricket despite all of his achievements on the field. Atul Wassan, a former cricket player for India, recently made a startling remark on Gambhir’s combative nature. Gambhir’s “ego is on a different level,” according to Wassan, who also asserted that certain Indian players are dissatisfied with his management style. Wassan discussed previous encounters between Gambhir and renowned Indian batsman Virat Kohli, but he declined to disclose the players’ names. Wassan alleged that Gambhir had been a bully since he was a young boy.Since he was a little child, I have personally known him. I’ve had problems with him. It’s either my way or the high-way with him. In an interview with Vicky Lalwani, Wassan stated, “He is like that, and he would bully a lot, even in Delhi cricket.” ”His disposition has always been that way. He is smart, wealthy, and a great player. He believes that if he claims it’s night when it’s morning, people will assume it’s night since he has an extremely high ego. Get in line. You are on my hit list if you don’t comply. He’ll attempt to hurt you, but he’s accomplished a lot in cricket thanks to his nature,” he continued. Wassan questioned Gambhir’s aggressiveness, specu-

lating that his confrontational demeanor is what makes him the finest player on the field. His character is what made him the player he became. He had to fight in order to give it his all. He most likely goes to his house and battles with the window. But now that he’s retired, he hasn’t realized when to give up.He is challenging Virat Kohli because of his excessive aggression and alpha-male attitude from Delhi, according to Wassan. After analyzing Gambhir’s temperament, Wassan made the harsh assertion that several Team India players are dissatisfied with the head coach’s methods.All of the players can’t be in a very happy place, I’m sure. There will be someone dozing off on needles. Personal preferences and dislikes do occur, especially when a person has such a strong personality. It’s okay to lead them with a stick and have personal preferences as long as you continue to win. However, you must pay attention to criticism if you lose,” he stated. Wassan declined to reveal the identity of any player who might be unhappy with Gambhir’s management.I know a couple of them, but they won’t be honest about it. In this show, I am unable to mention their names. Everyone is aware of the situation. However, if you win after excluding those players, it’s all yours. No one will pay attention to the player because it’s a team sport. Wassan came to the conclusion that the coach is correct and the player is incorrect if the coach prevails despite everything.

Bengaluru Civil Engineer Drawn in by a Gay Dating App Robbed and stabbed

New Delhi, May 07: When a 27-year-old Bengaluru engineer used a “gay dating app” to find a mate, he fell into the hands of thieves who wounded him, made him reveal his UPI password, and stole from him.For the past three years, the Chikkajala-based civil engineer has been interacting and socializing with individuals via the Grindr dating app, which bills itself as a dating service for the “GBTQ” community.A person he had connected with on the dating app called the victim and asked him to meet at Palanahalli Gate on Bagalur Road, according to the First Information Report (FIR) filed at Yelahanka Police Station. He took a bus to get there. Four guys confronted him as soon as he arrived and led him to Jayamuni Layout, which is close to Northgate Company. They began verbally harassing him and threatening to tell his family and friends about his dating app usage.He was led by the soldiers to a remote location close to the Canadian School in Venkata. One of the assailants demanded that he give up his cell phone and UPI password while threatening him with a knife.He was stabbed in the head, wrist, ribs, abdomen, and neck by the assailants.A robbery case has been filed by the Yelahanka Police in accordance with applicable Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita regulations. The group transferred money from his SBI bank account to their accounts using his UPI password, according to the FIR. Police later claimed that about Rs 15,000 had been transferred to another PhonePe account, despite the FIR mentioning a transfer of Rs 16,000. The man, who was bleeding and severely hurt, called his friend, who took him to Valence Hospital on Bagalur Main Road for medical attention.Four suspects—Darshan, Sunil, Chandan, and another associate—have been taken into custody by the police. They claimed that before to the crime, the accused had been corresponding with the victim via the app for a few days.

After PBKS implodes in a dropped-catch horror versus SRH, Ishan Kishan twists the knife

New Delhi: In the first part of the season, Punjab Kings appeared to be the team to beat. They led the points table and went undefeated in their first seven games. They chased down a record 265 against the Delhi Capitals last month, which best demonstrated the breadth of their firepower. However, the team has lost three straight games, ending their winning run since the beginning of this month. Although bowling was found to be the main problem, the losses also revealed a persistent issue that had gone mostly unnoticed throughout the wins. This season, Punjab’s catch efficiency percentage of 73.6% is only superior to Delhi Capitals’ 64%. They have dropped 15 catches in total, including three against Sunrisers Hyderabad on Wednesday night at the Rajiv Gandhi International



al Stadium. This expensive error was a major factor in their 33-run loss.

