

In the Patna Coaching Center Case, Khan Sir's bodyguards were denied bail

Patna, June 16: A Patna court on Tuesday denied bail to two bodyguards of educator Faizal Khan, popularly known as Khan Sir, in connection with an ongoing dispute linked to a coaching institute in the city. The court declined to grant immediate relief and directed police to submit an updated case diary before the matter is heard again on June 20. The Khan Sir bodyguards bail plea was heard at Patna Civil Court, where defence lawyers sought their release from custody. The court, however, observed that several aspects of the case required further examination before any decision on bail could be taken. According to court proceedings, the judge asked investigators to provide an updated case diary detailing developments in the case. The two accused will remain in judicial custody until at least the next hearing.

The case has attracted attention in Bihar because it involves one of the state's



most prominent coaching educators and follows a series of allegations and counter-allegations between rival parties connected to the coaching industry. The dispute stems from an incident reported on the evening of June 2 at Khan Sir's coaching centre in Patna. During the epi-

sode, a security guard was allegedly assaulted.

Following the incident, Khan Sir alleged that Roshan Anand, director of the coaching institute Gyan Bindu, had orchestrated the attack. Allegations were also made that gunshots had been fired outside the coaching centre during the

disturbance.

Police subsequently examined CCTV footage and other evidence as part of the investigation. According to information presented in the case, investigators were unable to confirm the alleged gunfire reported during the June 2 incident through available

surveillance footage. Investigators later reviewed CCTV footage recorded the day after the reported attack. According to police findings cited in court proceedings, the footage showed one of Khan Sir's bodyguards discharging a firearm. Based on the CCTV evidence, police

arrested both bodyguards. They have remained in custody since their arrest, and their bail applications are still under consideration by the court. The Khan Sir bodyguards bail case is now linked to broader investigations into the events surrounding the dispute and the actions of multiple individuals connected to it. Several people, including Roshan Anand and his brother Prince Yadav, were named as accused in the matter. Separate legal proceedings have also involved Khan Sir himself. Police had registered a case against Khan Sir and initiated efforts to arrest him. However, he secured anticipatory bail from a court on June 9, providing protection from immediate arrest in connection with the case. Roshan Anand was granted bail on June 15. The legal proceedings involving various accused continue as investigators examine evidence collected from the scene and surveillance footage.

Exam schedules for the 2026-2027 session are approved by PPU



Patna, June 16: Patliputra University (PPU) on Monday approved its examination calendar for the 2026-27 academic session at a meeting of the examination board chaired by the vice-chancellor (VC) Upendra Prasad Singh.

According to PPU registrar Abu Bakar, the examination calendar has been prepared to ensure timely conduct of examinations and publication of results in accordance with the provisions of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 which has been fully implemented across all constituent and affiliated colleges of the university.

The meeting reviewed various examination-related matters and emphasised strict adherence to the academic schedule to maintain transparency and efficiency in the examination system, he said.

Meanwhile, the vice-chancellor will release results of the undergraduate (UG) semester VI examination for the 2023-27 academic session on Tuesday. "The declaration of the results assumes special significance as it marks the passing out of the first batch of students who pursued their studies under the framework of NEP 2020 at the university," PPU examination controller Manoj Kumar said.

In addition, the successful completion of the four-year undergraduate programme by the first NEP batch reflects the university's commitment to implementing the reforms envisaged under the new education policy. The policy focuses on multidisciplinary learning, skill development, flexibility in course selection and outcome-based education, Kumar said adding the VC expressed satisfaction over the smooth implementation of NEP 2020 and the examination system in line with national educational reforms.

The government denies rumours of a route change for the Patna-Purnia Motorway and reveals the actual situation

Patna, June 16: The Bihar government has dismissed reports claiming changes in the alignment of the Patna-Purnia Expressway, calling them misleading and factually incorrect. Pankaj Kumar Pal, Secretary of the Road Construction Department, said no alteration has been made to the expressway's approved route and that land acquisition work in Samastipur district is being conducted strictly according to the original alignment.

He clarified that the stretch between kilometre 48 and kilometre 53 remains unchanged and that all ongoing acquisition proceedings are being carried out under the alignment approved for the project. According to the department, the expressway's route was finalised after detailed assessment of socio-economic factors and technical feasibility in line with prescribed guidelines.

The alignment was approved by the designated committee after extensive deliberations. The committee includes the Secretary of the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, the Chairman of the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI), and the Director General of NHAI. Pal said the alignment received final approval



on January 15, 2025, following which statutory notifications were issued for affected villages and land parcels in Samastipur district.

Rejecting allegations that the alignment between kilometre 48 and kilometre 53 was altered under external influence, he said such claims have no basis in fact and do not reflect the ground reality.

The secretary also clarified that the main building of KSR College is completely safe and is not affected by the project alignment. The Patna-Purnia Expressway is expected to significantly

improve connectivity between central and eastern Bihar. Once operational, the corridor is projected to reduce travel time between Patna and the Seemanchal region to around three hours.

Officials say the project will play a key role in boosting economic activity across the state by improving freight movement and passenger travel. The expressway is also expected to provide a faster route for vehicles heading towards West Bengal and Assam, strengthening regional connectivity in eastern India.

SC's notice to the EC and state government regarding the PIL against Minister Deepak Prakash

Patna, June 16: The Supreme Court on Monday sought a reply from Bihar govt and Election Commission on a PIL challenging the reappointment of Deepak Prakash as the panchayati raj minister in the state despite the fact that he is still not a member of either House of the state legislature. Hearing the PIL filed by one Rakesh Singh, a bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice V Mohanan also sought reply from Deepak, the son of Rajya Sabha member and Rashtriya Lok Morcha (RLM) chief Upendra Kushwaha, in the case.

The court asked the petitioner's counsel, "Is he still a minister?" When the counsel said yes, the CJI ordered to issue a notice to Deepak also and posted the matter for hearing in July when the SC resumes normal functioning after the partial court working days. RLM spokesman Ram Pukar Sinha said the party will respond only



after receiving the notice. The petition, filed under Article 32 of the Constitution, questions the basis on which Deepak continues as a minister. It also challenges his reappointment on May 7, 2026, contending that it violates Article 164(4) of the Constitution.

The petitioner has cited a Supreme Court ruling in S R Chaudhary vs State of Punjab in 2001, and asserted that the six-month exemption under Article 164(4) cannot be "reset" through resignation, cabinet reshuffles, or a change of chief minister. The

petition alleges violations of Articles 14, 164(2), 164(4), and 141 of the Constitution. Under Article 164(4) of the Constitution, a person who is not a member of the House can serve as a minister for a maximum of six consecutive months, during which time they must secure membership of either House (in case of a state having legislative council as well).

The petitioners' counsel, Sudeep Chandra and Sanya Kaushal, argued that Deepak first became a minister in the Nitish cabinet on Nov 20, 2025 despite not be-

ing a member of either the Bihar legislative assembly or council. He served as a minister for five months and ceased to be the same on April 15 following Nitish's resignation as the CM. He was appointed minister again on May 7 in the Samrat Choudhary govt, though based on the initial appointment, his six-month limit expired on May 20, 2026.

The petitioner argued that the authorities attempted to carry forward the unexpired portion of the original grace period by fragmenting, interrupting, suspending, and then reappointing him as the minister after resigning, under a reconstituted govt while the same legislative assembly continues in office. The petitioner argued that repeatedly appointing an unelected individual as a minister constitutes a misuse of constitutional power, aimed at indirectly extending the six-month exemption period granted to non-legislators.

Black Marketing of Government Medicines Exposed in Bihar IGIMS Supplies Found for Sale at Private Medical Stores

Patna, June 16: A new case of alleged black marketing of government-supplied medicines has emerged in Bihar, where drugs meant for free distribution at the Indira Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences (IGIMS) were discovered in private medical stores in Patna. Following a complaint, officials from the Drug Control Department conducted inspections at two stores—New Janata Medical Store and wholesale distributor New Chandan Pharma—both operated by brothers. The raids led to the recovery of nine medical devices and nine injections supplied to IGIMS, as well as a significant amount of expired medicines dating back six months to a year. Additionally, New Chandan Pharma was found to have expired medicines, unbilled sales, and discrepancies in inventory. Two medications had QR codes that were unscannable, resulting in their sale being suspend-

ed pending verification from manufacturers. The authenticity of the medicines will be confirmed following reports from the respective companies, as the Government of India has implemented QR code-based verification for many high-selling pharmaceutical products to assist consumers in identifying genuine items. The raids, supervised by Drug Inspectors Amal Kumar and Yashwant Jha, resulted in the seizure of government medicines and medical devices, with subsequent action initiated against the operators. According to officials, complaints had alleged that a network of middlemen had been involved in the illegal trade of government medicines for nearly two years. Investigators are now examining how medicines and medical devices meant for hospital use reached private retail outlets. Aftab, the operator of New Janata Medical Store, told of-

ficials that his shop supplies medicines to patients covered under the Ayushman Bharat scheme visiting IGIMS. He claimed that relatives of patients often returned unused medicines after treatment. However, the Drug Control Department is examining why such medicines were accepted and retained instead of being destroyed as per protocol or returned to the hospital. Officials are also investigating whether markings such as "Not for Sale" or "IGIMS Supply" were removed from government medicines before they were sold in the open market. There is further suspicion that expiry dates may have been altered in some cases. Dr. Vibhuti Prasanna Sinha, Deputy Director of IGIMS, said he was unaware of any medicines from the institute being sold through private shops.

He stated that the institute would fully cooperate with

the Drug Control Administration's investigation and would also conduct its own internal review if required. Assistant Drug Controller Chunendra Mahto said officials would inspect medicine storage facilities, distribution records, and inventory management systems at IGIMS. Relevant personnel, including the store in-charge, are expected to be questioned as part of the inquiry. The inability to scan QR codes on two branded medicines has raised concerns about possible counterfeit products.

Officials suspect that low-cost generic medicines may have been repackaged and sold as premium branded products. Samples have been sent for testing, and further action will depend on the manufacturers' findings. Items recovered during the raids included albumin injections, anti-rabies vaccines, buprenorphine injections, codeine-based medicines,

prazosin, cefixime, amoxicillin-clavulanate, ceftriaxone, ceftazidime, meropenem, erythropoietin injections, catheters, and other surgical equipment. Investigations by the Department of Pharmaceuticals have previously highlighted cases where inexpensive generic medicines were marketed in packaging resembling well-known brands. Officials said a generic medicine costing between Rs 80 and Rs 120 can sometimes be sold for Rs 300 to Rs 350 when presented as a premium brand, increasing costs for patients while generating illegal profits for traders.

The Drug Control Department's investigation is ongoing and is expected to determine whether the case involves theft of government supplies, counterfeit medicines, or organised diversion of public healthcare resources into the private market.

Flyers are greeted with joy at Patna airport

Patna, June 16: Jayprakash Narayan International Airport observed 'Yatri Suvidha Diwas 2026' on Monday with a series of passenger-focused initiatives, cultural programmes and community outreach activities aimed at enhancing the travel experience while showcasing Bihar's rich heritage and promoting social responsibility.

The celebrations began with the collective singing of Vande Mataram. Passengers arriving at and departing from the airport were welcomed with 'Tika-Chandan' and special welcome kits, creating a festive atmosphere across the terminal.

To make the occasion more engaging, selfie booths were installed outside the terminal building, while cultural and folk dance performances were organised throughout the day. Local cuisines, traditional art and craft exhibitions were also displayed, offering travellers a glimpse into Bihar's cultural richness and craftsmanship.



As part of efforts to improve passenger services, the airport set up a dedicated feedback wall inside the terminal, encouraging travellers to share their suggestions and experiences regarding airport facilities and operations.

The airport also organised a blood donation camp, free health check-up camp and free eye check-up camp for passengers and contractual employees. In a push towards environmental sustainability, a sapling plantation drive was conducted on the city-side premises of the airport, and saplings were

distributed to arriving passengers.

To promote youth engagement, a painting competition was held for students of Kendriya Vidyalaya. Students from St Xavier's College were invited for an airport tour and career counselling session, providing them with insights into airport operations and opportunities in the aviation industry.

Airport director Chandra Pratap Dwivedi said the celebration reflects the airport's continued commitment to improving passenger amenities for safe and seamless operations.

The Assam Government will undertake a survey on encroached pathways in Guwahati to eradicate unlawful possession of pavements

Dispur , Jun 16: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) said on Monday, June 15, that the Assam government will soon conduct a large-scale study to identify persons occupying footpaths around Guwahati and commence eviction actions as part of its larger urban development and public space restoration initiatives.Ranjib Kumar Sharma, spokesperson for the Assam BJP, told a news conference at the party's state headquarters in Guwahati that the effort seeks to eradicate unlawful pavement occupation and recover public areas in order to enhance urban administration and infrastructure. Sharma alleged that a section of unidentified individuals had occupied footpaths and established businesses in these spaces, leading to inconvenience for residents. He further claimed that some of these activities were linked to broader social and demographic concerns. According to Sharma, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has already announced the survey and



subsequent eviction drive across Guwahati, and BJP workers would extend support to the government during the implementation process.He further claimed that several small business spaces located on sidewalks had been transferred from indigenous communities during the tenure of the previous Congress-led government and stated that

the present administration intends to reclaim such areas.“The government will now conduct a survey to identify these individuals and evict them. The small businesses on sidewalks that were taken from indigenous people and handed over during the earlier regime will be reclaimed. Steps will be taken to ensure they are

returned to local communities,” Sharma said.The BJP spokesperson stated that the survey is scheduled to begin from August 16 and described it as part of a broader initiative to improve the city's urban landscape.He said the government has already initiated several infrastructure and beautification projects, including road develop-

ment and flyover enhancement works, and expressed confidence that reclaiming public pathways would contribute to making Guwahati more organised and visually improved. Sharma added that BJP workers would fully cooperate with authorities for the smooth conduct of the proposed survey and eviction exercise.

