

India in green tech accord with Nordics



New Delhi, May 20: India and the five Nordic nations on Tuesday unveiled a new "Green Technology and Innovation Strategic Partnership" at the 3rd India-Nordic Summit in Oslo, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his counterparts pledging deeper collaboration in clean energy, sustainability, digital innovation and emerging technologies. Addressing a joint press interaction after the summit, Modi said the partnership would combine "innovation with scale and talent" to drive sustainable growth and trusted technologies. "Today, we decided to elevate India-Nordic relations to a Green Technology and Innovation Strategic Partnership. With this green technology partnership, we will ensure a better future for the entire world," Modi said. The summit brought together Modi and the leaders of Iceland, Finland, Denmark, Norway and Sweden, reflecting what the Prime Minister's Office described as the "expanding scope and growing strength" of India's engagement with the Nordic region. Modi underscored

convergence on global security and governance issues, saying India and the Nordic countries shared "a clear and united stand on terrorism: No compromise, no double standards." "In this era of global tensions and conflicts, we will continue to work together to strengthen the rules-based global order," he said, adding that both sides supported "the earliest resolution of conflicts and efforts towards peace" in Ukraine and West Asia.

Calling the Nordic countries "natural partners", Modi said the relationship was anchored in "democracy, the rule of law and multilateralism". He also pressed for reforms in global institutions, saying changes in multilateral bodies were "necessary and urgent." On the sidelines of the summit, Modi held separate bilateral meetings with Icelandic Prime Minister Kristrun Frostadottir, Finnish Prime Minister Petteri Orpo and Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen. Discussions covered renewable energy, digitalisation, AI, 5G and 6G technologies, geothermal energy, Arctic cooperation and mobility partnerships.

PM Modi Backs Diplomacy to End Ukraine, West Asia Conflicts

New Delhi, May 19: Prime Minister Narendra Modi and leaders of the five Nordic nations elevated their ties to a "Green Technology and Innovation Strategic Partnership" at the 3rd India-Nordic Summit. Addressing a joint press interaction, Modi called the nations "natural partners" anchored in democracy and multilateralism.

The new framework focuses on deep collaboration in clean energy, sustainability, and digital innovation, combining Nordic technology with Indian scale. Modi highlighted a 200% surge in Nordic investments over the past decade and urged urgent reforms in global institutions.

On security, Modi emphasized a united, uncompromising stand against terrorism and called for the early resolution of conflicts in Ukraine and West Asia. He also held separate bilateral talks with the Prime Ministers of Iceland, Finland, and Denmark to boost trade, AI, and renewable energy ties.



Shah praises Bastar transformation, slams Congress on Naxals

Raipur, May 19: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday took a swipe at the opposition, saying several non-BJP state governments cooperated with the Centre in the fight against CPI (Maoist), but the Congress did not support anti-Naxal operations in Chhattisgarh. He also lauded security forces for transforming Bastar. Shah dismissed the long-held narrative that Maoism grew due to a lack of development. Instead, he asserted that Naxalism was the very barrier preventing development. To bridge this decades-old gap, an initiative named the "Veer Shaheed Gundadhar Seva Dera", will be rolled out. Out of nearly 200 security camps established to fight insurgents, the government will immediately convert 70 camps (roughly one-third) into comprehensive administrative and welfare centres. The 'Seva Dera' is designed to deliver governance directly to the doorsteps of tribal households, featuring All-in-one digital services like access to banking, Aadhar registration and 371 state and central welfare schemes through Common Service Centres. They will also establish primary schools, Anganwadi centres, and affordable ration shops under one roof. For women empowerment, units will be set up for tailoring training, rice milling, and tamarind processing to provide livelihood avenues for tribal women.

Focusing on sustainable wealth creation, Shah revealed a major push into the



cooperative dairy sector. In partnership with the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB), the Chhattisgarh government plans to provide every tribal citizen with a cow and a buffalo. "A massive dairy infrastructure network will be operational across the Bastar division within the next six months," he stated. Through these initiatives, Shah said that the average income of Bastar's citizens is projected to increase six-fold within the next five years.

He informed that the central government has already constructed over 1,221 km of roads costing Rs 20,255 crore, set up thousands of mobile towers, and opened 269 Eklavya model residential schools in the previously Maoist-affected regions. Shah chaired the Central Zonal Council meeting at Bastar. Earlier in the day, Union Home Minister chaired 26th edition of Central Zonal Council meeting at Jagdalpur (Bastar). Union Home Minister lauded the collective efforts of the member states and the host government, declaring that the strategically vital Central Zone has now

become entirely Naxal-free and devoid of inter-state or centre-state disputes. The high-level forum saw the convergence of Chief Ministers Vishnu Deo Sai (Chhattisgarh), Mohan Yadav (Madhya Pradesh), Yogi Adityanath (Uttar Pradesh), and Pushkar Singh Dhami (Uttarakhand), alongside top-tier central and state administrative officials.