Shashank Singh, who has already lost five catches this season, wasn’t

the only offender on the night PBKS fell from the top spot. As SRH rose to the top of the standings, Lockie Ferguson and Cooper Connolly also missed easy opportunities.SRH wicketkeeper-batter Ishan Kishan, who had been dropped twice during the innings, viciously ridiculed PBKS in an Instagram post that said, “Catch me if you can,” following the terrible fielding performance. After the third consecutive loss, Punjab skipper Shreyas Iyer did not hold back. He referred to the missed catches as “the biggest setback” and implied that PBKS would have been chasing “30-40 runs fewer” if the opportunities had been seized. Ishan benefited twice and went on to score a half-century. He pushed Ferguson in the direction of Connolly at deep square-leg in the ninth

over, providing the first reprieve. Ferguson himself misread a catch at fine leg on the eleventh over, resulting in the second. When Kishan was dropped the first time, he was on 9 off 9 balls, and the second time, he was on 18 off 14. Another hitter given a lifeline was Heinrich Klaasen, and PBKS also lost a stumping opportunity thanks to wicketkeeper Prabhsimran Singh. It was crucial that we carry out our plans, and we did. After the game, PBKS spin-bowling coach Saiyaj Bahutule stated, “Unfortunately, catches were dropped, and I think that hurt us.””It was crucial to take those catches because Heinrich Klaasen and Ishan Kishan are such players that they will score—and score quickly—if you tend to drop catches.”

As the Punjab Kings lose three straight games, Ricky Ponting makes an incredible “virus” remark

New Delhi: In the IPL, the margin of error is consistently small. Often, even taking a chance ends up being vital. In the IPL 2026 match against Sunrisers Hyderabad on Wednesday, Punjab Kings shown carelessness in that area. Sunrisers Hyderabad buried Punjab under a massive total, winning their IPL match by 33 runs to take the top spot in the points table here on Wednesday. Punjab made three catches in all at the drop of a hat. Ishan Kishan scored 55 off 32 balls in Sunrisers’ more than healthy total of 235 for 4, while Heinrich Klaasen continued his outstanding consistency with a 43-ball 69. In addition to making breakthroughs, SRH captain Pat Cummins (2/34 in 4 overs) and their best bowler of the season, Eshan Malinga (1/34 in 4 overs), produced 21 dot balls to limit the visitors to 202 for 7 on a calm surface.The only thing that kept PBKS in the game after a lackluster powerplay performance was Cooper Connolly’s century (107 not out off 59 balls). As a result, PBKS lost their eighth straight IPL match in Hyderabad.With the sixth victory, SRH moved up to the top of the 10-team standings with 14 points. They will reach the magic number of 16 points with one more win in the last three games, which should be sufficient to guarantee a postseason berth. The Punjab Kings, who have lost three straight games and are in a short slump, will point the finger at their terrible fielding, which was a major factor in their loss. The vice skipper was fortunate to escape a regulation stumping opportunity that was mishandled by Prabhsimran, whose glove work hasn’t been up to par. The Kishan-Klaasen pair were dropped three times, all of which were sitters. In a disappointing match for Yuzvendra Chahal, he was let down by teammates Shashank Singh and Lockie Ferguson, who dropped crucial catches. Coach Ricky Ponting acknowledged the team’s struggle with catching this season, highlighting Shashank’s recent return from injury. Despite their errors, Sunrisers batters, led by Klaasen and Kishan, capitalized on these opportunities, with contributions from Abhishek Sharma and Travis Head helping to set a formidable total. Nitish Reddy’s cameo further strengthened the score. Chahal’s performance (1 for 32) stood out given the team’s fielding troubles, culminating in three dropped catches as SRH hit 17 sixes, demonstrating their dominance at the crease.