Meghalaya gives cash prizes to 15 outstanding athletes at Sports Conclave

Guwahati, Jun 15:On June 16, Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma honored 15 exceptional athletes during the Meghalaya Sports Conclave, recognizing their achievements in six sports disciplines.The athletes from Archery, Athletics, Swimming, Weightlifting, Wrestling, and Football received cash prizes ranging from Rs 25,000 to Rs 87,500 in celebration of their achievements and dedication to sports. Speaking on the occasion, Sangma said celebrating sporting excellence is essential not only to encourage athletes to continue striving for success but also to inspire the younger generation to pursue their dreams through sports.The Chief Minister noted that Meghalaya has consistently produced talented athletes who have brought laurels to the state and the country. He reiterated the government's commitment to strengthening the sporting ecosystem and creating greater opportunities for aspiring athletes.The awards ceremony formed part of the Meghalaya Sports Conclave, which focuses on promoting sports development, nurturing talent, and fostering a culture of excellence among the youth.Sangma said the achievements of the awardees serve as a powerful motivation for young sportspersons to dream bigger, work harder, and achieve greatness on national and international platforms.

Manipur CM chairs NCORD meeting, promises tougher action on drug trafficking



Imphal , Jun 16: On June 16, Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh presided over a meeting of the Narco Coordination Centre (NCORD) at the Secretariat in Imphal to examine state-wide initiatives

to combat drug trafficking and substance misuse.The conference was attended by Home Minister K. Govindas Singh, top police officials, the Director General of Police, the Security Adviser, and members from security

agencies such as the Assam Rifles, Border Security Force, and Central Reserve Police Force. During the meeting, the Chief Minister reviewed strategies to strengthen intelligence sharing, inter-agency coor-

dination, and enforcement mechanisms to curb the trafficking of narcotics and psychotropic substances. Emphasising the need for a coordinated approach, Khemchand Singh said the state government remains committed to dismantling drug networks and intensifying action against those involved in the illegal trade. The NCORD meeting also focused on enhancing cooperation among law enforcement and security agencies to tackle the drug menace more effectively and prevent substance abuse, particularly among the youth.The Chief Minister reiterated Manipur's commitment to building a drug-free state through sustained enforcement, awareness initiatives, and stronger institutional coordination.

Jayanta Malla Baruah attends APFBC Phase-II closure workshop, highlights Assam's conservation achievements

Guwahati, Jun 16: Assam Finance, Environment & Forest, Mines & Minerals Minister Jayanta Malla Baruah attended the closure workshop of the Assam Project on Forest and Biodiversity Conservation (APFBC) Phase-II in Guwahati on June 16.Speaking at the event held at Radisson Blu Hotel Guwahati, the minister said Assam has made significant progress in forest management and biodiversity conservation under the leadership of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, emerging as one of the leading states in the country in the sector.

Baruah lauded the efforts of the Forest Department, the APFBC Society, partner organisations, and local communities for their collective contribution to the success of the landmark conservation initiative. He noted that the project has played



a crucial role in strengthening sustainable forest management, protecting biodiversity, and promoting community participation in conservation efforts across the state.The minister

also reaffirmed the government's commitment to preserving Assam's rich natural heritage and further enhancing conservation measures in the years ahead.

Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Launches TRACTION 2026 Filmmaking Initiative to Promote Tourism and MSMEs

Itanagar, Jun 16: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu launched the ‘TRACTION 2026 Residency and Film Challenge’ online platform on Monday, June 15. The program aims to promote tourism, culture, and MSMEs through digital storytelling.The program, funded by the Union Ministry of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) through the Raising and Accelerating MSME Performance (RAMP) scheme, is being carried out in partnership with the state Industries Department, the Centre for Cultural Research and Documentation (CCRD), and Rajiv Gandhi University. Khandu launched the program at the Civil Secretariat in Itanagar, stating that Arunachal Pradesh has immense potential in tourism, environment, traditional knowledge, and indigenous goods that require more worldwide attention. He described the effort as a

forum for showcasing the state's “authentic stories”.“TRACTION 2026 is more than just a filmmaking challenge. “It is a platform to tell the authentic stories of Arunachal Pradesh to the world,” the Chief Minister remarked, adding that digital platforms and social media may help Northeast creators become cultural ambassadors. State Industries Minister Nyato Dukam said the initiative would help combine creativity with economic development by using visual storytelling to highlight local cuisines, crafts and tourist destinations.Industries and Commerce Commissioner Amjad Tak said 25 emerging content creators from the eight Northeastern states will be selected to produce films and digital content showcasing Arunachal Pradesh's tourism potential, GI-tagged products and entrepreneurial stories.He added that creative storytelling can support market development and

branding for local startups, citing traditional handmade paper in Dirang as an example of heritage products that require digital promotion.RGU assistant professor and course director Moji Riba said social media has become a parallel economy and stressed the need for responsible storytelling that reflects the state's cultural identity.The 15-day residency programme will be held from August 7 to August 21 at Rajiv Gandhi University, hosting selected creators and influencers from across the Northeast.Participants will be required to produce a five-minute film as part of their deliverables, along with documenting their residency experience.The top two entries will receive cash prizes of Rs 1 lakh each along with trophies and citations. Selected works will also be showcased on official government social media platforms for wider outreach.

The Supreme Court has directed Tripura to organize Village Committee elections in the TTAADC by September

Agartala , Jun 16: In a landmark breakthrough for the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC), the Supreme Court has ordered the State Election Commission to hold the long-awaited Village Committee (VC) elections by September 2026.The decision came during the hearing of a writ suit brought by Pradyot Kishore Manikya Deb Barma, who had challenged the authorities' inability to hold the polls, which had been delayed for over a decade.

Announcing the development, Pradyot said the Tripura State Election Commission submitted an affidavit before the apex court stating that the election process would begin in the first week of September and be completed within the same month.Describing the order as a major victory for the people of the TTAADC, Pradyot said



the constitutional rights of tribal residents had been restored after years of legal struggle.“The people of the TTAADC have been waiting for 10 years. This is not the victory of any political party, but the victory of the Constitution and the people,” he said.The Village Committees function as grassroots local govern-

ance institutions in the TTAADC areas, and the absence of elections for a prolonged period had drawn criticism from various quarters.Pradyot expressed hope that the conduct of elections would pave the way for stronger local governance and accelerated development across the tribal council areas.

Minister Ashwini Ray Sarkar said Assam would soon conduct a study of OBC people



Dispur, Jun 16: Assam will soon conduct a detailed census of communities classified as Other

Backward Classes (OBC), Social Justice and Empowerment Minister Ashwini Ray Sarkar has declared.

Manipur Deputy Chief Minister charges KNF-P of abducting and murdering six Naga citizens

Imphal, Jun 16: Losii Dikho, Manipur's Deputy Chief Minister, said that KNF-P cadres were responsible for the deaths of six Naga people, including two pastors from Kon-sakhul village, who were kidnapped from Leilon Vaiphei on May 13, and demanded harsh punishment for those implicated.Losii Dikho, speaking to ANI at his official house on Sunday, described the event as “beyond human belief” and said the cruelty had stunned and infuriated the state administration and people. “We know it was done by the KNF-P. They were the ones who took them,” Dikho said, alleging that the victims were handed over to armed cadres with the involvement of certain women groups, local society members and village chairmen.“What can I say? This is beyond human belief, the kind of action they have done. We cannot find appropriate words to express our anger, sorrow and sadness,” he said.The Deputy Chief Minister said the state government has already done its part and informed that the National Investigation Agency (NIA) has taken over the case.



Nagaland capital expected to get rail link by December 2029: NFR

Kohima , Jun 16: On Monday, the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) told Nagaland Governor Nand Kishore Yadav that active construction is ongoing on the 78.42 km Dimapur-Kohima railway project, which is projected to connect the state capital to the national railway network by December 2029.During a project review, NFR (Construction) officials informed the Governor of the progress achieved on the strategically vital rail line and stated that measures were underway to speed the construction. Once finished, the Dimapur-Kohima railway project would give direct rail access to Nagaland's capital, considerably increasing transportation, trade, tourism, and general socioeconomic growth in the state. A Lok Bhavan official said the Governor chaired a review meeting on the status of the Dhanisiri-Zubza (Dimapur-Kohima) new line railway project and the Integrated Redevelopment of Dimapur Railway Station with officials of the NFR (Construction) in Kohima on Monday. During the review meeting, the NFR officials apprised the Governor of the progress made under the 78.42 km Dimapur-Kohima Railway Project, a National Project aimed at providing rail connectivity to Kohima district for the first time. The project traverses Assam's Karbi Anglong district and Nagaland's Chumoukedima and Kohima districts The Governor was informed that the Dhanisiri-Shokhuvi and Shokhuvi-Molvom sections have already been commissioned, while work on the remaining stretches is progressing despite challenging terrain and climatic conditions.The

official noted that the railway project is expected to significantly enhance connectivity, reduce travel time between Dimapur and Kohima, improve mobility for students, patients and commuters, facilitate freight movement, promote tourism, generate employment opportunities and contribute to the socio economic development of Nagaland and the wider Northeastern region.The NFR officials highlighted several challenges affecting project execution, including difficult geological conditions, landslide prone terrain, heavy monsoon rainfall, poor rock quality, limited working seasons, shortage of skilled labour and infrastructure constraints.

Particular attention was drawn to challenges posed by high pressure groundwater ingress and fault zones encountered during tunnel construction. The Governor also reviewed the progress of the Integrated Redevelopment of Dimapur Railway Station, sanctioned under the station redevelopment programme. The project, scheduled for completion by July 2028, includes modern passenger facilities, office complexes, residential quarters, circulation areas and associated infrastructure.

The railway officials briefed the Governor on ongoing foundation and construction works at various project sites. During the meeting, NFR sought the state government's cooperation in facilitating approach roads to upcoming railway stations, expediting the mutation of acquired railway land, and addressing issues related to riverbed mining near major railway bridges.

“Adding more pressure”: Former BJP leader Annamalai challenges the Center’s stringent security protocols for the NEET retest

Chennai, June 16: Former president of BJP’s Tamil Nadu unit, K Annamalai, has raised concerns regarding the high security measures adopted for the upcoming NEET UG re-test. In a post on X, the Tamil leader stated that such measures would only add to the pressure on candidates, rather than decrease them. “Two-tier CRPF CISF escort with IAF airlift. 4-layer CCTV with AI surveillance. Biometric & facial recognition before entry. Multiple layers of frisking. Multi-level oversight with direct monitoring from the prime minister’s office. Yes, you read it right. But these are not arrangements to buy high-level, classified, military-grade software. These are the arrangements made by the Ministry of Education for the NEET retest scheduled for June 21,



2026,” he wrote on X. He added that while students would appreciate orders to prevent paper leaks, the added security for an exam that lasts for

three hours would only add to the “already ballooning exam pressure.” “While the government has taken measures to contain leaks, they have

forgotten the additional burden they have imposed on a young student before they take up an assessment, one that they have spent months preparing for, dis-

solving the entire purpose of our exam system and the NEP 2020’s goal to reduce ‘Exam Stress’,” the former BJP leader wrote further. The Tamil Nadu leader also flagged that the measures adopted by the Centre may not resolve the issue, but create problems. Annamalai also flagged the issues candidates are facing while trying to download their NEET UG admit cards for the re-test, a document essential to appear for the medical entrance examination. In response to Annamalai, Vinoj P Selvam, the state secretary at BJP’s Tamil Nadu hit back and stated such measures are normal for a large-scale examination. “China’s Gaokao is taken by over 13 million students every year under some of the world’s strictest examination protocols. Nobody calls it “militarisation”

they call it protecting merit,” he wrote on X, adding that students deserve confidence in the system, and the measures implemented for NEET aim to reflect that. The National Testing Agency (NTA) will conduct the re-examination for the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) on June 21. This re-examination follows the cancellation of the May 3 exam due to a paper leak. The NEET paper leak, which triggered massive uproar in the country, is currently being investigated by the Central Bureau of Investigation. Ahead of the re-test, the Centre announced a series of security measures to ensure a leak does not occur again, including roping in the Indian Air Force to transport the question papers to the respective exam centres.

Govt amends rules to bring cough syrups under stricter regulatory oversight



New Delhi, June 16: Amid drug quality and patient safety concerns, the Union Health ministry has amended rules to prohibit sale of syrups, including cough syrups, without a doctor’s prescription across the country. The move is aimed at bringing syrup-based formulations, including cough syrups, under stricter regulatory oversight, officials said. Earlier, prior to this amendment, entry No. 13 of Schedule K permitted the sale of cough syrups in villages with a population of less than 1,000 without requiring compliance with certain retail sale licensing provisions, the ministry said in a statement.

With the omission of the word “syrup” from the said entry, this exemption will no longer be available for cough syrups. “Consequently, the sale and dispensing of cough syrups in smaller villages will now be required to take place only through duly licensed pharmacies in accordance with the provisions of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 and the Rules framed thereunder,” the statement said. The amendment has been notified through the Drugs Rules, 2026, published in the official gazette. The Schedule K of the Drugs Rules, 1945 provides exemptions from certain provisions of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 and the rules made thereunder for specified classes of drugs. It specifies categories of drugs that are exempt from certain provisions relating to

manufacture, sale and distribution under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act and Rules, subject to prescribed conditions. The move follows a draft notification issued by the government in December last year seeking objections and suggestions from stakeholders. The amendment has been undertaken to strengthen regulatory oversight of syrup formulations and to align the exemption framework with contemporary public health and safety requirements, the statement said. “The measure is expected to promote responsible distribution and sale of cough syrups while ensuring greater compliance with regulatory standards across the country,” the health ministry said. “Manufacturers, distributors and retailers dealing with cough syrups are advised to ensure strict adherence to the applicable licensing and regulatory requirements under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 and the Drugs Rules, 1945,” it stated. The decision comes against the backdrop of increased regulatory scrutiny of cough syrups and other liquid oral formulations in recent years following reports of contamination-linked deaths of children in several countries. According to sources, the latest amendment is expected to enhance traceability and regulatory supervision of syrup-based medicines by ensuring that manufacturers and sellers comply with stricter licensing and quality-control requirements.