Highlighting the region's massive economic weight, rich in minerals, forests, and grain reserves, Shah praised the coordinated leadership that brought an end to Left-Wing Extremism (LWE) in Bastar. Emphasising the strengthening of India's federal structure under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Shah presented a comparative look at the council's growing efficiency. Zonal Council meetings jumped from just 11 (between 2004-2014) to 32 meetings between 2014 and 2026. Standing Committee meetings rose 2.5 times to 35 sessions. Out of 1,729 regional issues discussed during the 2014-2026 window (up from 569 in the previous decade), approximately 80% have been successfully resolved.

Indian flyers call out Vietnam Airlines for racism, discrimination

New Delhi, May 20: A Pune-based doctor has alleged racism and discrimination at the hands of a staffer at Vietnam Airlines on a return trip from Vietnam recently. Stating that he has travelled to 37 countries, Dr Abhay Daga charged that he was never subjected to such "vile treatment" by any airline. In a series of posts on X on Monday, Dr Daga said that he had travelled with his family of three on Business class from Hanoi to Delhi on flight VN981. "Instead of a premium experience, your ground staff subjected us to blatant discrimination and humiliation," he charged. Elaborating, the flyer said, "At the aerobridge, your staff blocked us, looked at me with utter disrespect, and stated, 'This is Business Class,' implying we didn't belong. When I replied, 'Yes, I know,' he had the audacity to mock me, snapping back with

"Really?" and "Are you sure?" Dr Daga also put up a photo of the ID card online to substantiate his claim. The doctor said he felt insulted in front of his young child. When he confronted the staff, he refused to apologise and was arrogant, he said. The airline staff is reported to have remarked to the doctor, "We need to make sure which passenger belongs where."

The passenger added in his post that he had travelled to 36 countries and Vietnam was his 37th. "I have NEVER experienced such vile treatment from any airline. My child actually had to ask why your staff was speaking to us with such disrespect. Your employee is an embarrassment to your national carrier," he posted. The doctor called upon Vietnam Airlines to launch an immediate investigation into this discriminatory conduct and issue a formal apolo-

gy. "Racism and humiliation have no place in aviation. Do better," his post concluded. The airline could not be reached for their version of the incident. The post received a volley of criticism and similar experiences shared by multiple people. Writer Vedvrat, who had travelled by Vietnam Airlines, charged, "The country is terrific, but service staff and security personnel are brutal. They will deliberately pick you out and subject you to unreal checks for no apparent reason. If it is a white person or someone of European/American nationality, they'll be treated like royals and allowed to get away with murder." Another respondent, Sachin, alleged in his post, "Even we faced racism by Vietnam Airlines staff. Not once but twice by different staff. That was the only incident on our trip. Must get your act together, Vietnam Airlines."



Airlines."



Sikkim Joins Brahmaputra Board as Full-Fledged Member



Gangtok, May 19: Sikkim's Minister for WR/PHE/Eccls, Ven. Sonam Lama, represented the state at two key meetings in Guwahati today, the 14th High Powered Review Board of the Brahmaputra Board under the Ministry of Jal Shakti, and the 6th Governing Body Meeting of the North Eastern Regional Institute of Water and Land Management (NERIWALM). The sessions were presided over by Union Jal Shakti Minister C.R. Paatil, alongside Union Ports, Shipping & Waterways Minister Sarbananda Sonowal and Union

Minister of State for Jal Shakti Raj Bhusan Chaudhary, with ministers from all North Eastern states in attendance. The Sikkim delegation also included WRD Secretary L.D. Lamtha and PCE/WRD Rajiv Subba.

The meeting was significant as Sikkim and West Bengal have now been included as full-fledged members of the Brahmaputra Board. Union Minister Paatil emphasized the need to complete ongoing projects on a war footing, stressing that the Board's objectives would be instru-

mental in driving all-round development in the Northeast, in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision. Ministers Sonowal and Chaudhary highlighted the immense potential of the region's water resources to diversify the agro-economy, boost infrastructure, and generate employment.

Expressing gratitude for Sikkim's inclusion, Minister Sonam Lama described it as a historic step that would lead the state to new heights of development. He raised issues faced by Sikkim and expressed confidence that the Brahmaputra Board would help find effective solutions. The meeting agenda was coordinated by Brahmaputra Board Chairman Dr. Ranbir Singh. Later in the day, Union Minister Paatil virtually inaugurated the International Hostel-cum-Guest House of NERIWALM, further strengthening institutional infrastructure for water and land management in the region.

Assam Crime Branch summons Randeep Surjewala in CM Himanta's wife passport row



Guwahati, May 19: The Assam Crime Branch on Tuesday summoned senior Congress leader Randeep Surjewala to appear before investigators on May 23 in connection with the passport controversy involving Riniki Bhuyan Sarma, wife of Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. The development comes days after Congress leader Pawan Khera was summoned to the Crime Branch Police Station in Guwahati in connection with the same case.

After appearing before investigators, Khera said he had cooperated fully with the probe and confirmed he had been asked to return on May 25. "I was asked all the questions that are usually asked during

an investigation... I have been called next on 25 May. I will come again because every responsible citizen must cooperate with an investigation," Khera said. Addressing reporters in Guwahati, Khera said investigators questioned him on routine aspects of the case and reiterated that citizens should cooperate with investigative agencies. Asked whether he stood by his earlier allegations against Riniki Bhuyan Sarma, Khera declined to comment further, saying he would limit his remarks to the investigation process.