Three persons are being held in relation to Suvendu Adhikari’s assistant’s murder



New Delhi, May 07: At least three individuals have been detained for questioning in relation to the murder of Chandranath Rath, who served as the personal assistant to Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Suvendu Adhikari. This incident occurred as Rath was returning home when he was shot at point-blank range by unidentified assailants. The attack involved two motorcycles and a car that was used to block Rath’s vehicle, leading to a rapid getaway after the shooting.Chandranath Rath had been Adhikari’s PA for approximately five years and played a crucial role in his electoral campaigns in Nandigram and Bhabanipur, where Adhikari emerged victorious over incumbent chief minister Mamata Banerjee. Following the incident, Union Home

Minister Amit Shah was informed, underscoring the seriousness of the situation. As per eyewitness reports, three helmeted assailants executed the attack and fled on motorcycles, abandoning the blocking vehicle, which had tampered number plates traced back to another car registered in Siliguri. A local resident observed the shooting and reported details to the media. Suspicions arose regarding the premeditated nature of the attack, with Adhikari claiming that the killers had conducted reconnaissance for two to three days prior. While Rath succumbed to his injuries, his driver, Buddadab Bera, sustained critical injuries, and a third BJP worker in the vehicle escaped unharmed by hiding. Police and forensic teams have been on-site gathering evidence and analyzing CCTV footage, which suggests the crime vehicle was in proximity to the crime scene several hours before the shooting. The emotional impact of Rath’s death was expressed by his mother, Hasirani Rath, who indicated suspicions toward the Trinamool Congress (TMC) party and requested life imprisonment for the culprits rather than the death penalty, emphasizing her anguish over her son’s senseless murder.

Congress MLAs request that party leadership choose Kerala’s chief minister and enact a resolution

New Delhi, May 07: In the midst of fierce competition for the top position, the 63-member Congress Legislature Party (CLP) in Kerala formally authorized the party leadership on Thursday to select the nominee for the chief minister’s position.Following the parliamentary party’s meeting in Thiruvananthapuram, Chalakudy member Saneesh Kumar Joseph told reporters, “The party passed a one-line resolution asking the high command to take the decision (on the CM’s post).”Sunny Joseph, the head of the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee, introduced the formal motion, which was approved with the backing of prominent figures including VD Satheesan, the opposition leader in the departing assembly, and 69-year-old Ramesh Chennithala, a former Kerala minister and opposition leader. The two veterans and AICC general secretary (organization) Venugopal (63), an Alappuzha Lok Sabha member, are thought to be competing for the top position.Over the course of the following few hours, senior Congress leaders Ajay Maken and Mukul Wasnik, observers assigned by the AICC leadership, met one-on-one with the 63 lawmakers at Indira Bhawan, the party headquarters, to learn about their preferences.The bulk of MLAs have declared their support for Venugopal’s camp. According to reports, Satheesan’s group emphasized that he had the support of all significant allies, including the Communist Marxist Party, Kerala Congress (Joseph), and Indian Union Muslim League (IUML). After ten years of



Left administration, the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) won a landslide victory in the Kerala assembly elections on April 9. In the 140-member assembly, the UDF secured 102 seats.Chennithala’s faction has maintained that he should be given the head position due to his knowledge in administrative matters and seniority within the state unit. Venugopal did not run for office, but Satheesan and Chennithala were elected from their respective strongholds of Paravoor and Haripad. The Muvattupuzha seat winner, Mathew Kuzhalsadan, declared that all lawmakers would follow the high command’s ruling.”The Congress must no longer be depicted by the media as being confused. As a national party, we have produced numerous PMs and CMs. After attending the legislature party meeting, he declared, “We have the ability to choose the next CM.”

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

New Delhi: Holders Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) advanced to the Champions League final after a 1-1 draw against Bayern Munich, winning 6-5 on aggregate. The match began dramatically, with Ousmane Dembele scoring for PSG less than three minutes in, giving them a two-goal advantage in the tie. Despite Bayern’s Harry Kane scoring in stoppage time, PSG effectively con-

tained their opponents’ attack. Forward Desire Doue praised the match, emphasizing it as a dream scenario. PSG faces Premier League leaders Arsenal in the final on May 30 in Budapest and seeks to become the second team to win back-to-back titles since Real Madrid in 1990. Bayern criticized refereeing decisions but struggled to find their form, contrasting their previous

high-scoring match against PSG. Both teams rotated players, and while Bayern showed initial promise, they failed to capitalize despite dominating possession. PSG’s strategy shifted to a more defensive approach in the second half, absorbing Bayern’s pressure while maintaining counter-attacking threats, ultimately sealing their place in the final despite late efforts from the hosts.