Pawan may get key role in BJP: Delhi MP

Patna, June 16: Bhojpuri singer-actor-turned-politician Pawan Singh might soon be entrusted with a significant responsibility in the BJP, third-term North-east Delhi MP Manoj Kumar Tiwari said on Monday. Pawan has recently been elected to the legislative council. When asked about the possibility of Pawan becoming a minister in Samrat Choudhary’s cabinet, Tiwari told reporters at the Patna airport, “Don’t make me say everything.” He, however, hinted that Pawan might soon be entrusted with a significant responsibility as he is a committed party worker and delivers whatever is asked of him. Pawan, who was instrumental in the defeat of RLM chief Upendra Kushwaha in the last Lok Sabha elections from Karakat by contesting himself as an independent

candidate was expected by the BJP to be accommodated in the Rajya Sabha. But the BJP later decided to make him an MLC first. “The position of an MLC is not a minor one. Rather, it is a significant and important responsibility to serve the people of Bihar. Politicians strive for years to become an MLC. Through this position, one can serve the public on a large scale,” Tiwari said about Pawan. Expressing concern over the turf war between two coaching institutes in Patna, MP Tiwari said he was deeply saddened by the entire episode. “The cut-throat competition witnessed among coaching institutes is tarnishing the image of Bihar’s coaching sector. It is fostering a perception of a ‘coaching mafia’ among the public, which is a cause for concern,” he said.

In Patna, Bihar DG (Special Branch) opens a two-day cyber security workshop

Patna, June 16: Bihar’s Director General (Special Branch and Operations) Kundan Krishnan on Monday emphasised that cyber security has become one of the most significant issues affecting public welfare in an era marked by rapid digital advancement and increasing dependence on technology. Speaking after inaugurating a two-day training workshop on cyber security for police personnel at the Police Headquarters in Patna, Kundan Krishnan underlined the growing importance of safeguarding digital systems and networks against emerging threats. The workshop has been organised for police officials engaged in cyber security-related duties and aims to strengthen their capabilities in tackling cybercrime and protecting citizens from online fraud. Addressing the participants, Kundan Krishnan said,



“Cybersecurity has become an important issue in the fields of banking, e-commerce, communication, electricity supply, transport and other sectors”. He noted that the expanding use of digital platforms across essential services has made cyber security a critical concern for both governments and citizens. The senior police officer urged the attending officials to remain abreast of the constantly evolving methods employed by cyber criminals. He stressed the need

for continuous learning and adaptation, calling upon officers to equip themselves with the latest technological tools and knowledge to effectively counter cyber threats. Kundan Krishnan further advised police personnel to focus on the development of indigenous technologies capable of identifying cyber threats at an early stage. Such innovations, he said, would not only help in preventing cyber attacks but would also facilitate quicker

detection and investigation of cyber offences. This, in turn, would enable law enforcement agencies to deliver timely justice to victims of cyber fraud. Outlining the expanding scope of cyber security as a professional field, he observed that significant opportunities are emerging for both police personnel and members of the public who acquire expertise in cyber security. According to him, the growing digital ecosystem has created a strong demand for skilled professionals capable of addressing increasingly sophisticated cyber challenges. Among the senior officers present on the inaugural day of the workshop was Amrit Raj, Additional Director General (CCSU), who highlighted the work being carried out by cyber units at the district level, along with other officials associated with cyber security initiatives in the state.

CMFRI drafts national guidelines for marine ecolabelling to boost seafood exports



Kochi, June 16: The CMFRI has prepared a draft of India’s National Guidelines for Marine Ecolabelling, proposing a comprehensive framework to regulate seafood sustainability certification programmes and enhance the global competitiveness of the country’s marine products. The draft, released as a discussion paper, comes amid growing demand for internationally recognised sustainability certification for Indian seafood and increasing interest from global certification agencies in the country, the ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute said in a statement on Tuesday. A key feature of the proposed guidelines is the protection of the interests of the country’s fishing community while promoting environmental sustainability and facilitating premium market access for Indian

seafood products, it said. The draft recognises that although ecolabelling can help fisheries gain access to high-value international markets and improve returns for fishers, market-driven certification systems may create barriers for small-scale and traditional fishing communities. To address this, the proposed framework calls for equitable participation of traditional and artisanal fishers in certification processes, ensuring that legitimate stakeholders are not excluded from the benefits of ecolabelling. Ecolabel certification verifies that fish and fishery products originate from sustainable and responsibly managed fisheries. India currently does not have a national mechanism to govern such certification processes, even as several international agencies have shown interest in operating

in the country, it said. According to CMFRI, the proposed guidelines seek to ensure that certification schemes function in alignment with India’s fisheries laws, sustainability priorities and socio-economic realities. The draft also reaffirms the country’s sovereign rights over marine fisheries resources within its Exclusive Economic Zone and stipulates that all certification activities must comply with national and state fisheries regulations, biodiversity conservation laws, seafood safety standards and coastal aquaculture norms. It further emphasises traceability across the seafood value chain and explores the possibility of developing an indigenous Indian marine eco-label that could complement globally recognised certification systems, the statement added.

Andhra CM pitches state as semiconductor manufacturing hub at Singapore roundtable

Amaravati, June 16: Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Tuesday invited global semiconductor companies to explore investment opportunities in the state, describing Andhra Pradesh as one of India’s most investment-friendly destinations. Addressing the Semicon Ecosystem Roundtable in Singapore, the Chief Minister said Andhra Pradesh follows a “Speed of Doing Business” approach to facilitate investments and industrial growth. “This is the right time for investors to explore opportunities in Andhra Pradesh. I invite industrialists to visit the state within the next 30 days and assess the policies and opportunities available,” Naidu said, according to an official press release. He said India is among the safest destinations for investments globally and noted that Andhra Pradesh offers a conducive environment for industries through investor-friendly policies and faster approvals. Highlighting the state’s potential

in semiconductor manufacturing, he said a semiconductor manufacturing facility would soon be established in the Rayalaseema region. The chief minister noted that Rayalaseema also offers significant opportunities in defence, aerospace, electronics, fighter aircraft manufacturing and automobile production. Representatives of several Singapore-based semiconductor companies attended the roundtable meeting and discussed opportunities for collaboration and investments in Andhra Pradesh. Among the participants were representatives from GlobalFoundries, NXP, ASMPT, One System Technologies, TechSend Photomask and Aquatech. The discussions focused on strengthening the semiconductor ecosystem and exploring investment opportunities in manufacturing and allied sectors in Andhra Pradesh, the release added. Earlier, the chief minister released

a book titled ‘CBN@361 Degrees - Polymath’ in Singapore, which analyses his leadership style and decision-making as a public administrator. Naidu participated in an event organised by a local Telugu association in Singapore and formally released the book. He presented the first copies to the Indian High Commissioner to Singapore, Shilpak Ambule, Municipal Administration Minister P Narayana and representatives of the association. The book was authored by Shakamuri Srinivasa Prasad, a senior journalist and editor, and translated into English by retired IAS officer KV Satyanarayana. According to the author, the book examines several decisions taken by Naidu over the years and analyses his role as a visionary leader in governance and development. Prasad said Naidu’s decision-making could be compared with that of globally recognised leaders such as

former Singapore Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew and former New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern. He noted that Naidu’s vision for Andhra Pradesh’s development and his commitment to the construction of Amaravati as the state capital were examples of his approach as a leader. The author said the book also highlights lesser-known aspects of Naidu’s public life through observations and opinions expressed by former Andhra Pradesh Real Estate Regulatory Authority Chairman Rammanath on various occasions. During the event, representatives of the association presented Naidu with a commemorative silver coin issued to mark the centenary of Lee Kuan Yew, regarded as the architect of modern Singapore. The organisers said the book would soon be released in Telugu, Hindi and other Indian languages. They also noted that the digital version of the previously published book ‘Chandrababu X.0’ had recorded around eight million downloads.

Karnataka cabinet minister’s portfolio row unresolved over a week after oath ceremony

Bengaluru, June 16: The allocation of responsibilities within Karnataka’s newly expanded cabinet remains unclear over a week after the swearing-in ceremony. Bengaluru development minister Krishna Byre Gowda has postponed assuming charge due to unresolved issues regarding his authority over the Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) and the Ben-

galuru Metropolitan Region Development Authority (BMRDA). Despite seeking intervention from the Congress high command and discussions with Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, Gowda returned without a resolution. He argues that effective oversight of Bengaluru’s development requires control over these key agencies. Currently, he oversees the Greater Ben-

galuru Authority, the five municipal corporations, the Bengaluru Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB), and Namma Metro, while the BDA and BMRDA remain under the chief minister’s control. Gowda reported that discussions with the chief minister had touched on these issues, but clarity is still pending, with assurance that a resolution will

come within days. He emphasised that his concerns are based on accountability rather than a mere dispute over authority, suggesting that without a clear institutional framework, it would be challenging to meet the public’s expectations. The impasse has drawn criticism from the opposition, with R Ashok questioning the government’s management of civic issues

amidst ongoing internal negotiations, especially following recent rainfall. He alleged that Gowda’s delay in assuming office is linked to the lack of control over the BDA and BMRDA. BJP MP Tejasvi Surya also criticized the government’s decision to appoint ministers who are not granted full authority, calling into question the efficiency of the cabinet’s administration.

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Editorial

North Bengal Needs a New AIIMS

North Bengal, home to over 10 million people spread across the districts of Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Jalpaiguri, Uttar and Dakshin Dinajpur, Cooch Behar, Alipurduar, and Malda, remains one of India's most medically underserved regions. The nearest All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) — in Kalyani — is hundreds of kilometres away, rendering it practically inaccessible for the region's poor and remote populations. The healthcare deficit here is stark. Patients suffering from cancer, cardiac conditions, neurological disorders, and rare diseases are forced to travel to Kolkata or beyond, often at prohibitive cost and physical toll. Primary and

district hospitals in the region are perennially overburdened, understaffed, and under-equipped. The hills and tea garden communities face near-total absence of specialist care. A dedicated AIIMS for North Bengal would transform this reality. It would bring world-class tertiary care to the doorstep of Assam, Sikkim, Bhutan, and Nepal's border populations, establishing a regional medical hub. It would also generate thousands of jobs, anchor a medical education ecosystem, and serve as a referral anchor for the entire sub-Himalayan belt. The demand is not new — it has been raised repeatedly by civil society, legislators, and health activists.

It should begin with MoD wastefulness, or perhaps the pensioner triple lock

What will it be: war or welfare, social or military spending, weapons or butter? Hermann Göring invented the re-armament slogan, "Guns will make us powerful, butter will only make us fat." Margaret Thatcher cautioned in her "Britain awake" address in 1976 that the Soviets "put guns before butter, while we put just about everything before guns" - despite the fact that defense expenditure declined as a proportion of GDP throughout her tenure and accelerated once the cold war ended. But that peace dividend must be repaid now that we are back in a cold (and very heated) conflict with Russia, with the United States no longer dependable, let alone a friend. Today's "guns vs. butter" has evolved into a zero-sum warfare/welfare equation. How disheartening that Al Carns reiterated it when he resigned as armed forces minister this week. "There's an argument about

welfare," Carns adds. "I am a great believer that it is important to put your hands up rather than out. But we need to aid the individuals who need it the most within the country while also striking the correct balance in defense." Why the juxtaposition? This former marine colonel would "take the country by the scruff of its neck and make it great again" - military rhetoric that leaves Westminster weak in the knees. But "there is an argument" about defence, too, as the public accounts committee repeatedly criticises wild overspending and delays. The National Audit Office again refused to fully verify Ministry of Defence accounts last year. The £6bn Ajax armoured vehicle was eight years late, and faulty, Dreadnought-class submarines are 10 years late, while two white elephant aircraft carriers, costing twice their original price, are too vulnerable to

sail. Aukus and Gcap are further mightily expensive projects: the word is that Dan Jarvis, the new defence secretary, may axe some of them. Carns says the next war will be won by "the country whose 19-year-olds can code, whose factories can build drones in weeks not years, and whose grid stays on when someone tries to switch it off". John Healey's shock resignation as defence secretary over spending badly dents not just Labour but the country, despite a steep budget rise. Britain is not a laggard in Nato: countries near the Russian border spend most, while we are roughly level with Germany, a bit ahead of France and further ahead than Canada, Italy and Spain. All need to spend more as the alliance's biggest contributor, the US, dials back, but how much should the UK punch above its weight? Wise ministers should have no truck with talk of a welfare/warfare

switch. That's Tory policy. Here's James Cartlidge, shadow defence secretary: "Our brave armed forces are crying out for resources. But the PM is more interested in doling out benefits." How big an axe to benefits? "Only the Conservatives will cut welfare spending by £23bn and get Britain working again," is their pitch. Some hearts may have sunk at a misleading headline in the Times on Friday. "Andy Burnham: I'll cut welfare bill to fund defence," it read, but the interview said nothing of the sort. More for defence is needed, Burnham said, with "maximum social return" in the number of apprenticeships and support for British industry. But cuts in welfare would come only from getting young people into work, and doing "things that will reduce the benefits bill" by investing in employment support - exactly as Alan Milburn prescribes. The right uses benefits

as a bottomless lucky dip: its "out-of-control welfare" trope is now taken as a near-universal truth, even by the usually irreproachable BBC Verify, which recently stated: "Defence spending has fallen as welfare spending has risen." Ruth Curtice, chief executive of the Resolution Foundation, challenges this. "It didn't look quite right to me so we took a closer look." She finds fundamental errors in charts showing Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) spending soaring, but which overlook that introducing universal credit meant the DWP taking over vast tax-credit spending previously paid by HMRC. They also let child disability allowances appear as adult payments. When corrected, she says, "non-pensioner welfare is now about the level of the mid-90s". Here's the kicker: why pick on non-pensioner welfare anyway, Curtice asks? Pensions are where the welfare

budget skyrockets. Like the Institute for Fiscal Studies, the Resolution Foundation just produced a devastating critique entitled What a ratchet! Why it's time to stop being polite about the triple lock. The state pension ratchets up at twice the rate of unemployment benefits, and pensioners have seen three times as much living standards growth as non-pensioners in the last 20 years. Reformers want to keep its rise equal with average earnings: had it done that, the Office for Budget Responsibility estimates it would cost £12.6bn less by 2029. But when the right talks the warfare/welfare switch, you hear no whisper about the lock. The grey vote petrifies all parties, though they all know the triple lock is the obvious escalator in the DWP budget. The right distracts with talk of lavish disability benefits and wastrel families: it would restore the two-child benefits lim-

it, impoverishing more than 400,000 children. Pensioners are half as likely as children to be poor. As for the defence comparison, why? These issues are quite unconnected. Spending on working-age benefits was lower than on defence in the mid-1980s - but defence spending dropped with the fall of the Wall. The benefit bill is projected at 4.3% of GDP by the end of the decade in an older, sicker society, while defence is promised to be 3% by the 2030s. Cash is hard to screw from any department, but UK benefits are the lowest among OECD countries at £98 a week for universal credit, and 9% lower in real terms than in 2010. There should have been a defence levy to match the pledge: some suggest low-interest patriotic defence bonds, with inheritance tax relief to attract older investors. But end any talk of taking from those with least.