The controversy began after Khera, during a press conference in April, alleged that Riniki Bhuyan Sarma held three passports, from India, the UAE and Egypt, and owned undisclosed luxury properties in Dubai, besides having links to a company in Wyoming, United States. The Sarma family has denied the allegations, calling the documents in circulation "AI-generated fabrications" allegedly spread by Pakistani social media groups.

Nagaland child protection meeting



Kohima, May 19: A state-level consultative meeting on the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, the Juvenile Justice Model Rules, 2026, and Adoption Regulations, 2022 was held in Kohima, Kohima on Tuesday. The meeting was organised by Mission Vatsalya and the Department of Social Welfare, Department of Social Welfare Nagaland. At the inaugural session, Secretary of the Department of Social Welfare and Mission Director Limawabang Jamir addressed the participants. He stated that the implementation of child protection laws requires alignment with local customary laws and the cultural context of Nagaland while following legal provisions. The consultative meet focused on discussions related to the implementation of child protection frameworks and related regulations in the state.

Mizoram CM Inaugurates Road, Health Sub-Centre, and Rubber Allotment at Hmunpui

Aizawl, May 19: Chief Minister Lalduhoma attended a thanksgiving function in Hmunpui on Tuesday, where villagers celebrated the completion of several key development projects. Accompanied by local MLA H. Lalzirliana, the Chief Minister joined residents in marking the inauguration of the newly blacktopped road, the construction of a Health Sub-Centre with staff quarters, and the allotment of 24 hectares of rubber plantation under the Chief Minister's Rubber Mission. In his address, Lalduhoma explained that the road had been reconstructed under SASCI 2025-26 Part-I at a cost of Rs. 3 crore, following urgent repairs needed on the earlier PMGSY road. He also outlined the objectives of the Rubber Mission, which was introduced after studying Tripura's successful model. The initiative aims to plant over 51 lakh rubber saplings across 11,500 hectares within five



years, with Hmunpui receiving 24 hectares in the second phase.

The Chief Minister further noted that the new Health Sub-Centre and staff quarters, funded under NABARD RIDF-30, were designed to strengthen healthcare services in the village. Calling Hmunpui an important settlement, he assured continued government support and revealed that a survey for a new power supply line is currently under-

way. MLA H. Lalzirliana expressed gratitude to the Chief Minister, praising the developmental progress achieved under the present government. Village Council Vice President H. Laldusanga, speaking on behalf of the community, thanked the government for the improved road, healthcare facilities, and rubber-based livelihood opportunities extended to 24 families.

Manipur: COCOMI Demands Transparency on Kamjong Border Village Attacks

Imphal, May 19: The Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI) has urged the Manipur government to disclose details regarding the recent attacks on border villages in Kamjong district and clarify the measures being taken to ensure the safety and security of residents living along the Indo-Myanmar border. A joint team comprising COCOMI, the Foothills Naga Coordinating Committee (FNCC) and the All Tribal Trade and Commerce Association (ATTCA) visited the border villages of Z Choro, Wanglee and Namlee on May 18 to express solidarity with villagers affected by the alleged attack reportedly carried out by suspected Myanmar-based militants on May 7. During the visit, the organisations distributed humanitarian aid and essential supplies to the affected residents.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the visit, COCOMI spokesperson Shanta Nahakpam alleged that armed cadres of the Kuki National Army-Burma (KNA-B) were visible in videos circulated after the incident. He questioned the Manipur government's reported position that the attack did not involve foreign elements. "Several videos showed armed KNA-B cadres moving around in the background of the attacked villages. However, representatives of the Manipur government declared that the incident was not an act of external aggression," Nahakpam said. He stated that Z Choro village is located barely 100 metres from a border pillar along the Indo-Myanmar border and alleged that neighbouring villages Wanglee and Namlee were also targeted during the attack.

Nahakpam criticised the government for what he described as inadequate security arrangements in the affected areas despite as-



surances from the state Home Department. He alleged that patrolling remained insufficient and that residents continued to face insecurity even though an Assam Rifles post is situated nearby. Seeking accountability, COCOMI demanded that the government disclose the legal steps taken following the incident and identify those responsible for the alleged firing, arson and looting in the villages. "The government should reveal what legal action has been initiated so far and what measures are being adopted to protect the land and people of Manipur," he said. The organisation also expressed concern over continuing violence in other parts of the state, including reports of killings, kidnappings and exchanges of captives in districts such as Senapati and Kangpokpi.

FNCC convenor Ng Akhiu said the organisations visited the villages as a gesture of solidarity with the indigenous Tangkhul community residing in the border areas. He also criticised the state government's denial of alleged foreign involvement in the attacks. Residents of the affected villages thanked the organisations for extending support during what they described as a difficult period.

Sony launches BRAVIA 3II smart TVs in India with XR processor, 4K 120Hz gaming features

Guwahati: Sony has announced the launch of its new BRAVIA 3II television series in India, introducing advanced AI-powered picture processing and next-generation gaming features to its mid-premium smart TV lineup. The company said the new series is powered by Sony's XR Processor™, designed to analyse content the way humans see and hear to deliver enhanced colour, contrast, depth and clarity.