PBKS Spin Coach Explains Why Cooper Connolly's Century For SRH Represented More Than Just Runs

New Delhi: Cooper Connolly came into the IPL without a lot of hype around him apart from his exploits in the Big Bash League. However, just like his idol Shaun Marsh did for the franchise during his time in the competition, Connolly has quickly established himself as a run-machine for Punjab. Bought for Rs. 3 Cr, Connolly has filled up the void left by Josh Inglis at No.3 and has scored 377 runs in 10 matches at a strike-rate of 171.36 and an average of 53.86. His latest outing saw him score a fighting 107 for PBKS in their loss to SRH. Speaking at the press conference after the game, the PBKS spin-bowling coach Sairaj Bahutule said that Connolly has a good head on his shoulders and tipped him for success with the Australia team. “He is somebody who’s very positive and he’s a great potential,” Bahutule said in the press conference. “Definitely he’ll play a long period for Australia. He’s a very good allrounder in the making, fabulous fielder. And he’s got a good head



lian team. “He is somebody who’s very positive and he’s a great potential,” Bahutule said in the press conference. “Definitely he’ll play a long period for Australia. He’s a very good allrounder in the making, fabulous fielder. And he’s got a good head

on his shoulders.” While Connolly doesn’t get mentioned alongside the likes of Priyansh Arya, Prabhsimran Singh and PBKS captain Shreyas Iyer for their destructive batting, the southpaw played one of the best knocks of his career on Wednesday, May 6. But at the Uppal, Priyansh, Prabhsimran and Iyer contributed just 9 runs from 12 balls in the chase, Connolly fought till the very end. This ensured that the margin of the loss was less in the end and it didn’t take a big toll

on PBKS’ net run-rate. Bahutule was happy to see how well Connolly has adapted to Indian conditions and playing in the IPL. “He’s a team man,” Bahutule said. “For today’s conditions, we knew at some stage [that] it was a losing cause, but he just made sure that the momentum is on and see how we can get closer to the total. Because obviously things like these also help us in our net run-rate. That’s what he did beautifully. I think he’s learning, you know, being in India, playing in the conditions and the way he has adapted as an overseas player has been fabulous to see at that age [22] to come and to really play in different venues, different pitches and perform so well.” PBKS will next be in action against DC on Monday, May 11.

Jitesh Sharma Leads NECO Master Blaster In Quest For Another Title



Nagpur: Defending champions NECO Master Blaster have expressed strong confidence ahead of Season 2 of the Vidarbha Premier League (VPL), following the successful assembly of a formidable men’s squad at the recent player auction. Led by captain Jitesh Sharma, the men’s team

retains its core strength while welcoming key additions to further bolster the squad. The franchise has focused on achieving the right balance between continuity, experienced performers, and emerging talent, including the addition of Harsh Dubey, who brings valuable top-level experience,

according to a press release from the franchise. Speaking on the team’s preparations, Anand Jayaswal, Owner - NECO Master Blaster, said, “We approached the auction with clarity and purpose. The aim was to strengthen the team in the right areas while continuing to build.

Iran Demands FIFA Guarantees For Respect Before Playing World Cup In United States

Iran Seeks FIFA Guarantees For Participation

New Delhi: Iran football federation chief Mehdi Taj said on Wednesday that he will meet FIFA president Gianni Infantino in the coming days to seek assurances that Iran will be treated with respect during the World Cup in the United States, as growing political tensions cast uncertainty over the country’s participation in the tournament. Taj’s planned talks with Infantino come after Canada last week denied him entry because of his past links to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), a force designated as a terrorist organisation by both the US and Canada.

The development has intensified concerns within Iran’s football establishment ahead of the World Cup, where Team Melli are scheduled to be based in the US and play all three of their group-stage matches. Speaking to state broadcaster IRIB in Tehran, Taj warned that Iran could reconsider participating in the tournament if FIFA failed to guarantee what he described as respect for the country and its institutions. “We will tell FIFA what our expectations are. If they can address them, we will definitely participate,” Taj said. “But if there is no guarantee, then no one has the right to insult us or the pillars of our system. If this path of disrespect continues, we may make a different decision.” The issue has added a political dimension to Iran’s World Cup preparations at a time when tensions surrounding the country have already escalated following the conflict triggered by US and Israeli air strikes on Iran in late February. On Wednesday, Iran’s foreign ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei backed Taj’s position, saying FIFA and the host nations had a responsibility to ensure Iran could compete without political interference. “Our national football team is not simply travelling to the United States, it is going there to participate in the FIFA World Cup,” Baghaei told reporters in Tehran. “Host governments have a clear obligation under FIFA regulations to provide the necessary arrangements and visas without political motives.” Away from the off-field uncertainty, Taj said Iran