If the UK wishes to rejoin the European Union, it must first comprehend it

As the 10th anniversary of Britain's decision to leave the EU approaches, the country is beginning to consider rejoining what it refers to as Europe. However, like with most prior British discussions on "Europe," this is Europe minus Europe. The debate focuses on what would be best for Britain's economy and the British politics involved in getting there. There is little or no consideration of what the rest of Europe thinks or cares about. Lord Livermore, the Treasury Minister, just became the first member of the cabinet to explicitly support rejoining the EU. "Of course," he told the House of Lords, "the UK will re-enter the European Union because it's absolutely in our national economic interest." As if we had only to knock on the EU's door and - abracadabra! - we would immediately be welcomed back in. If you asked all sitting British MPs to say when the European Council is next meeting in Brussels, I doubt that more than a handful could give you the right answer. In fact, I wonder how many could immediately tell you what the European Council is. It's instructive to look at the agenda for that top table gathering of the national leaders of the 27 EU member states, together with the union's key institutional leaders. Between 6pm this Thursday and lunchtime on Friday, they hope to discuss Ukraine, the Middle East, the EU's next seven-year budget, global economic challenges, European defence and security, migration and illicit drugs. So they have, to put it mildly, a lot on their plate. If you follow European media, or listen to Germans talking about Europe with Poles, or Italians with Portuguese, our sceptred isle hardly features at all. On both sides of the Channel, "Europe" is again being construed as not including Britain. The only major exception is defence and security, where the British are still seen as playing an important role. Poland's Oxford-educated and once-anglophile foreign minister, Radek Sikorski, now coldly describes the UK as a "security provider". As for countries wanting

to join, the EU has no shortage of them. There are already nine acknowledged candidates for membership, including small frontrunner Montenegro and the very large Ukraine (UKR is more important than UK to Europe today). This August, Iceland is holding a referendum on whether to resume negotiations for membership. A debate has opened up again in wealthy Norway. And let's be honest, there are some in the EU - a minority to be sure, but a significant minority - who would not welcome Britain back. All countries think mainly about themselves, but if there were a World Cup for solipsism, the British would effortlessly carry off the trophy. A new BBC documentary revisiting the 2016 vote painfully reminds us of the poverty of the British European debate. Here, amid a procession of the scheming boys who gave us the biggest act of national self-harm in our recent history, we again meet Boris Johnson, his thoughts as disordered as his hair. He sums up the core issue thus: "You either want the country to be independent or you think that we should create a federal Europe." Actually, the entire mainstream of continental European politics today is precisely about finding a middle way between those two extremes. On the most charitable interpretation, Johnson has learned nothing and forgotten nothing since his time as a Euro-sceptic Brussels correspondent in the early 1990s. If you look at how the world is likely to develop in the next 20 years - a world of competing great powers and empires, with a militarily aggressive Russia, an economically aggressive China and a United States that will never return to its exceptional post-1945 level of transatlantic commitment - it's obvious that the best bet for a middle power such as Britain is to be part of a bigger grouping of countries that largely share the same interests and values. Tony Blair, when freshly minted as prime minister, once rather ludicrously declared: "Britain should be bigger!" Every other European country, starting with France and Germany, can tell you



that this is how you become "bigger". The strategic goal of British policy should therefore be for the UK to become a full member of what, by then, will be a different European Union. And, with all due modesty, a sober analysis suggests that it would be in the long-term interest of the EU as a whole to have, as one of its 30-plus members, a Britain whose settled will it was to be among them. It will, however, take a marathon of democratic persuasion to get us there. That persuasion will be needed on both sides of the Channel. In British opinion polls, there's already a steady

majority in favour of rejoining the EU and an overwhelming majority for it among younger voters - 68% of those aged 18-34, according to Ipsos. So time will be working for Bretun. But the politics will still be complicated. The person most likely to succeed Keir Starmer as Labour prime minister this autumn is Andy Burnham, the mayor of Greater Manchester - if he wins the byelection this Thursday, the same day that the European Council convenes. He (or whoever succeeds Starmer) may still feel confined to negotiating within the party's current red lines, which specify

no return to the customs union, single market or freedom of movement. But the new government should immediately and boldly declare a much larger strategic ambition. Labour should then fight the next election, due in 2029 at the latest, without any red lines, saying simply that it aims to achieve the relationship that will be best for Britain. Ideally, the entire emerging (very European-style) fragmented left-liberal block of Liberal Democrats, Labour, Greens and Scottish and Welsh nationalists would take that position. A lot is going to change in Europe over the next three

years, and there may need to be some interim steps (membership of the single market, for example) in the next parliamentary term; but the democratic persuasion has to start now. In this dangerous post-American world, the best place for Britain is indeed "at the heart of Europe", and the only way to be at the heart of Europe is to be a full member of the EU. The path is unknown, but the goal should be clear. Yet every step will depend on the EU side, which holds most of the cards. So the British have also to understand where other Europeans are coming from, how their

complicated union really works and what is, to put it bluntly, in it for them. And Britain's elected representatives must learn to speak European, that unique multilingual language in which the advancement of national interest is subtly blended with the historically informed embrace of a shared European future. Is the current British political class capable of this? I hope it even more than I doubt it. Timothy Garton Ash is a historian, political writer and Guardian columnist. His new book, Europe in 7½ Chapters, will be published this autumn.

BOJ raises interest rates to 31-year high as Iran war fuels inflation risks

Mumbai: The Bank of Japan raised interest rates to a 31-year high on Tuesday, marking another landmark step in normalising monetary policy as it focused on taming price pressures from the energy shock caused by the Iran war.

The hike was the first since December and aligns the BOJ with other central banks shifting towards tighter policy to combat inflation, including the European Central Bank.

In a widely expected move, the BOJ decided to raise its short-term policy rate to 1 per cent from 0.75 per cent, taking borrowing costs to levels unseen since 1995.

“The price pass-through stemming from rising crude oil prices has been progressing at a relatively fast pace in business-to-business transactions, which could spread to an increase in consumer prices across a wide range of items,” the BOJ said in a statement announcing the decision.

“Taking into account that medium- and long-term inflation expectations have also continued to increase, there is a risk of underlying inflation deviating above our price target,” it said. The decision was made by a 7-1 vote. Governor Kazuo Ueda missed the meeting and did not vote due to a two-week treatment in hospital for an infected liver cyst.

All eyes will be on any hints Deputy Governor Shinichi Uchida



could drop on the pace and timing of future rate hikes at a news briefing he will hold on behalf of Ueda. A flurry of hawkish BOJ signals since then have led markets to almost fully price in the chance of a June rate increase. A Reuters poll showed economists projecting the BOJ to raise rates to 1.25 per cent in the fourth quarter after a hike in June to 1 per cent.

A weak yen, which pushes up import prices and broader inflation, will also keep the BOJ under pressure to stay on course for further rate hikes, analysts say.

The BOJ’s hike comes in a busy

week for global central banks.

The US Federal Reserve is widely expected to hold its benchmark interest rate steady on Wednesday but officials have recently signaled their rising concern about inflation, which has led more in the market to now predict its next move as being a hike rather than a cut.

West Asia conflict has complicated the BOJ’s policy path by adding inflationary pressure through higher oil costs, while hurting an economy heavily reliant on imported fuel. While the peace deal between the US and Iran eased market fears over global inflationary pressures,

wholesale inflation spiked to a 3-year high of 6.3 per cent in May in a sign companies were already passing on higher costs from the energy shock. Analysts expect core consumer inflation to accelerate back above the BOJ’s 2 per cent target later this year, after sliding below the level on government subsidies aimed at curbing utility bills. The BOJ kept policy steady at its previous meeting in April but sharply revised up its price forecasts and stressed its vigilance to the risk of an inflation overshoot. Three of its nine board members proposed a hike to 1 per cent.

Devyani International, Sapphire Foods rally

Mumbai: Shares of Devyani International Limited (DIL) and Sapphire Foods jumped as much as 9 per cent in trade on Tuesday after the exchanges BSE and NSE granted no objection and no adverse observations to the composite scheme of arrangement between the two companies. Under the scheme, Devyani International will acquire Sapphire Foods, marking a strategic consolidation of the two firms.

Devyani International shares opened with a gain of 2.3 per cent at ₹113.99 and touched a high of ₹121.38, up 9 per cent, on the National Stock Exchange (NSE). Similarly, Sapphire Foods shares opened higher at ₹177.70 and touched an intraday high of 7 per cent at ₹185.58. Notably, Devyani International has announced via a filing that it has received “observation letters from the NSE and BSE in relation to the proposed Scheme of Arrangement amongst Devyani International Limited (Transferee Company) and Sapphire Foods India Limited (Transferor Company), and their respective shareholders.”

The scheme, however, remains subject to necessary statutory and regulatory approvals and of the respective shareholders and creditors of the companies involved, the filing added. Arctic International, an entity associated with the promoter group of DIL, will acquire approximately 18.5 per cent of Sapphire Foods’ paid up equity share capital from the existing promoters, with an option to assign to a mutually agreed financial investor.

The strategic focus areas of the merged entity will be to accelerate expansion of KFC; strengthen and revitalise Pizza Hut for long-term sustainable growth, and scale growth



of Devyani’s emerging brands portfolio. As of 11:45 AM, Devyani International shares were trading 4.1 per cent higher at ₹115.95, while Sapphire Foods shares gained 3.6 per cent to trade at 179.85. Both Devyani International and Sapphire Foods are engaged in the development, management, and operation of Quick Service Restaurants (QSRs). Devyani is the largest franchisee for Yum! Brands (KFC and Pizza Hut) in India. Sapphire Foods’ portfolio includes KFC, Pizza Hut, and Taco Bell. Upon completion, the transaction will result in Devyani International becoming one of the largest QSR operators in India by combining the operations of both companies, positioning the merged entity for the next phase of accelerated growth, scale, and profitability. The merger will take place through a share-swap mechanism. Under the share swap ratio, 177 equity shares of Devyani International will be issued to the eligible shareholders for every 100 equity share of Sapphire Foods.

GIC shares fall 5% as Centre launches OFS; floor price at 9%



Mumbai: Shares of state-run General Insurance Corporation of India (GIC) fell 5.5 per cent in early morning deals as the government has announced sell up to 5 per cent stake in the PSU via offer for sale (OFS). The counter opened at ₹371.20 on the National Stock Exchange (NSE) and touched a low of ₹366. The two-day OFS of GIC opened for institutional investors on Tuesday. Retail investors can participate in the OFS on Wednesday.

As of 9:30 AM, GIC shares were trading at ₹366.80, with a total of 2.2 million equities changing hands. In comparison, the Nifty 50 index was up 0.40 per cent. At the floor price of Rs 352 apiece, the sale of over 8.77 crore shares will fetch about ₹3,000 crore to the exchequer. The floor price is at a discount of 9.36 per cent over Monday’s closing. GIC shareholding: Govt stake At present, the government owns an 82.40 per cent stake in General Insurance Corporation. Post OFS, the government’s stake in the company will be reduced to 77.40 per cent. According to details available, the government will divest 2 per cent equity in GIC, with an additional 3 per cent as a green shoe option.

GIC is primarily involved in reinsurance

and operates under the administrative control of the Finance. It acts as India’s national reinsurer, functioning essentially as insurance for insurance companies. The government has already raised ₹13,389 crore through public sector units’ stake sales in the current fiscal. This includes ₹5,542 crore from Coal India, ₹4,357 crore from NHPC, ₹2,266 crore from Central Bank of India and ₹1,223 crore from NLC India

The government hopes to exceed the budgeted target of ₹80,000 crore from PSU disinvestment and asset monetisation in the current fiscal. GIC stock: Analyst view

Rajesh Bhosle of Angel One said that the stock has witnessed a sharp decline in the morning session accompanied by strong volumes following the OFS announcement. The weakness appears event-driven, and the OFS price band of ₹350–352 is likely to emerge as a key support zone, which also coincides with the swing low formed in March. Historically, OFS prices tend to act as a base for the stock, making the price action around this zone crucial to watch. On the upside, the bearish gap area around ₹380 is expected to act as an immediate resistance.

Motilal Oswal sector of the week: Banks; top picks are SBI, ICICI Bank

Mumbai: The Reserve Bank of India’s latest measures to attract foreign currency deposits and overseas borrowings could provide a meaningful near-term boost to the banking system, forex reserves and the rupee.

By reopening a concessional swap window for FCNR(B) deposits and external commercial borrowings (ECBs), the central bank is effectively reviving a playbook that worked during the 2013 currency crisis.

Under the new framework, banks can raise FCNR(B) deposits for 3-5 years and swap them into rupees without bearing hedging costs, while also getting exemptions from CRR and SLR requirements.

At the same time, overseas foreign currency borrowings can be hedged with the RBI at a concessional 1.5 per cent cost, significantly lower than prevailing market hedging rates. The immediate impact is likely to be visible in deposit mobilisation and liquidity conditions.

Analysts estimate potential forex inflows of \$40-50 billion in FY27, with FCNR(B) inflows expected to accelerate sharply during the traditionally strong July-August remittance season. During the previous such scheme in FY14, FCNR(B) deposits had surged by \$27 billion and helped stabilise the currency. Performance in 4QFY26 remained strong, with PAT at INR137b (+8.5 per cent YoY) driven by negligible provisions and steady core income. Advances grew 15.8 per cent YoY, while deposits rose 11.4 per cent YoY with CASA improving to 41.4 per cent. NIMs stayed resilient at 4.32 per cent, and asset quality strengthened further with GNPA/NNPA at 1.4 per cent/0.33 per cent, reflecting strong recoveries and controlled stress. We expect ICICI Bank to sustain ~2.25 per cent RoA over FY27-28E, supported by steady loan growth, stable margins, and low credit costs (~0.4–0.5 per cent). Strong operating performance and improving growth traction should drive gradual rerating, reinforcing our buy stance. For banks, the economics are compelling. FCNR(B) deposit rates have already been raised from roughly 3-4 per cent to 6-7 per



cent, making them attractive for non-resident depositors. Meanwhile, lower hedging costs on overseas borrowings could reduce funding costs by 200-250 basis points, supporting credit growth without materially increasing balance sheet pressure.