The BRAVIA 3II series comes with XR Triluminos Pro™, Dolby Vision®, Dolby Atmos®, DTS:X® and support for 4K 120Hz refresh rate aimed at improving cinematic viewing and gaming experiences. Sony said the television lineup will initially be launched in 55-inch and 65-inch variants, while larger screen sizes, including a 100-inch model, are expected between July and August this year.

The company said the smart TVs support HDMI 2.1 gaming features such as Variable Refresh Rate (VRR), Auto Low Latency Mode (ALLM)

and Dolby Vision Gaming. The models are also integrated with Google TV, hands-free voice search, Apple AirPlay 2, HomeKit, Amazon Alexa compatibility and upcoming Google Gemini AI support through an OTA update.

Sony said BRAVIA 3II televisions will be available across Sony retail stores, major electronic outlets and e-commerce platforms from May 2026. The 55-inch model has been priced

at Rs 1,59,900, while the best buy price starts at Rs 99,990.

In Guwahati, retailers and electronics dealers expect strong demand for large-screen premium smart TVs ahead of the festive and cricket season. Industry observers said growing interest in home entertainment, OTT streaming and console gaming among urban consumers in Assam is likely to support sales of premium television models such as the BRAVIA 3II series.



Škoda Auto India upgrades Kodiaq range with new luxury and tech features

Guwahati: Škoda Auto India has refreshed its flagship Kodiaq luxury 4x4 SUV range for 2026 with new technology, enhanced premium features and a wider variant lineup aimed at different customer segments. Prices for the updated Kodiaq start at Rs 36.99 lakh (ex-showroom).

The updated Kodiaq lineup now includes Lounge, Sportline and Selection L&K variants, each offering a distinct focus on accessibility, sportiness and premium luxury. The company has also introduced Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS) in the Sportline and Selection L&K variants. These include adaptive cruise control, lane assist, blind spot detection, rear traffic alert and front assist with automatic braking functions.

The Kodiaq Lounge has been posi-



tioned as a value-luxury offering with a five-seater configuration and 786-litre boot space. The Sportline variant highlights Škoda's motorsport-inspired styling with glossy black elements, while the Selection L&K continues as the top-end luxury trim with massage seats, Cognac leather upholstery and premium comfort features. All variants continue with the 2.0-litre TSI petrol engine producing

150kW power and 320Nm torque, paired with a seven-speed DSG automatic transmission and 4x4 capability.

Speaking on the update, Ashish Gupta, Brand Director of Škoda Auto India, said the company aims to cater to every luxury 4x4 aspiration through the enhanced Kodiaq range following strong sales growth in 2025 and early 2026.

In Guwahati, luxury SUV demand has been witnessing steady growth, particularly among premium buyers looking for performance-oriented vehicles suited for both urban roads and Northeast terrain conditions. Dealers in Guwahati expect the updated Kodiaq range, especially the Sportline and Selection L&K variants, to attract affluent customers seeking advanced safety features, all-wheel-drive capability and premium interiors.

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

Aizawl: Tata AIA Life Insurance has announced its highest-ever bonus payout of ₹2,173 crore for participating (Par) policyholders for the financial year ended March 31, 2026, registering an 18 per cent rise from ₹1,842 crore declared in the previous fiscal. The record payout will benefit more than 8.74 lakh policies, the company said on Sunday.

The insurer stated that the bonus has been declared across eligible participating insurance plans, including Smart Value Income Plan, Shubh Flexi Income Plan, Shubh Maha Life, Diamond Savings Plan and Value Income Plan. Participating plans allow policyholders to share in the profits of the insurer through annual bonus declarations, depending on the performance of the participating fund.

Kshitij Sharma, Appointed Actuary at



Tata AIA Life Insurance, said, "We are proud to announce yet another milestone year of record bonus payouts for our participating policyholders. This record bonus declaration reflects Tata AIA's

disciplined investment strategy, prudent fund management, and continued commitment to delivering long-term value to our policyholders."

The company's Assets Under Management (AUM) grew 18 per cent year-on-year to ₹1,45,617 crore as on March 31, 2026, reflecting sustained business growth and fund performance.

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

TVS Motor Company posts 30% revenue growth in FY26, records highest-ever sales



Guwahati: TVS Motor Company has reported a 30 per cent rise in revenue for the financial year 2025-26, posting its highest-ever annual sales and revenue figures driven by strong growth across motorcycles, scooters and electric vehicles.

The company recorded revenue of Rs. 47,270 crore in FY26 compared to Rs. 36,251 crore in the previous financial year. Operating profit before tax (PBT) rose 40 per cent to Rs. 4,975 crore from Rs. 3,563 crore in FY25, while operating EBITDA improved to 12.9 per cent.

TVS Motor sold 58.89 lakh two-wheelers and three-wheelers during FY26, marking a 24 per cent increase from 47.44 lakh units sold in

FY25. Motorcycle sales grew 24 per cent to 27.13 lakh units, while scooter sales rose 27 per cent to 24.13 lakh units.