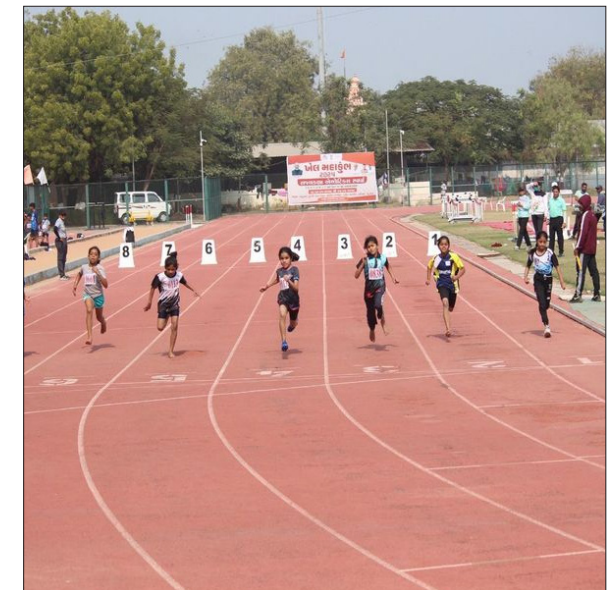
would announce a preliminary 30-man squad this week before trimming it to the final 26 following a training camp in Turkey. Head coach Amir Ghalenoei said the team plans to arrive in the US two weeks before the tournament begins, although efforts to arrange warm-up matches have faced setbacks, with several teams reportedly pulling out at the last minute. Iran are scheduled to open their World Cup campaign against New Zealand in Los Angeles on June 15, with Tucson, Arizona set to serve as the team’s tournament base. For now, however, Iran’s World Cup preparations remain split between football and diplomacy, with the federation seeking FIFA guarantees before fully committing to participation in the tournament.

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World Athletics Day: Khel Mahakumbh Nurtures Talent Across Gujarat's Village And State Levels

Gandhinagar: The youth of Gujarat are making the state proud in the field of sports and are increasingly taking it up as a profession, guided by the far-sighted vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. In 2010, as the then Chief Minister of Gujarat, he launched Khel Mahakumbh. This innovative initiative has brought new energy to athletes and encouraged talent to emerge from even the remotest areas, according to a press release from Gujarat CMO. World Athletics Day is observed annually on 7 May to raise awareness among young people about the importance of fitness, discipline, and sports.

The theme for 2026, ‘Sport: Building Bridges, Breaking Barriers’, reflects the role of athletics in strengthening youth and promoting unity, equality, and social cohesion through physical activity. Athletics is known as the foundation of all sports, forming the base for overall sporting development. The athletics competition organised under the Khel Mahakumbh initiative in Gujarat is taking this vision forward, providing athletes



letes from the village to the state level with a platform to showcase their talent. This year, the state-level athletics competition under Khel Mahakumbh 2025 was held at Nadiad in Kheda district from 16 January to 3 February, with 9,383 athletes from across the state participating enthusiastically. The competition was organised by the state government at the High Performance Centre under the leadership of Chief Minister Shri Bhupendra Patel. The participants included 4,694

boys and 4,689 girls across Under-9, Under-11, Under-14, Under-17, and open age groups, reflecting the growing interest and wide participation in sports across Gujarat. 390 events were organised in the state-level athletics competition of Khel Mahakumbh 2025, covering 30m to 5000m running, 80m, 100m, 110m and 400m hurdles, long jump, high jump, pole vault, triple jump, shot put, discus throw, javelin throw, hammer throw, relay, and race walking. Players who performed well received

medals and tracksuits. Khel Mahakumbh has helped Gujarat produce talented athletes such as Sarita Gayakwad, Mayur Malviya, Ruchit Mori and Murali Gavit. Sarita Gayakwad, known as the ‘Golden Girl’ of Dang, won a gold medal in the women’s 4x400m relay at the Asian Games 2018, while Murali Gavit earned a bronze medal in the men’s 10,000m event at the 2019 Asian Athletics Championships, bringing glory to Gujarat. The state government continues to support such athletes and promote the steady growth of sports across the state. Captain de Leede expressed excitement at leading the team into uncharted territory. “We are super excited for our first-ever appearance in the ICC T20 World Cup. It’s a great opportunity to compete with the best teams in the world and showcase the talent we have in the Netherlands,” she said, adding that the team hopes to inspire the next generation of cricketers back home. Placed in a challenging Group 1, the Netherlands will face India women’s team, Australia, South Africa, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