The broader significance, however, lies in currency stability. Foreign institutional investors have sold an estimated \$45 billion from Indian markets since CY24, partly due to rupee depreciation concerns. A more stable USD/INR trajectory - analysts expect the rupee to strengthen toward 93-94 levels in the near term; could help ease FII outflows and improve sentiment toward financial stocks. That said, the benefits will not be evenly distributed across the sector. Banks with strong NRI franchises, extensive overseas presence and large liability bases are expected to capture a disproportionate share of inflows. Profitability gains will also depend on how effectively banks deploy these funds into loans while maintaining pricing discipline

The medium-term outlook for the banking sector remains constructive, supported by healthy

credit growth, stable asset quality and improving liquidity conditions. While the RBI’s measures may be temporary in nature, they provide an important buffer against external volatility and reinforce confidence in India’s financial stability framework.

State Bank of India remains well-positioned to sustain market share gains, backed by its leadership across deposits and lending, strong retail franchise, improving corporate credit demand, and deep digital penetration through YONO. Granular deposits, prudent underwriting, and low borrower concentration continue to support earnings resilience and balance sheet strength.

FY26 witnessed healthy business momentum, with the loan book growing 17 per cent led by retail, SME, and corporate segments, particularly across renewables, data centres, metals, and infrastructure. Asset quality improved further with low slippages, strong recoveries, and reduced stressed asset concentration, while margin moderation was largely driven by rate transmission.

Sarvam AI deal lifts HCL Tech shares by 3%; Nomura says Buy for 39% upside

New Delhi: Shares of information technology major HCL Technologies were in demand on the bourses on Tuesday after the company announced an investment of ₹1,427.25 crore (\$150 million) in Axonwise Private Limited (Sarvam AI), India’s leading AI company. In its note, Nomura said the investment would enable HCL Tech to develop industry- and client-specific language models and AI solutions for its global client base, delivering differentiated enterprise AI offerings with compelling price-to-performance

outcomes. The partnership, it added, would also help HCL Tech leverage and expand Sarvam’s multilingual AI capabilities in India and overseas, supporting both sovereign AI initiatives and enterprise deployments across global markets.

It continued to trade in positive territory. At 10:08 AM, HCL Tech was quoting at ₹1,151, up 2.85 per cent from its previous close. In comparison, the benchmark BSE Sensex was up 222 points, or 0.29 per cent, at 76,486. HCL Tech is investing \$150 million in Sarvam for a

10.46 per cent stake. Sarvam, meanwhile, is raising \$300 million at a post-money valuation of \$1.5 billion. Besides HCL Tech, private equity and venture capital firms including Peak XV, Bessemer Venture Partners and Khosla Ventures have participated in the funding round. “Our investment in Sarvam marks a significant step toward building India’s trusted and globally competitive AI ecosystem. By bringing together Sarvam’s research in AI models with HCL Tech’s global presence, we are creating a differentiated full-stack

AI platform for enterprises and governments, strengthening our ability to deliver secure, scalable, and responsible AI solutions,” said C Vijayakumar, chief executive officer and managing director, HCL Tech. Global brokerage Nomura has reiterated its ‘Buy’ rating on the current market price. According to the company, the proceeds will be used to further Sarvam’s research and development efforts aimed at training next-generation frontier models for agentic AI, coding and cybersecurity use cases.

Battle of bourses: Listed BSE vs IPO-bound NSE is a better bet

New Delhi: The National Stock Exchange of India (NSE) is inching closer to a public listing, with the country’s largest stock exchange reportedly planning to file its Draft Red Herring Prospectus (DRHP) with market regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) later this week, according to media reports. BSE’s outperformance is predominantly on the back of continuous market share gains in the F&O segment. BSE’s market share in terms of premium turnover stands at 30.6 per cent as of May 2026. In terms of valuations, BSE’s earnings growth, Agrawal said, is likely to continue its earlier trend and outpace NSE’s earnings growth, led by market share gains in derivatives and the cash market. Assuming an IPO price in the band of ₹1,600–1,800, NSE is trading at a 38–43x FY26 PE multiple, which Agrawal believes appears cheaper than BSE. The development has set the stage for a classic “battle of the bourses”, leaving investors with a choice between an already listed exchange and a potential IPO candidate. BSE, on the other hand, has already delivered a strong operational performance,

with Q4 profit after tax rising 61 per cent year-on-year and revenue growing 85 per cent. BSE, on the other hand, has already delivered a strong operational performance, with Q4 profit after tax rising 61 per cent year-on-year and revenue growing 85 per cent. Analysts render a split verdict. Analysts remain divided on the two exchanges. Gaurav Sharma, head of research, equity, at Globe Capital Market, believes BSE has run ahead of fundamentals and sees better risk-reward in NSE, citing its stronger earnings profile, dominant share in revenue-generating turnover, and a potential re-rating catalyst from the upcoming IPO. For BSE, analysts have cut FY27 and FY28 earnings estimates, with consensus target prices suggesting downside from current levels. NSE, meanwhile, has a clear set of near-term triggers. The exchange is targeting a DRHP filing in June 2026 and a listing before December through a ₹21,000–25,000 crore offer for sale (OFS), implying no dilution of existing equity. It received Sebi’s no-objection certificate on January 30, 2026, and board approval for the IPO on February 6, 2026.

Kalshi Reports Disgraced Former Congressman George Santos



Iran: The online “prediction markets” platform known as Kalshi has reported the disgraced former Republican Congressmember George Santos to federal authorities on suspicion of insider trading. Two sources familiar with the investigation say Kalshi contacted the Commodity Futures Trading Commission and the Department of Justice after Santos placed bets on whether or not he would attend the State of the Union address last February. Santos bet against his own attendance — after posting this video to his hundreds of thousands of social media followers.George Santos: “I’m going to be there for the State of the Union in the gallery, guys. Just chill, trolls. Chill. OK?”Santos was expelled from Congress in 2023 and pleaded guilty last year to wire fraud, identity theft, lying to Congress, stealing money from campaign donors and fraudulent unemployment claims. He was released from federal prison in October after President Trump commuted his seven-year sentence. It’s not clear whether Santos will face new criminal charges.

This comes after President Trump lashed out at prominent politicians who’ve sought to regulate or ban Kalshi and similar platforms. Writing on his Truth Social site after Minnesota last month became the first state to ban prediction markets, Trump called Governor Tim Walz “SCUM,” along with Chris Christie, Letitia James, and JB Pritzker. Trump added, “Other Countries are after

this new form of Financial Market, and we want to remain at the top. Likewise, and even more importantly, where we are currently the Crypto (Bitcoin, etc.) Capital of the World, other Countries are trying diligently to replace us in that capacity, but we won’t let that happen.”

Senate Republicans have rammed through a \$70 billion budget reconciliation package to fund Trump’s immigration crackdown through 2029. This is in addition to the \$170 billion already approved for ICE and Border Patrol last year as part of Trump’s so-called One Big Beautiful Bill. Senator Lisa Murkowski of Alaska was the sole Republican to vote against the package early Friday morning. The legislation does not include language that would permanently bar the Trump administration from creating a \$1.8 billion slush fund for Trump’s MAGA allies, a ban that was backed even by some Republicans. The legislation now heads to the House. This comes as detained immigrants continue to raise alarm over the inhumane, unsanitary and dangerous conditions they face in ICE jails nationwide and amid a record number of deaths in ICE custody since Trump’s return to office. At least 18 immigrants have died in ICE custody since the beginning of this year alone. Meanwhile, The Washington Post reports ICE plans to stop reporting deaths of immigrants that occur within 30 days of being released from custody.

Israeli attacks across Lebanon have killed at least six

people so far today, despite the announcement of an extension of the U.S.-brokered so-called ceasefire. The agreement between Israeli and Lebanese diplomats seeks to create zones inside Lebanon in which Hezbollah operatives would be banned. Hezbollah has not been part of the negotiations, which the group’s leader Naim Qassem has rejected as a “farce.” On Thursday, Qassem also warned of more retaliatory attacks unless Israel agrees to a comprehensive ceasefire and withdraws from southern Lebanon. Over 3,500 people have now been killed and more than 10,000 injured in Israeli strikes on Lebanon since early March.Meanwhile, U.S. lawmakers have voted down a resolution seeking to block U.S. military support for Israel’s assault on Lebanon. On Thursday, 91 House Democrats joined nearly all Republicans in a vote of 324 to 92 to defeat the resolution authored by Michigan Congressmember Rashida Tlaib, who forced the vote over what she called Israel’s “genocidal war on Lebanon.” Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps says there will be no peace in the region until Israeli forces withdraw from Lebanon, and has reaffirmed its support for Hezbollah. This comes as the World Food Programme warns millions of people face acute hunger due to soaring costs and shortages of fuel and fertilizer due to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz. The U.N. agency warns the crisis has pushed an additional 2.5 million people

in Somalia, 1.3 million in Sri Lanka and 2.3 million in Afghanistan into acute food insecurity. In the Gaza Strip, Al Jazeera reports a Palestinian family of five was burned alive as they slept in their beds when Israel bombed their home in Gaza City overnight. They were among nine people killed in the attack. This is a Palestinian man who lost his daughter and his two grandchildren.Rabah Lubbad: “The war did not end. It is a hoax. The war did not end. They are fooling people. Nothing ended. There are martyrs every day. There are martyrs in all places in Gaza every day. What war ended? The war ended from one side only.”

Since October, when Israel agreed, on paper, to a U.S.-brokered ceasefire with Hamas, it has killed nearly 950 Palestinians in near-constant attacks on Gaza. Nearly 3,000 others have been wounded. The Trump administration has begun dismantling the Ocean Observatories Initiative, a network of ocean floor sensors that collect critical data on marine ecosystems, ocean currents and the climate crisis. The National Science Foundation said this week it will decommission more than 900 deep-sea sensors installed a decade ago. Its closure was recommended by the Heritage Foundation’s Project 2025 playbook for Trump’s presidency. Scientists warn the move will severely degrade efforts to monitor changing climate patterns and could negatively affect weather forecasting and extreme weather alerts.

Discontent Iranian hardliners regarding the conditions of the agreement reached

Iran: Hardliners have mounted a rearguard rejection of a deal with the US as as they say it does not guarantee sanctions relief, compensation or control of the strait of Hormuz.“The fact that they say we won and America has retreated is a blatant lie,” said the Iranian MP Kamran Ghazanfari. Meysam Nili, the managing director of Rajanews and brother-in-law of the hardline former president Ebrahim Raisi, called the deal on the table a catastrophic capitulation. He urged Iranians not to sit quietly.Faced with the onslaught, Iranian officials led by Mehdi Mohammadi, an adviser to the head of the negotiating team, Mohammad-Bagher Ghalibaf, mounted a detailed rebuttal in an audio message insisting the deal would end the war, including Israel’s offensive in Lebanon, and that Tehran has not been required to make any new commitments on its nuclear programme, leaving the means of disposal of its highly enriched uranium – including down-blending inside Iran – to future discussions lasting 60 days.Mohammadi also said that by referring to “Iranian arrangements”, the text would allow Iran and Oman to charge fees for passage through the strait of Hormuz, and would even prevent Israeli commercial ships using the waterway. The hardliner’s criticism may help Donald Trump as the US president seeks to justify the deal as better than Obama’s. The two deals are not directly comparable, however, because the 2015 deal was

be freed.”The Khorosan newspaper expressed concern at the licence given to the critics of the proposed agreement. “If the regime is going to grant freedom of speech and assembly to this group so that they can chant slogans against the negotiations and the negotiators, similar freedom must be given to those in favour of the agreement so that they can also gather and march in support of the regime’s decision to end the war, sign the agreement, and even resume relations with the United States,” it said.“Then it will become clear that the majority of the Iranian people support the regime’s will for the agreement, and the minority cannot impose its will on the regime and the nation through shouting, using the national radio and television, abusing the gatherings. Shariatmadari wrote in an open letter: “We must ask Mr Ghalibaf and Mr Araghchi, wasn’t closing the strait of Hormuz one of our country’s main levers in the Ramadan war, and wasn’t closing the strait blocking the enemy’s commercial and economic breathing space and bringing it close to suffocation?!” With what logical justification and acceptable explanation are these gentlemen going to give up this fateful lever?!”They say ‘we will charge service fees from passing ships’! That’s it?! America and its allies have martyred former supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and the Islamic world shed the blood of dozens of nuclear scientists and high-ranking military commanders, hundreds of



a specific and detailed arms control agreement while the memorandum is focused on the preconditions for a ceasefire.Trump, who faces accusations that he has only achieved an agreement through a disruptive, expensive and illegal war that he could have reached through diplomacy, needs evidence that it is superior to the one Obama struck and from which he withdraw the US in 2018.The US had fought hard to have the phrase “Iranian arrangements” excluded, he claimed, and in the second phase of the deal had agreed to lift primary sanctions for the first time. His explanation is sharply at odds with the critics on points of fact and interpretation, which he said was because they were working from outdated drafts. On the nuclear programme, Mohammadi said the only statement in the text was that Iran would not build or purchase nuclear weapons, which he said was “what we have been saying for years”. The opponents have mounted protests outside the foreign ministry in Tehran, and launched a “we will not accept” hashtag. Government supporters say the Paydari Front is opposed to any deal and is not representative of ordinary Iranians, who know wars against superpowers rarely end in outright victory. The hardline Shia cleric and MP Hajatoleslam Naboyan, who acts as the de facto foreign affairs spokesman for the Paydari Front, appeared incredulous that the proposed agreement appeared to allow free commercial shipping in the strait. “Will Israeli commercial ships also be freed? It is the proposal of the Islamic Republic of Iran,” he said. “From now on, all Israeli ships, not military, all hostile countries, their ships and their movement in the strait of Hormuz must

innocent people and oppressed students. They have caused hundreds of billions of dollars in damage ... and now by opening the strait of Hormuz and charging service fees (!) from passing ships, we are going to release their economic and commercial bottleneck?!”He said the proposed deal was better for Iran than the 2015 nuclear pact agreed under Barack Obama that lifted sanctions in return for limits on its nuclear activities, because Tehran had shown it could control the strait of Hormuz. “This time, it is not like we will shut down the nuclear programme and wait for them to lift the sanctions,” he said. “There is no such wishful thinking. The strait is in our hands, we can close it any time we want at an hour.”He acknowledged that the text on the release of half of Iran’s frozen money held abroad, roughly \$12bn (£9bn), had not been finalised. “We know that America will not give us money,” he said. “The Arab countries have pledged this money and are forced to give it, because we are above them and they have seen our power in the region and have tasted our power. One of the implications of this agreement is that the Arab countries have been forced to accept Iran’s sovereignty and superiority and participate in making concessions.Critics in Iran aiming their fire at Ghalibaf and the foreign minister, Abbas Araghchi, are from a group in the parliament coalesced around the Paydari Front including Mahmoud Nabavian, a hardline member of the national security committee, commentators such as Hossein Shariatmadari, the editor-in-chief of the Kayhan newspaper, and a senior commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps who worked alongside Russia in Syria.