The company's electric vehicle business also witnessed strong momentum, with EV sales increasing 33 per cent to 3.71 lakh units. TVS Motor said it now has over nine lakh EV customers globally. Three-wheeler sales surged 63 per cent to 2.19 lakh units during the fiscal year.

In the January-March quarter, the company posted its highest-ever quarterly revenue of Rs. 12,808 crore. Quarterly sales rose 28 per cent to 15.60 lakh units, while EV sales jumped 51 per cent to 1.15 lakh units. The company's EBITDA margin for the quarter stood at 13.1 per cent.

TVS Motor inducts Ravindran Shanmugam as Independent Director

Guwahati: TVS Motor Company on Thursday announced the induction of technology entrepreneur Ravindran Shanmugam as an independent director on its board for five consecutive years, effective May 13, 2026, subject to shareholders' approval.

The Bengaluru-based two and three-wheeler manufacturer said Shanmugam brings extensive experience in digital transformation, AI-led platforms and consumer-focused businesses across global markets. He is currently the Co-founder and Executive Chairman of Mable, a Singapore-based AI-enabled interior design and renovation platform. He has also worked as a management consultant with McKinsey & Company, advising companies on growth and busi-



ness strategy.

An alumnus of the University of Oxford, Shanmugam is expected to strengthen the company's focus on technology, innovation and corporate governance.

Sudarshan Venu, Chairman of TVS Motor Company, said Shanmugam's expertise in digital and consumer-focused

businesses, AI-led transformation and entrepreneurship would add valuable depth to the company's board as it pursues future-ready growth ambitions.

Shanmugam said the mobility sector is being reshaped by technology, AI and changing consumer expectations, adding that TVS Motor is well positioned to play a significant role in the transformation.

In Guwahati, the appointment reflects the increasing importance of technology and AI-driven mobility solutions in India's fast-growing two-wheeler market. Industry stakeholders believe TVS Motor's stronger focus on digital innovation could further enhance its competitiveness in Northeast India, where demand for smart mobility and connected vehicle features is steadily rising.



TVS Racing expands grassroots motorsport push with India OMC 2026 program



Guwahati: TVS Motor Company on Monday announced the successful completion of the TVS India One Make Championship (OMC) 2026 Training & Selection Program, strengthening its long-term strategy to expand India's grassroots motorsport ecosystem and nurture emerging racing talent. The nationwide initiative was conducted across four cities and concluded with the final selection round held from May 15 to May 17 at the Madras International Circuit (MIC), Chennai. More than 120

racers participated across Women, Media, Rookie, Electric and TVS Apache RR310 Expert categories. TVS Racing said the championship continues to serve as one of India's leading rider development platforms by combining structured training, professional mentorship and competitive track exposure. Participants underwent evaluation sessions focused on riding technique, consistency, track awareness, safety and race discipline under the guidance of TVS Racing experts.

Vimal Sumbly, Head Business – Premium, TVS Motor Company, said the program reflects the company's continued commitment to democratising motorsport and creating a professional racing ecosystem for riders across categories. He added that TVS Racing continues to provide a structured pathway for riders to build racing skills and progress towards higher levels of motorsport competition.

The 2026 season also marks 20 years of the TVS Apache brand, developed through TVS Racing's "Track to Road" philosophy. Since the inception of TVS India OMC in 1994, the platform has trained more than 4,000 racers and emerged as one of the country's most organised rider development ecosystems.

Guwahati is witnessing growing interest in premium and performance motorcycles, particularly among younger riders and biking communities. Dealers in the region believe initiatives like TVS India OMC are helping strengthen awareness around professional motorsport while boosting consumer engagement for racing-inspired motorcycles in Northeast India.

BharathCloud launches first AI-ready sovereign cloud centre at CtrlS Hyderabad datacenter

Guwahati: BharathCloud has launched its first AI-ready sovereign Cloud Centre at the Hyderabad DC1 facility of CtrlS Datacenters, marking a significant step in India's rapidly expanding digital infrastructure and cloud ecosystem. The Cloud Centre was inaugurated by Sridhar Pinnareddy. Global property consulting firm JLL served as the exclusive advisor for the transaction through which BharathCloud established its data-centre ecosystem. The launch comes amid growing demand for sovereign, scalable and AI-ready infrastructure as industries

accelerate digital transformation, AI adoption and data localisation initiatives. The facility is hosted within CtrlS' AI-ready Rated-4 datacenter ecosystem and marks the beginning of BharathCloud's infrastructure expansion plans across India. Congratulating BharathCloud, Pinnareddy said India's AI and digital growth story would require resilient and secure digital infrastructure at scale, adding that CtrlS remains focused on enabling enterprises and governments with sovereign AI-ready datacenters. Rahul Takkallapally and Padma Reddy

Sama, Co-Founders of BharathCloud, said CtrlS' digital infrastructure capabilities and JLL's strategic expertise would help the company build "India's most trusted AI-ready sovereign cloud ecosystem" and support its expansion nationally and globally. The initiative forms part of BharathCloud's planned \$100 million (around ₹950 crore) investment over the next five years across cities including Mumbai, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi NCR, Kolkata and Pune, besides Tier-II and Tier-III markets.