AIFF Asserts India Is Too Large A Market To Miss Out On World Cup Broadcasting



New Delhi: The All India Football Federation (AIFF) has expressed confidence that a broadcast deal for the FIFA World Cup 2026 will be reached, despite the tournament being only 30 days away with no confirmed platform for Indian viewers. While football fans across the country remain in the dark regarding where to watch the competition, AIFF Deputy General Secretary M Satyanarayan said that India’s market size makes it nearly impossible for FIFA or major broadcasters to ignore. The current impasse is widely understood to be a result of a valuation gap between FIFA’s asking price

And the bids submitted by Indian broadcast houses. Reports suggest that while FIFA has lowered its initial expectations, broadcasters remain hesitant to meet the current figures. “We are very optimistic that something will happen,” Satyanarayan told India Today. “Either FIFA may have to come down a bit, or the broadcasters bidding for it may have to go up a bit. I don’t think anyone will ignore such a huge market like India.” Curious about which broadcasters are in the race for FIFA World Cup rights in India? We have got you covered. He noted that the commercial viability of the rights is likely being im-

pacted by the tournament’s logistics. With the 2026 edition hosted across the United States, Canada, and Mexico, the majority of matches will kick off during the early hours of the morning in India. “Maybe one reason affecting the bids is the match timings, since most games will be played late at night,” Satyanarayan observed. “That could be discouraging broadcasters from offering higher amounts. But I’m sure something will work out because we have many broadcasters in the country who understand the potential of the World Cup.” Despite the looming deadline, the AIFF has clarified that it cannot intervene in the negotiations.

Bowling To Top Batters Like Klaasen And Shreyas Is Daunting, Says Krunal Pandya

Lucknow: Royal Challengers Bengaluru all-rounder Krunal Pandya said the insane hitting power of modern day batters in the IPL is forcing the bowlers to evolve rapidly and add more variety to their craft to stay competitive. Pandya has been witnessing this transformation since 2016, and understands that the league has evolved into a high-intensity power driven spectacle. “If you follow the IPL closely over the last 10 years, the striking ability of batters has changed drastically. Today, power-hitting is constantly evolving. The new-age batters coming in have an insane ability to clear the ropes with ease,” Pandya said on JioStar. “So as a bowler, I have realised that you have to add variety to your bowling arsenal. You must stay one step ahead of the batter.

That is how bowling bouncers and yorkers came into the process,” added Pandya, who has so far taken nine wickets this season and has crossed the century wicket mark overall in the IPL. Pandya, who had earlier played for Mumbai Indians and Lucknow Super Giants, said he



has managed to stay relevant in a competition tailor-made for batters, relying on bouncers despite being a spinner. It was not that I suddenly woke up one day and started bowling bouncers as a spinner. It was a very well thought out plan, understanding what a bouncer does psychologically to a batter. “Being a batter myself helps me think like

a batter. I always try to stay one step ahead of the batter in terms of thought process and then focus on how to execute my skill,” he added. The 35-year-old said bowling to quality batters like Heinrich Klaasen and Shreyas Iyer can be daunting but reading the situation and adapting to it helped him stay with them. “My approach depends on

the situation. Sometimes I need to attack, other times I need to choke the runs. My main thought is always about bowling the best possible delivery for that moment. Heinrich Klaasen loves taking on spinners. Against batters like him, the better balls you bowl, the more dot balls you create, and the higher your chances of forcing a

mistake. You can’t just keep attacking mindlessly. “Sometimes, when a dangerous batter is at the crease, you have to go for the wicket and take a risk. It all depends on the game situation,” he added. Pandya said against players like Iyer, who is comfortable against spin, his focus was on targeting their weaker scoring areas. “Shreyas Iyer is also a very good player of spin. Against quality batters like him, where the margin for error is small, my thinking is always the same: how can I make them hit to their weaker areas? “For example, if a batter scores easily over covers, how can I force him to hit over mid-wicket? If he likes to slog sweep, how can I make him hit over long off? That has been my game plan against most batters, including Shreyas,” he added. Pandya added that on small grounds like the Chinnaswamy Stadium where the margin for error is minimal, he preferred to take the boundary size out of his mind, focusing on delivering his best possible ball. “On grounds like Wankhede or Chinnaswamy, especially Chinnaswamy, are small.