Globally significant volcanic event formed Giant’s Causeway, scientists find

London: for centuries, the tale has been passed from generation to generation: how the Irish giant Finn McCool built the Giant’s Causeway in Northern Ireland to fight Benandonner, his Scottish rival, by hurling chunks of the Antrim coastline into the sea.Now, scientists have revealed it was intense volcanic activity during a “major globally impacting volcanic event” – and not a legendary battle between two destructive giants – that led to the formation of the coastline’s 40,000 distinctive interlocking basalt columns about 60m years ago.Geochronologists investigating how the Giant’s Causeway was created have discovered it was formed over 5.5m years, 8m years less than previously estimated.

They also found the processes that formed the Giant’s Causeway were linked to a globally significant volcanic event recorded in rocks as far away as Greenland. For the first time, they were able to definitively connect the first lava flows on the Northern Irish plateau to the same volcanic activity that formed the giant basalt columns in Fingal’s Cave on the Scottish Hebridean island of Staffa – rocks that were previously thought to have formed millions of years after the Causeway.Rock formations on the nearby Mourne mountain range and on the Hebridean isle of Rùm, as well as magmatic activity on Skye, can also be linked to this volcanic activity, placing the formation of the Giant’s Causeway within a more precise, global geological context for the first time and enabling scientists to create a new timeline for volcanic activity across Northern Ireland.Dr Simon Tapster, a geochronologist at the Brit-



ish Geological Survey (BGS), said: “Fundamentally, what we’ve done is by piecing together this tapestry of volcanic rocks all across the North Atlantic, but focusing on Northern Ireland, we have been able to reassess a major globally

impacting volcanic event.

“In doing that, and in reassessing the timescales, we have shown that actually it occurred in a much shorter duration.”The Giant’s Causeway is a Unesco world her-

itage site and has been named one of the greatest natural wonders of the UK. According to Irish folklore, Finn McCool created the causeway so he could cross to Scotland to confront Benandonner, who was threatening his homeland – but retreated back to the island of Ireland, chased by his Scottish rival, when he saw the Scot was a much larger and more impressive giant. Legend has it that it was Oonagh, Finn’s quick-thinking wife, who then saved the day. She disguised Finn as a giant baby so that Benandonner, scared into believing the infant’s father would be large enough to beat him in a fight, rushed back across the causeway to Scotland – destroying as much of the crossing as he could on his way

Although visitors to the dramatic landscape may prefer to believe the legend, scientists have shown the Causeway was formed when thick molten rock rose through cracks in the Earth’s crust.

As the lava cooled and contracted, stress and tension built up in the rock, forcing it to fracture into mostly hexagonal columns, although some of the rocks have four, five, seven or more sides.Tapster’s research is part of a wider initiative at the BGS to improve the understanding of the UK’s geology through better quantifying geological time in the rocks around us.He said: “By looking at the timescales and the high-resolution timeline, we’re able to match it up with various other locations, particularly in the Inner Hebrides in Scotland, the volcanics of Mull, Rùm, the Isle of Skye, and taking a bigger view, looking at Greenland and the Faroe Islands.”

Tour the Stunning Taj Lake Palace Hotel Featured in James Bond Film

Content creator Rachel Wiseman recently gave her followers a tour of what she described as “probably the nicest hotel I’ve ever stayed at” during her trip to Udaipur, Rajasthan. In an Instagram video shared on April 9, Rachel documented a day at the iconic Taj Lake Palace and revealed that she only learned about the property’s fascinating history after booking her stay. “So apparently Jackie Kennedy stayed at this hotel and a James Bond movie was filmed here, which I honestly had no idea when I was booking it. As soon as I got here, I completely understood why,” she said. The creator began her day with breakfast, admitting she had expected a standard hotel buffet. Instead, she was pleasantly surprised by both the setting and the food. “When they said breakfast was included, I was expecting some crappy buffet. Not only was the food incredible, but they sat us in the most beautiful alcove,” Rachel shared. After breakfast, she spent time exploring the sprawling property, which left a lasting impression on her. According to Rachel, every corner of the hotel seemed more beautiful than the last. “We didn’t really have time to explore the grounds the night before, so after breakfast we just walked around with honestly no direction or intention, but every single corner of this property is absolutely jaw-dropping,” she said. During her exploration, she also learned about the property’s royal past. “They also had a little bit of history behind the king and the lineage because this actually used to be his palace, which was super cool,” she added. The day continued at a leisurely pace as Rachel and her travel companion



relaxed by the hotel’s stunning swimming pool. She was particularly surprised by how quiet the area remained throughout the day. “I don’t know if this is like an America versus India thing, but there was absolutely nobody at the pool all day long. If this property was in the US, you would be fighting for a po As evening approached, Rachel got ready for a rooftop dinner overlooking Udaipur’s iconic City Palace. Dressed in one of her favourite thrifted dresses from Paris, she described the dining experience as one of the highlights of her stay. “One of the restaurants here has a star, I think it’s this one, but even if it doesn’t, the food was amazing. It was also just such an insane, romantic, beautiful setting. It was truly the perfect dinner,” she said. From royal heritage and world-famous guests to breathtaking views and



luxury hospitality, Rachel Wiseman’s Udaipur getaway offered a glimpse into one of India’s most iconic palace hotels. ol chair,” she remarked. The magic of India’s heritage often reveals itself when you least expect it. For American content creator Rachel Wiseman, a spontaneous booking for a trip to Udaipur, Rajasthan, turned into an enchanting journey through royal history, cinematic legacy, and world-class luxury. Documenting her journey in a video walkthrough shared with her followers, Wiseman gave an intimate tour of the legendary Taj Lake Palace, an architectural marvel sitting entirely on its own island in the middle of Lake Pichola. Captivated by its floating white-marble facade, pristine courtyards, and world-renowned hospitality, she unreservedly crowned ver stayed at.

What Makes A Truly Great Ice Cream? Experts Decode Texture, Flavor Balance And Craft

There are few foods as universally loved as ice cream. Yet not all scoops are created equal. The difference between a forgettable dessert and one that lingers in your memory long after the last spoonful often comes down to a delicate interplay of texture, flavour and craftsmanship. It’s why some ice creams feel rich without being heavy, sweet without becoming cloying, and indulgent without sacrificing quality. In an era where consumers are increasingly interested in ingredient sourcing, artisanal production and culinary authenticity, ice cream is experiencing something of a renaissance. No longer viewed as a simple frozen treat, it is being appreciated as a craft, one that demands as much attention to detail as fine pastry or specialty coffee. Ask any ice cream maker what separates a good scoop from a great one, and texture is often the first thing they mention. A truly exceptional ice cream should feel smooth, creamy and luxurious on the palate. But perfection doesn’t necessarily mean uniformity. Increasingly,

chefs are embracing texture as a way to create contrast and complexity. “A great ice cream or gelato is all about texture, balance and craftsmanship,” says Chef Ashish Singh, COO and Culinary Director, Café Delhi Heights and Ikigai. According to him, while the base should be silky and easy on the palate, thoughtfully incorporated elements such as fruit chunks, nut pralines and flavour swirls can transform the overall experience. A mango gelato, for instance, becomes more compelling when pieces of ripe fruit accompany the pulp. Similarly, a butterscotch ice cream gains depth from crunchy praline shards, caramelised nuts or crisp butterscotch fragments that provide contrast in every bite. The result is an experience that feels dynamic rather than one-dimensional, something that keeps the palate engaged from the first spoonful to the last. While texture may be what you notice first, balance is what determines whether you’ll return for another scoop. The best ice creams avoid extremes. Sweetness should never overwhelm flavour. Richness should

enhance rather than dominate. Every ingredient must serve a purpose. For Chef Singh, achieving that harmony is one of the most important aspects of frozen dessert craftsmanship. Flavour, sweetness and creaminess should work together seamlessly, with no single element overshadowing the others. It’s a philosophy increasingly embraced by premium ice cream makers who are moving away from artificial flavourings and excessive sweetness in favour of more nuanced, ingredient-driven profiles. Behind every memorable scoop lies an uncompromising commitment to ingredients. For Malika Chawla Batra, Co-Founder and Head Chef, Olivia Creamery, great ice cream begins long before the churning process.



Prakash Padukone Applauds Deepika, Ranveer as Parents

Mumbai: As Bollywood stars Deepika Padukone and Ranveer Singh prepare to welcome their second child, Deepika's father and badminton legend Prakash Padukone has offered a rare glimpse into the couple's family life, praising them as devoted and hands-on parents to their daughter, Dua.

In a recent interaction, Prakash spoke warmly about his experience as a grandfather and the parenting approach adopted by Deepika and Ranveer. While acknowledging that Deepika takes on a larger share of childcare responsibilities, he highlighted Ranveer's active involvement whenever his professional commitments allow. "Deepika does a lot more, of course, but Ranveer helps a lot whenever he is not working. Both families are also there to support them," Prakash said, emphasizing the strong family network surrounding the couple. The former badminton champion admitted that becoming a grandfather has changed his perspective on family life. He said he had often wondered why grandparents become so emotionally invested in their grandchildren, but now fully understands the joy and attachment that come with the role. Prakash revealed that he enjoys

spending quality time with little Dua and introducing her to experiences beyond the world of celebrity privilege. From metro rides and auto-rickshaw journeys to evening visits to neighbourhood parks, he believes these simple outings help her connect with everyday life.

He described Dua as a sociable and cheerful child who enjoys interacting with people around her. According to Prakash, she is particularly fascinated by trains and loves visiting places where she can watch them pass by. "She is a very friendly child and likes meeting people. She says hello to almost everyone she sees," he said. "She has been travelling from a very young age, which has helped her become comfortable in different environments. She is growing up very quickly and is at a fascinating stage right now." Prakash also shared that Dua has developed an interest in sports at an early age. He noted that she enjoys visiting a nearby padel court and watching people play, a sign that athletic genes may already be making their presence felt.

Deepika and Ranveer's love story has long captivated fans. The two reportedly fell in love while working together on filmmaker Sanjay Leela Bhan-

sali's acclaimed film Goliyon Ki Raasleela Ram-Leela. After several years of dating, they tied the knot in a private ceremony at Lake Como in November 2018. The couple welcomed their first child, daughter Dua, in September 2024. They later revealed her name during the Diwali festivities, explaining that "Dua" means "prayer," a name that resonated deeply with their family. Recently, Deepika and Ranveer delighted fans by announcing that they are expecting their second child, sparking excitement among their admirers and the film fraternity. On the professional front, Deepika has resumed work after completing a major shooting schedule in South Africa for King alongside Shah Rukh Khan. She is also working on filmmaker Atlee's upcoming project, reportedly titled Raaka, in which she stars opposite Allu Arjun. Meanwhile, Ranveer is gearing up for his next venture, the zombie adventure film Pralay, which also features Kalyani Priyadarshan. As the couple balances flourishing careers and growing family responsibilities, Prakash Padukone's comments offer a touching glimpse into a household built on support, togetherness and the joys of parenthood.



Govinda Wears A Hair Patch, Confirms Wife Sunita Ahuja: "Nothing To Hide"



Mumbai: Sunita Ahuja and Govinda have been making headlines lately due to persistent speculation surrounding their marriage, along with a series of candid interviews

husband wears a hair patch. The honest revelation has taken social media by storm.

While speaking to Mashable India, Sunita Ahuja fondly recalled being smitten by Govinda during the early days of their relationship, describing him as "extremely handsome." She remarked that while the actor still looks good today, she particularly remembered his youthful charm and natural hair from back then, adding with her trademark candour that he now wears a hair patch. She said, "Even now he looks handsome, but at that time he had his original hair. Now he wears a patch." When her comment drew laughter from the host, Sunita clarified that using a hair patch is fairly common and shouldn't be treated as a taboo. She noted that several individuals in the film industry rely on such solutions and stressed that there is no

reason for anyone to feel embarrassed about it. She added, "What's there to hide? Many heroes do it. Men and women both use patches." She further showered praise on Govinda and called him a rare talent. She stated, "My husband is one piece. There has never been anyone like him in the industry and there never will be." Meanwhile, in earlier interviews, Sunita accused Govinda of having an extramarital affair. Reacting to the claims, the actor spoke to ANI and put an end to the allegations. He said, "What I've been observing lately is that sometimes when we don't speak, we either appear weak or it seems like we are simply the problem. So today, I'm responding. I was told that people in my family might be unknowingly involved and they won't realise they are being used in the initial stages of a big conspiracy."

Soha Ali Khan Recalls Childhood Memories and Treasure Hunts With Brother Saif Ali Khan

Mumbai: Soha Ali Khan recently took to her Instagram and revisited some of her most cherished childhood memories with her favourite toy, a stuffed toy dog named Elliot. The actress, taking a trip down memory lane, recalled how she would sit with her brother Saif Ali Khan and sister Saba Pataudi and play investigative games and tell stories around Elliot.