Bajaj General Insurance bets on high-value health segment with MHCP EDGE+ launch

Guwahati: Bajaj General Insurance has launched 'My Health Care Plan Edge+' (MHCP EDGE+), a next-generation health indemnity insurance product aimed at addressing rising healthcare costs and expanding access to customised medical coverage solutions. The company said the plan offers sum insured options ranging from Rs 5 lakh to Rs 5 crore and includes unlimited reinstatement of the sum insured within a policy year, ensuring uninterrupted protection even in cases of multiple claims. Available for both individual and family floater categories, the product combines hospitalisation coverage with modular add-ons and riders that can be tailored according to customer needs and affordability.

MHCP EDGE+ covers hospitalisation expenses including room rent, ICU charges, surgeries, AYUSH therapies, modern treatment methods, pre and post hospitalisation expenses, organ donor costs, domiciliary treatment, ambulance services, and day care procedures. The insurer has also introduced riders such as Consumables Plus, Super Cumulative Bonus, Health Limitless, and global treatment coverage for planned and emergency care abroad. The plan includes the Age Shield feature that locks premiums at the entry age until a claim is made, while Smart Tenure allows customers to pool their to-



tal sum insured across the policy tenure and utilise it flexibly from the first year. Dr. Tapan Singhel said the company aims to make health insurance more flexible, transparent, and aligned with evolving healthcare needs. The company said its freeze-

Vi rolls out flexible roaming plans to make overseas travel easier

Shillong: For thousands of Indians travelling abroad this summer for work, studies, medical needs or family visits, staying connected without worrying about high roaming bills remains a major concern. Responding to this growing demand, Vi has launched a new range of flexible International Roaming (IR) plans for its postpaid customers.

The telecom operator has introduced new 7-day, 14-day and 21-day roaming packs, adding to its existing portfolio and taking the total number of IR plans to 17. Customers can now choose plans with validity ranging from one day to 30 days depending on their travel schedule and usage requirements. Vi said the plans cover more than 120 countries and include both limited and truly unlimited benefits for data, voice and SMS services. The

company also claimed to be the only telecom operator offering unlimited voice and data benefits across 41 major travel destinations. Customers can activate the packs digitally through the Vi App. Avneesh Khosla, Chief Marketing Officer of Vodafone Idea, said international travel needs are becoming increasingly diverse and the company aims to offer customers greater flexibility and peace of mind through customised roaming solutions. In Shillong, the demand for international roaming services has increased steadily among students, professionals and tourists travelling overseas from Meghalaya. Market observers noted that flexible-duration plans and unlimited connectivity options are becoming important for travellers seeking affordable and hassle-free communication while abroad.

Tata Coffee Gold targets summer demand with premium café-style coffee range

Guwahati: As summer temperatures rise across the country, Tata Coffee Gold has introduced its premium freeze-dried coffee range aimed at bringing café-style coffee experiences into homes. The company highlighted that the range is designed for both hot and cold coffee preparations, offering consumers a variety of flavours for everyday indulgence during the summer season.



The range includes five variants — Original, Vanilla, Hazelnut, Brownie and Tiramisu — each positioned to cater to different consumer preferences. The Original variant offers a rich and full-bodied coffee taste with a strong aroma, while Vanilla focuses on smooth and mellow flavours suitable for creamy lattes and iced coffees. Hazelnut delivers a nutty café-style flavour profile, while the Brownie variant is aimed at consumers looking for dessert-style coffee experiences. The Tiramisu flavour, inspired by the classic Italian dessert, combines creamy and cocoa-like notes for a more indulgent blend. The company said its freeze-

dried technology helps preserve aroma and flavour, allowing consumers to recreate café-style beverages at home with convenience. In Guwahati, premium instant coffee consumption has been witnessing gradual growth, particularly among young consumers and working professionals seeking convenient beverage options. Retailers in Guwahati said flavoured coffee variants and café-inspired products are increasingly gaining traction as demand rises for affordable at-home indulgence products during the summer months.



Škoda Auto India upgrades Kodiaq range with new luxury and tech features



Guwahati: Škoda Auto India has refreshed its flagship Kodiaq luxury 4x4 SUV range for 2026 with new technology, enhanced premium features and a wider variant lineup aimed at different customer segments. Prices for the updated Kodiaq start at Rs 36.99 lakh (ex-showroom).

The updated Kodiaq lineup now includes Lounge, Sportline and Selection L&K variants, each offering a distinct focus on accessibility, sportiness and premium luxury. The company has also introduced Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS) in the Sportline and Selection L&K variants. These include adaptive cruise control, lane assist, blind spot detection, rear traffic alert and front assist with automatic braking functions.

The Kodiaq Lounge has been positioned as a value-luxury offering with a five-seater configuration and 786-litre boot space. The

Sportline variant highlights Škoda's motorsport-inspired styling with glossy black elements, while the Selection L&K continues as the top-end luxury trim with massage seats, Cognac leather upholstery and premium comfort features. All variants continue with the 2.0-litre TSI petrol engine producing 150kW power and 320Nm torque, paired with a seven-speed DSG automatic transmission and 4x4 capability.