Inspired by Disney and Pixar's highly anticipated Toy Story 5, which releases on Friday, 19th June, in a nostalgic video, Soha Ali Khan reflected on her favourite childhood companion and shared, "One of my most favourite summer vacation memories is just sitting with Bhai, with my sister Apa, and making up stories around Elliot. One of us would start the story, another would continue it, and a third would add a twist; and by the end of the afternoon, Elliot had travelled the world, solved mysteries, and made the most unlikely friends." She also reminisced about the imaginative games the siblings created together and recalled, "Bhai would hide clues around the house, my sister would draw up a treasure map, and I would lead the investigation through Elliot. I remember entire afternoons just disappearing as we solved mysteries that basically existed



only in our imaginations." "It was never really about the toy itself. It was about everything our imagination allowed it to become," she added.

Now a mother herself, Soha sees those same qualities come alive in her daughter, Inaaya. "When Inaaya was born, I really wanted her to experience that same joy of creating her own little world, so starting with Elliot, I gave Elliot to her, and now her favourite toy is stuffed animals. One day she is reading to them, she's cooking for them, she's teaching them lessons," she shared. "Watching her imagination

take over is honestly one of my favourite things." While dropping the post, Soha Ali Khan captioned, "As Disney and Pixar's Toy Story 5 releases in cinemas, what I love most is that this new chapter not only reunites us with Woody, Buzz Lightyear, Jessie and the gang, but also asks a very important question for today's children and parents: how do we continue to nurture imagination in a world increasingly shaped by screens? What was the one toy you couldn't live without growing up, and where did your imagination take you? I'd love to hear your story."

AR Rahman Releases New Album Main Vaapas Aaunga, Hopes Listeners Connect Personally with the Music

Mumbai: Main Vaapas Aaunga has been receiving a positive response since its theatrical release, with audiences connecting with both the film and its music. The songs reflect the emotions of the story through melodies and lyrics that align with the film's themes. The makers have now unveiled the film's complete music album.

Known for his distinctive approach to integrating music and storytelling, Imtiaz Ali once again brings the two together in Main Vaapas Aaunga. Over the past few weeks, songs such as Kya Kamaal Hai, Maskara, and Ishq Mastana have attracted attention from listeners and generated engagement across streaming platforms and social media. The newly released album offers a varied musical experience that complements the emotional landscape of Main Vaapas Aaunga. Exploring themes of love, longing, hope, and homecoming, the soundtrack reflects several key as-



pects of the film's narrative.

The complete album also introduces Dheere Dheere, sung by Faheem Abdullah, Shilpa Rao, Antra Nandy, and Heer; Tere Paas Main, presented in both female and male versions by Deepali Sahay and Vipin Aneja respectively; and Dariya, sung by Armaan Khan and Romy. Together, these tracks expand the album's musical range and contribute to its emotional depth. Talking

about the album, A.R. Rahman said, "There are certain stories where music becomes the language of the unspoken. It expresses what cannot be explained and reveals what cannot always be shown. In Main Vaapas Aaunga, the songs and score have been an attempt to listen to the silence within the story and give it a voice. I hope people find a part of themselves in this music."

Sharing his thoughts on

the album, Imtiaz Ali said, "Music was always going to be exciting in Main Vaapas Aaunga. First of all, music is the heart of Panjab and Panjab in 1947 had folk as well as Western influences that we were very excited to showcase. That is seen in songs like Ishq Mastana and Maskara. Music is the heart of Panjab, which is the heart of Main Vaapas Aaunga. I have seen A. R. Rahman and Irshad in new

form in this film where they have worked with greater excitement and gone deeper in the exploration of musical gems. I'm very excited at the prospect of this album going out to listeners. I hope they love these songs as much as we loved making them. Also this album marks the beginning of many new singers - Deepali, Heer, Antara, Aditya, and Vipin. We are very proud that we could carry the energy of these wonderful new singers. I hope that the listeners show them their love."

Bringing together romance, nostalgia, longing, and hope, the soundtrack complements the film's emotional narrative. Each song contributes to the storytelling and forms an important part of the Main Vaapas Aaunga experience. Main Vaapas Aaunga is set in Imtiaz Ali's world of love and longing and stars Diljit Dosanjh, Naseeruddin Shah, Sharvari, and Vedang Raina in pivotal roles.

Alia Joins Prabhas' Kalki 2; Rumors Squash Deepika Replacement Claims

Mumbai: Nag Ashwin's Kalki 2898 AD emerged as one of the biggest blockbusters of 2024, with Amitabh Bachchan, Kamal Haasan, Prabhas and Deepika Padukone playing pivotal roles in the sci-fi epic. As the makers gear up for the next chapter of the franchise, the film has once again grabbed headlines amid fresh casting buzz following Deepika's exit from the sequel. Speculation is rife that Alia Bhatt has come on board the Kalki universe, potentially marking her first collaboration with Prabhas and director Nag Ashwin in the ambitious cinematic saga.

According to Aakashvani and Telugu Chitraalu, Alia Bhatt, who is currently busy promoting her upcoming film, Alpha, has joined Prabhas' Kalki 2. While the makers are yet to make an official announcement, reports suggest that Alia has already come on board the project and is believed to have joined the cast during the film's second shooting schedule. Reportedly, she shot for



around five days in Hyderabad last month. Early reports had sparked speculation that Alia would take over Deepika's character, Sumathi (SUM-80), the mother of Kalki. However, the latest buzz suggests otherwise. According to reports, Bhatt has been cast in a different yet significant role within the franchise, while Sai Pallavi is said to be the frontrunner to step into Sumathi's shoes following Deepika's exit.

Recent reports suggest that the team is gearing up to

commence the next phase of filming, with the remaining schedules expected to be completed soon. Several reports stated that the film is eyeing a theatrical release in December 2027, with the shoot likely to be wrapped up by April next year. However, the makers are yet to share an update on the release date. Meanwhile, Alia is gearing up for YRF's Alpha. It also stars Sharvari, Bobby Deol, and Anil Kapoor in key roles. It is all set to hit theatres on July 3.

Smriti Mandhana Only Indian in TIME's Influential Sportspersons List



New Delhi: India women's cricket vice-captain Smriti Mandhana has earned global recognition after being named in TIME magazine's list of the 100 Most Influential People in Sports 2026. She is the only Indian sportsperson to feature in the prestigious annual ranking. TIME's list celebrates athletes, coaches, advocates and investors who are shaping the future of sports worldwide. The 2026 edition includes several of the biggest names across different sporting disciplines,

with American basketball great LeBron James leading the list.

The prestigious selection also features football superstars Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo, tennis sensation Carlos Alcaraz, skier Eileen Gu, basketball player Victor Wembanyama, golfer Rory McIlroy and FIFA president Gianni Infantino. South Africa cricket captain Temba Bavuma, who guided his team to major international success, is among the other notable names on the list.

Mandhana, 29, has been recognised for her outstanding contributions to Indian and global cricket. TIME highlighted several milestones achieved by the left-handed opener, including becoming the first Indian woman to score a double century in domestic one-day cricket and the first Indian woman to register centuries in all three international formats. The profile also noted that Mandhana is among the leading century-makers in women's international cricket and continues to rewrite records. She became the first woman cricketer to score more than 1,000 runs in women's ODIs in a calendar year, further strengthening her reputation as one of the game's most consistent performers. While celebrating her individual achievements, TIME also highlighted Mandhana's team successes. She led Royal Challengers Bengaluru to Women's Premier League titles in 2024 and 2026 and played a key role as India's vice-captain during their ICC Women's World Cup triumph.

Mandhana has continued to set new benchmarks in international cricket. In 2024, she broke the record for the most international runs scored by a woman cricketer across formats in a calendar year and surpassed her own mark the following year. Her remarkable performances also earned her the BBC Indian Sportswoman of the Year award in 2025, adding another honour to an already decorated career.

India Eye Batting Boost Against Netherlands After Pakistan Win



Leeds: India will look to strengthen their batting performance and build on their winning start when they face the Netherlands in their second Group match of the Women's T20 World Cup on Wednesday.

India began their campaign with a victory over Pakistan, powered by valuable contributions from Smriti Mandhana and Richa Ghosh. However, the team management will expect greater consistency from the rest of the batting unit as the tournament progresses and the challenges become tougher. The upcoming clash against the Netherlands may appear to be a relatively comfortable fixture for India, but the side will be aware that strong performances in the league stage are crucial. India will need to secure important wins, particularly against stronger opponents such as Australia and South Africa, to strengthen their chances of reaching the semifinals. Middle-order batter Bharti Fulmali, who plays an important role in

India's batting plans, will be eager to bounce back after a disappointing outing in the opening match. The team will hope players across the order can contribute more consistently in the upcoming games.

India will also aim to improve their fielding after a mixed performance against Pakistan. While some excellent catches were taken later in the innings, there were early lapses that the side would want to avoid in future matches. The pace attack will be another area of focus. Arundhati Reddy and Kranti Gaud were unable to make a major impact

in the opening game and will look to provide early breakthroughs against the Netherlands. India's spin department, however, remains a major strength. Deepti Sharma and Shree Charani shared eight wickets between them against Pakistan, with Deepti claiming a five-wicket haul. The performance was especially significant for Deepti, who was looking to regain rhythm after conceding runs in the lead-up to the tournament. Young spinner Charani has also impressed with her variations, flight and ability to trouble experienced batters.

The Netherlands enter the contest after suffering a defeat against Bangladesh in their opening match. Captain Babette de Leede admitted that her team fell short in all three departments and highlighted the need for improvement with the bat, ball and in the field. "Overall, there is a lot to learn and improve from the experience," de Leede said after the loss. India will be expected to dominate the contest, but the match provides an opportunity for the team to fine-tune its combinations before facing more challenging opponents later in the group stage.

Supreme Court Seeks Centre, State Responses on Plea to Limit Aadhaar to Identity Proof Only

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Tuesday issued notices to the Central government, state governments, and Union Territories regarding a public interest litigation (PIL) alleging that Aadhaar cards are being misused as proof of citizenship, domicile, and residence. The petition seeks explicit directions to ensure the document is utilized strictly for identity verification.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice V. Mohana sought responses from the respondents and tagged the plea with similar pending matters for a collective hearing. The Core Grievance: Violation of Statutory Limits Filed by advocate Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay through advocate Ashwani Dubey, the plea urges the Centre, states, and the Election Commission of India (ECI) to strictly enforce the statutory boundaries of the unique identification number. The petition highlights a stark contradiction between legal mandates and ground-level implementation.



Statutory Prohibition: Section 9 of the Aadhaar Act, 2016 expressly dictates that the document cannot be treated as evidence of citizenship or domicile. **UIDAI Directives:** A formal notification by the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) dated August

22, 2023, reiterated that the card serves solely as proof of identity—not of citizenship, address, or date of birth.

"Despite clear statutory provisions, Aadhaar is routinely accepted as proof of age, citizenship, and domicile for school

admissions, property transactions, birth certificates, ration cards, and driving licenses," the plea argued. **Risks to Electoral Integrity** A major focus of the petition is the document's integration into voter registration. The plea contends that using the identification card

as definitive proof of date of birth and residence in the new voter registration form (Form-6) directly violates Section 9 of the Aadhaar Act, Section 23(4) of the Representation of the People Act, 1950, and Article 14 of the Constitution.

The petitioner warned that the current verification mechanism under Form-6 is structurally inadequate. By allowing individuals without rigorous supporting documents to enter the electoral database, the loophole potentially enables illegal immigrants and infiltrators to obtain legitimate state documents and voting rights. Proposed Reforms To rectify these vulnerabilities, the plea has asked the apex court to mandate a comprehensive overhaul of the verification frameworks used across all electoral processes. Specifically, it proposes the setting up of a high-powered monitoring committee—headed by a retired Supreme Court judge and featuring cybersecurity and forensic experts—to oversee systemic institutional reforms.

BJP Leadership Reviews Organisation; New Team Announcement Expected

New Delhi: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is set to announce its new organisational team soon following a high-level meeting between senior party leaders and representatives of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), sources said.

The four-hour meeting, held at Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's residence, focused on organisational restructuring and the proposed composition of BJP national president Nitin Nabin's new team. The meeting was attended by Union Home Minister Amit Shah, RSS functionary Arun Kumar and BJP National General Secretary (Organisation) BL Santhosh. Although no official statement was issued after the discussions, party sources indicated that the meeting reviewed key organisational matters, including appointments to important party positions and preparations for an upcoming reshuffle. The exercise assumes significance as organisational changes are expected in several state



units, including the Delhi BJP, along with adjustments at the national level. Sources said the new appointments could be announced within the next few days, with Nitin Nabin likely to unveil his team around June 20-21.

According to party insiders, the new team is expected to include a greater number of younger leaders, reflecting Nabin's own position as the youngest national president of the party. The leadership is also

likely to maintain a balance between experienced organisational workers and emerging faces. "More young leaders are expected to find a place in the new team," a party source said, adding that the appointments would be aligned with the BJP's broader strategy of strengthening the organisation at various levels.

Sources also indicated that some leaders may be moved between organisational responsibilities and

government roles as part of a wider restructuring exercise. The new team is expected to reflect the party's social outreach strategy by ensuring representation from different communities and regions. RSS functionary Arun Kumar, who attended the meeting, conveyed the Sangh's views during the discussions. The RSS traditionally plays a key role in organisational coordination with the BJP, particularly on matters related to party structure and grassroots expansion.

Party sources further suggested that the organisational revamp could be followed by a possible Union Cabinet reshuffle after the completion of two years of the NDA 3.0 government. The BJP leadership is expected to prioritise leaders with strong organisational experience while also creating opportunities for women and younger members. The new team will play a crucial role in preparing the party for upcoming electoral challenges and strengthening its presence across states.