Speaking on the update, Ashish Gupta, Brand Director of Škoda Auto India, said the company aims to cater to every luxury 4x4 aspiration

through the enhanced Kodiaq range following strong sales growth in 2025 and early 2026.

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TVS Venu to pick up stake in Jana Small Finance Bank



Guwahati: TVS VENU has announced plans to acquire a minority stake in Jana Small Finance Bank through a combination of primary issuance of warrants and secondary share purchase, taking its total equity ownership to up to 9.9% on a fully diluted basis. The transaction includes a proposed 4.9% holding by TVS Motor Company and remains subject to regulatory approvals and customary closing conditions.

The move strengthens TVS VENU's growing presence in India's financial services sector. The group already operates through TVS Credit Services, one of the country's major non-banking financial companies offering retail and consumer loans, and has also signed definitive agreements to acquire 100% stake in PGIM India Asset Management.

Jana Small Finance Bank has built a strong national presence in retail and MSME banking with over 12 million customers, 822 outlets across 23 states and two Union Territories, and advances and deposits exceeding Rs 35,000 crore each as of March 31, 2026.

Sudarshan Venu, Chairman of TVS Motor Company, said the investment aligns with the group's long-term strategy of supporting quality institutions serving India's expanding digital financial ecosystem. He also acknowledged the role of TPG Capital and welcomed new investors including industrialist S P Lohia and Shruti Lohia-backed 2i Capital PCC.

In Guwahati, the investment reflects rising confidence in India's retail lending and MSME banking segments, which are witnessing steady expansion in the Northeast. Financial experts noted that growing digital banking adoption and increased credit access in Guwahati could create fresh opportunities for small businesses, traders, and emerging entrepreneurs in the region.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds expands East India footprint with first Assam showroom in Guwahati

Guwahati: Malabar Gold & Diamonds has strengthened its East India expansion strategy with the launch of its first showroom in Assam at Guwahati, taking the brand's total presence in the eastern region to 21 outlets. The development marks a significant retail expansion move for the jewellery major as organised jewellery brands continue to target emerging high-growth markets in Northeast India.

The newly opened 8,000-square-foot showroom has been designed to deliver a premium retail experience with spacious layouts, modern interiors and personalised customer services. The outlet was inaugurated by Sonu Sood along with O. Asher, Managing Director, India Operations, in the presence of company executives, customers and local community members.

The Guwahati showroom offers a wide portfolio of gold, diamond, platinum, gemstone and silver jewellery across bridal, festive, gifting and everyday wear categories. Signature collections include Mine diamond jewellery, Era uncut diamonds, Precia gemstone jewellery, Ethnix handcrafted jewellery and Virazpolki jewellery. The company has also introduced "Chitrangi," an East-inspired collection influenced by Bengal and Odisha's artistic heritage, temple motifs and alpina-style craftsmanship.

Chairman M. P. Ahammad said Guwahati's growing commercial importance and rising consumer demand for trusted jewellery brands made Assam a strategic market for the company.

In Guwahati, the entry of Malabar Gold & Diamonds is expected to accelerate competition in the organised



jewellery retail segment as demand for certified and premium jewellery products continues to rise in the city. Retail analysts believe Guwahati is emerging

as a major consumption hub for the Northeast, attracting national brands seeking expansion in high-potential urban markets.

India strengthens Africa partnership as Jayant Chaudhary attends Uganda Presidential swearing-in

Guwahati: India reaffirmed its growing strategic and educational partnership with Africa as Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Skill Development & Entrepreneurship and Minister of State for Education Jayant Chaudhary represented the country at the swearing-in ceremony of Ugandan President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, who assumed office for a seventh term.

During the visit, Chaudhary conveyed greetings and a message of goodwill from Prime Minister Narendra Modi and highlighted the im-



portance of political stability and continuity for economic growth and development. He reiterated India's commit-

ment to deepening cooperation with Uganda and the African continent across sectors including education, skill de-

velopment and institutional capacity building.

A major highlight of the visit was Chaudhary's tour of the Uganda campus of National Forensic Sciences University in Jinja, India's first overseas public academic campus, which enrolled its inaugural batch in October 2025. He said the campus is expected to emerge as a hub for multidisciplinary forensic sciences, research and training, symbolising growing India-Africa collaboration.

In Kampala, the minister also interacted with members of the Indian diaspora, under-

lining strong people-to-people and business ties between the two nations.

The expanding India-Africa engagement could create fresh opportunities for Guwahati, particularly in education services, skill training, student exchange programmes and consultancy sectors. Industry observers believe institutions and entrepreneurs in Assam may benefit from rising international partnerships and growing African demand for Indian expertise in technical education and workforce development.



Fuss-free, One Pot Paneer dishes perfect for your weekday lunch

One Pot Paneer recipes are the ultimate lunch solution at weekdays. These meals are mouth watering, protein packed and easy to prepare. Moreover these kind of delectable recipes keep your stomach full for longer. 30 minutes One Pot Paneer Pulao Sauté 200g of cubed paneer until browned and set aside. In 1.5 tbsp of hot oil, splutter cumin and curry leaves. Fry chopped onions until golden, and then add ginger-garlic paste along with turmeric, garam masala, and cumin powder. After that add half cup of veggies like capsicum, carrot, chili, beans etc and mix it well. Now mix bowlled basmati rice to the kadai and post mixing it well add fried paneer on the top and mix these paneer cubes too.