Rajya Sabha Polls: NDA Shifts Jharkhand MLAs to Ranchi Hotel Ahead of Crucial Voting



Ranchi: Ahead of the high-stakes Rajya Sabha elections for two seats in Jharkhand, legislators from the opposition National Democratic Alliance (NDA) are being shifted to a hotel in Ranchi, according to alliance sources. Leader of the Opposition in the state Assembly, Babul Marandi, confirmed the move, stating that the lawmakers will hold a series of meetings to chalk out their strategy for the upcoming June 18 elections. When asked if the MLAs would remain sequestered at the hotel for the next two days, the senior BJP leader simply stated, "We will hold meetings." Marandi nonetheless exuded

confidence regarding the victory of BJP-backed independent candidate Parnal Nathwani for one of the two vacant seats. The Numbers Game To secure a victory in this election, a candidate must win a minimum of 28 first-preference votes.

On paper, the ruling coalition holds a commanding lead, meaning the NDA lacks the necessary numbers in the state assembly to guarantee Nathwani's victory without cross-voting from the opposition. The current structural breakdown of the Jharkhand Assembly highlights the steep climb for the NDA Alliance / Party MLA Count Compo-

Breakdown INDIA Bloc (Ruling) 56 JMM (34), Congress (16), RJD (4), CPI(ML) Liberation (2) NDA (Opposition) 24 BJP (21), AJSU (1), JD(U) (1), LJP-Ram Vilas (1) JMKM (Independent) 1 Jharkhand Loktantrik Krantikari Morcha (1) Why the Seats Are Vacant The current election was triggered by two distinct vacancies in the upper house representation for Jharkhand: One seat fell vacant following the passing of Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) co-founder and veteran leader Shibu Soren. The second seat is opening due to the completion of BJP MP Deepak Prakash's tenure.

Maxi Araújo Goal Denies Saudi Arabia World Cup Win

Miami: Maxi Araújo's late equaliser rescued a point for Uruguay as they were held to a 1-1 draw by Saudi Arabia in their FIFA World Cup opener on Monday. However, the two-time champions were left disappointed after failing to convert their dominance into a winning start.

Uruguay midfielder Federico Valverde admitted his team failed to match their expectations in the first half and paid the price for a slow start. "We gave away the first half. We did not play the way we had trained," Valverde said, adding that the team improved significantly after the break. Saudi Arabia took the lead in the 41st minute through Abdulrahman Al-Amri, who reacted quickly to score from close range after Uruguay

goalkeeper Fernando Muslera parried away a header.

The goal sparked celebrations among Saudi supporters at Hard Rock Stadium, where they were outnumbered by a largely Uruguay-backed crowd. Al-Amri had earlier been denied by Muslera before eventually finding the breakthrough. Uruguay dominated possession and created far more opportunities, registering 29 attempts compared to Saudi Arabia's seven. But goalkeeper Mohammed Al-Owais produced an outstanding performance to keep La Celeste at bay for much of the contest.

The equaliser finally arrived in the 80th minute when Araújo fired home a rebound from close range, scoring his fourth international goal and earning Uruguay a valuable point. Saudi Arabia

coach Georgios Donis, who took charge of the team only two months ago after Hervé Renard's departure, praised his players for their disciplined display against a strong opponent. "Getting one point against a team like Uruguay is a positive," Donis said, adding that he was still working on understanding his squad and building a competitive side. Uruguay continued to push for a winner, but Al-Owais denied several efforts, including chances from Federico Viñas, Manuel Ugarte and Valverde. The result followed another surprise outcome in Group H, where debutants Cape Verde held Spain to a goalless draw. Saudi Arabia now sit level with Uruguay, Spain and Cape Verde after the opening round of matches.

Iran Supporters Turn Up in Numbers With Banned Flag at FIFA World Cup



New Delhi: Thousands of Iran supporters turned up for their side's FIFA World Cup opener against New Zealand carrying the Lion and Sun flag, the pre-revolution emblem that has become a visible symbol of opposition to the current government. At the packed stadium in Los Angeles, home to one of the world's largest Iranian diaspora communities, the flag, banned by FIFA, was impossible to miss. Fans draped it across shoulders, waved it from the stands and held it aloft during Iran's opening match against New Zealand on Monday. The atmosphere often felt unlike a typical World Cup fixture. Parts of Iran's national anthem were drowned out by whistles, while many others in the

crowd sang along. Some supporters cheered Iran's attacks and goals throughout the night, while others celebrated New Zealand's goals with equal intensity. The contrasting reactions reflected the different identities inside the stadium and highlighted the complicated relationship sections of the diaspora have with Team Melli and the state it represents. The Lion and Sun emblem was used on Iran's national flag before the 1979 Islamic Revolution and is no longer officially recognised by the country. Over the years, however, it has remained a powerful symbol among parts of the Iranian diaspora and anti-government groups. The political backdrop surrounding Iran's World Cup campaign had already been unusually tense.

India Will Host the Asia Cup of Fencing This June in New Delhi

New Delhi Hosts Asian Fencing Championships

New Delhi: India will host the Asian Senior Fencing Championships for the first time when the continental tournament takes place at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi from June 19 to 24. Widely recognised as the "Asia Cup" of fencing, the annual championship is considered the most prestigious competition in the Asia-Oceania region and will bring some of the world's top-ranked athletes to India. This year's edition carries added significance as it will serve as a direct qualification event for the upcoming Asian Games while also offering ranking points that shape the international standings and the road towards the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic cycle. Alongside the competition, New Delhi will also host the 39th General Assembly of the Fencing Confederation of Asia (FCA), marking the first time India will



stage the governing body's administrative summit. Speaking ahead of the event, FCA and Fencing Association of India secretary general Rajeev Mehta said the championship could become a defining moment for the sport's growth in the country. "Hosting the Senior Asian Fencing Championships for the first time is a watershed moment that will permanently redefine the trajectory of Indian sports. We are not just welcoming

the world's elite to New Delhi; we are laying down the path towards the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic cycle right here at home. "I am equally excited to welcome delegates for the 39th FCA General Assembly, which is also being hosted in India for the first time. Our athletes have already shown they can compete and win medals at the continental level, and this tournament offers them invaluable exposure competing under home

conditions. "By introducing technologies such as the AI Video Referral System, India is also taking a leading role in modernising the sport. We believe this event can inspire a new generation of fencers in the country." The championship is set to feature several of the sport's biggest names, including Olympic champions Cheung Ka Long of Hong Kong, Oh Sang-uk of South Korea and Japan's Yamada Masaru. India will field a full-strength squad of 24 fencers led by Olympian Bhavani Devi, who became the country's first-ever fencer to qualify for the Olympic Games and won India's maiden medal at the Asian Championships in 2023. She will be joined by sabre fencer Karan Singh, Asian Olympic qualification silver medalist, along with Tanishka Khatri and Gisho Nidhi.

Cricketer Smriti Mandhana Is Only Indian on Time's Most Influential Sportspersons List



New Delhi: India vice-captain Smriti Mandhana has been named in TIME magazine's list of the 100 Most Influential People in Sports for 2026, emerging as the only Indian athlete to feature in the annual selection. TIME

described the list as a collection of athletes, coaches, executives, investors and changemakers who are shaping the sporting landscape globally. Mandhana joins an elite group of international stars that includes LeBron James, Lio-

nel Messi, Cristiano Ronaldo, Carlos Alcaraz, Eileen Gu, Rory McIlroy, Victor Wembanyama and FIFA president Gianni Infantino. Explaining her inclusion, TIME highlighted Mandhana's role in pushing the boundaries of women's cricket while combining individual milestones with team success. The publication noted that Mandhana became the first Indian woman to score a double century in a domestic one-day game and the first Indian woman to register centuries across all three international formats. It also highlighted that she is tied for the most centuries in women's international cricket with 17 and became the first player to score more than 1,000 ODI runs in a calendar year. The 29-year-old has also enjoyed sustained success at the franchise and international level. TIME pointed to her leadership role in guiding Royal Challengers Bengaluru to Women's Premier League titles in 2024 and 2026 and her contribution to India's ICC Women's World Cup-winning campaign last year, where she finished among the tournament's leading run-scorers.

India Women's Hockey Team Beats Japan to Secure FIH Nations Cup Semifinal

New Delhi: The Indian women's hockey team sealed a place in the semifinals of the FIH Hockey Women's Nations Cup New Zealand 2026 with a 2-1 win over Japan in their second Pool A match at the North Harbour National Hockey Centre in Auckland on Tuesday. Captain Salima Tete and forward Lalremisami scored in either half for India, while Ai Hiramitsu found the net for Japan. The victory, India's second in as many matches, took them to six points and confirmed their passage to the last four of the tournament. The opening half was evenly contested, with both sides enjoying periods of possession and creating scoring opportunities. However, neither team managed to break the deadlock before the interval. India made the breakthrough in the third quarter through a well-executed penalty-come routine. In the 33rd minute, Navneet Kaur's strike was cleverly redirected by Nikki Pradhan into the path of Salima, who finished from close range to hand India the lead. Japan responded almost immediately. Two minutes



later, Hiramitsu converted from a penalty corner to level the scores and restore parity. With the contest finely balanced heading into the final quarter, India regained the advantage in the 49th minute. Sushila Chanu Pukhrambam delivered a precise pass from the edge of the circle towards the goalmouth, where Lalremisami produced a deft touch to guide the ball into the net. Japan pushed forward in the closing stages in search of an equaliser, but India's defence stood firm to preserve the lead

and secure all three points. The match was also a significant milestone for midfielder Jyoti, who made her 100th senior international appearance for the national team. India are now at the top of Pool A with six points from victories over the United States and Japan. They will face Uruguay in their final group-stage match on June 18, while Japan and the United States will compete for the second semifinal berth from the pool. The Nations Cup serves as a qualifying tournament for next year's

FIH Pro League, adding further significance to India's impressive start to the campaign. The Indian women's hockey team secured a semifinal spot at the FIH Hockey Women's Nations Cup New Zealand 2026 by defeating Japan 2-1 in their second Pool A match. Goals from captain Salima Tete and Lalremisami ensured victory after Japan equalized once. Midfielder Jyoti marked her 100th international appearance. With six points from two wins, India leads Pool A and will face Uruguay next.

Vaibhav Sooryavanshi Ignored Advice From Virat Kohli, Who Spent Years Ignoring It Too

New Delhi: Two weeks ago in Ahmedabad, Virat Kohli put his arm around Vaibhav Sooryavanshi's shoulder and said something the 15-year-old will need to remember for the rest of his career. "Do not pay attention to who is saying what or how they are saying it." Sooryavanshi later said the moment felt like a dream, that it didn't even feel like it was actually Virat Kohli. That the man spoke to him like an elder brother.



He stored the words carefully, the way you store something precious. In Dambulla, after a Super Over that India A lost to Sri Lanka A in circumstances already fraying with controversy, Sooryavanshi turned back. He had been walking away, gloves tapped with Suryansh Shedge, head down, done. Then a Sri Lanka A fielder — Vishen Halambage, clapping, talking — said something. And the 15-year-old, who had just faced Jasprit Bumrah in front of 50,000 people, decided he wasn't done after all. He pushed Halambage with his left hand before Niroshan Dick-

wella stepped in to separate them. It lasted seconds. It will be discussed for days. The match itself had been a powder keg. India A and Sri Lanka A had tied at 265 apiece, a no-ball controversy had dragged both sets of players back onto the field after they'd begun leaving, and Tilak Varma had spent considerable time in the umpires' faces before the Super Over was eventually played. By the time Mathuran's yorker ended India A's chase, nerves were already stripped raw. Sooryavanshi

had scored five runs off two balls in the Super Over. it was not enough, and not through want of trying. As the hosts celebrated, he and Shedge began the long walk back. What followed was brief but ugly: words from Halambage, a response from Sooryavanshi, a push, and then cooler heads, Dickwella, Sri Lanka A captain Sahan Arachchige, pulling everyone apart. A gripping contest had its ending soured. This is, in truth, a familiar script, at least on the field,

in the heat of competition. In December 2025, during India's chase of 348 in the Under-19 Asia Cup final in Dubai, Sooryavanshi hammered 26 off 10 balls before Pakistan pacer Ali Raza dismissed him and celebrated with some pointed words. Sooryavanshi did not simply walk off. He turned, gestured, said his piece. It went viral. People talked about it for days then, too. Two incidents, separated by months, do not define a character. Away from the field, Sooryavanshi

Romelu Lukaku Changes the Game for Belgium but Egypt Hold Firm in Draw

Seattle: Romelu Lukaku spared Belgium from an embarrassing start to their FIFA World Cup 2026 campaign after the striker's immediate impact off the bench earned a 1-1 draw against an impressive Egypt in Group G at Seattle Stadium on Monday. The Napoli forward needed just 28 seconds to alter the course of the contest after being introduced in the 66th minute, forcing an own goal from Mohamed Hany that cancelled out Emam Ashour's first-half opener. While Belgium will be relieved to leave with a point, the result represented a missed opportunity for Egypt, who outplayed one of the tournament favourites for long stretches and came within minutes of securing one of the biggest results in the nation's World Cup history. Much of the pre-match focus centred on Belgium's star-studded squad, but Egypt emerged as the more cohesive and dangerous side throughout large parts of the contest. Hossam Hassan's decision to deploy Mohamed Salah through the middle proved effective as Belgium struggled to contain the movement of Egypt's attacking players. Salah played a key role in the opening



goal, threading a pass into the path of Ashour, who fired a low effort beyond Thibaut Courtois in the 19th minute for his first international goal. The advantage was thoroughly deserved. Egypt combined defensive discipline with attacking intent, frustrating Belgium's wide players while limiting the influence of Kevin De Bruyne in advanced areas. Despite enjoying more possession, Belgium failed to register a shot on target in the opening half and looked short of ideas against a well-drilled opponent. Belgium improved after the interval but continued to struggle to convert pressure into clear opportunities. Courtois kept his side in contention with important saves from Mostafa Zico and

Salah as Egypt threatened to extend their lead on the counterattack. With Belgium's attack lacking a focal point, the introduction of Lukaku changed the dynamic instantly. Thomas Meunier's delivery into the box caused panic inside the Egyptian penalty area and, under pressure from Lukaku, Hany diverted the ball into his own net less than half a minute after the striker entered the pitch. The equaliser finally gave Belgium momentum and highlighted the importance of Lukaku's physical presence, which had been absent for much of the match. Although Belgium pushed for a winner during the closing stages, Egypt held firm to secure a point that could prove valuable in the race for qualification.