30 minutes One Pot Paneer Biriyani Recipe
Marinate 250 gm of paneer



with spices and stir chopped vegetables with whole spices and get it tender. Add marinated paneer to the mixture in the pot, layer 1.5 half boiled rice on these paneer cubes, add water and cover it with a lid and let it cook for 10 minutes in low

flame. One Pot Paneer Hariyali without onion and garlic Add 1.5 tbsp of oil at pre heated pressure cooker; add bottle guard, capsicum, nuts, whole spices salt and water. After that place a ring, place a steel

container filled with paneer cubes marinated with dahi, kasturi methi, cumin, coriander powder. Cook it for 3 to 4 whistle. Remove the container, combine the boiled vegetables and nuts, stir in the paneer, and serve alongside roti or paratha.

Crunchy Lemonade Drumsticks

In a large bowl, combine 1 tablespoon of lemon zest with the lemon juice. Incorporate 1 cup of water along with the sugar, whisking until dissolved, and then blend in the buttermilk. Use a fork to pierce the drumsticks multiple times and season them with salt and pepper. Immerse the drumsticks in the marinade, cover the bowl, and refrigerate for 4 hours or overnight. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F. Bring the chicken to room temperature. Put the panko, thyme, the remaining 1 tablespoon lemon zest, the cayenne, 1 teaspoon salt, and black pepper to taste in a large resealable plastic bag and shake to mix. Put the mayonnaise in a bowl. Set a rack on a baking sheet and spray with cooking spray. Remove the drumsticks from the marinade, dip in



the mayonnaise, then drop into the bag and shake to coat; transfer to the rack. Mist the chicken with cooking spray. Bake until golden, about 35 minutes; flip and bake until browned and crisp, 35 to 40 more minutes. Cool completely, then pack in an airtight container.

Grilled Sheet Pan S'mores

Directions Preheat a gas or charcoal grill to medium heat and line a sheet pan with aluminum foil. Spread 15 graham crackers with chocolate spread and line them up on the prepared sheet pan. These will be the sandwich bases. Using 2 spoons, dollop the marshmallow cream evenly on the chocolate-spread graham crackers. Sprinkle the mini marshmallows evenly across the graham crackers. Do the

same with the caramel chips, chocolate chips and toffee bits. Top each bottom cracker with a top cracker to create a sandwich. Position the sheet pan on the grill. If your grill is equipped with a lid, close it. In the absence of a lid, invert a second sheet pan and place it atop the pan containing the s'mores to form a makeshift lid. Cook until all ingredients are thoroughly melted and delectable, which should take approximately 25 minutes. Serve while warm.



Summer in a Sip at Third Wave Coffee

Summer just got a lot more sip-worthy with the limited-time Beach Packers range, launched by Third Wave Coffee (TWC). The collection brings a sense of sun-soaked nostalgia to every glass, blending tropical sweetness with refreshing, contemporary twists — Tropical Alphonso Frappe, Alphonso Matcha Frappe, Brazilian Lemonade Frappe, and Vietnamese Coconut Frappe. Speaking about the inspiration behind the launch, Rajat Luthra, CEO, Third Wave Coffee, shared, "At Third Wave Coffee, we continuously experiment at our innovation lab, guided by evolving consumer preferences to create distinctive beverage experiences for every season. Each range is shaped by a thoughtful exploration of flavours, formats, and textures—balancing familiarity with a sense of newness. With the Beach Packers range, we set out to celebrate classic summer flavours like mango, coconut, and lime that evoke nostalgia, while reimagining them in refreshing formats for our patrons." At the heart of the collection are two mango-forward creations. The Tropical Alphonso Frappe pairs the vibrant intensity of sun-ripened Alphonso mango with the subtle richness of coconut, resulting in a drink that feels both bright and in-



dulgent. Its counterpart, the Alphonso Matcha Frappe, stands out visually and in flavour — layering mango slush with smooth Japanese matcha to create a harmonious balance between tropical sweetness and earthy depth. Rounding out the menu are two equally compelling offerings. The Brazilian Lemonade Frappe delivers a bold citrus punch, mellowed by condensed milk into a frothy, cloud-like finish. Meanwhile, the Vietnamese Coconut Frappe offers a more grounded profile, blending bold espresso with sweet coconut in a chilled slush that is both refreshing and deeply satisfying. Available across all TWC outlets,



the Beach Packers range captures the essence of summer in a cup — playful, nostalgic, and effortlessly cool.



CBSE extends Class 12 re-evaluation deadline after technical glitches irk students

New Delhi, May 19: Frustrated students spent hours refreshing web pages, waiting for OTPs and repeatedly logging back into the CBSE portal on Tuesday as the Board opened its Class 12 re-evaluation and answer sheet verification process for 2026. What many expected to be a quick application process turned into a stressful experience because of slow loading pages and frequent portal issues.

Following the technical glitches faced by a lot of students, the CBSE on Tuesday late evening issued a circular extending the dates for the re-evaluation. "It is hereby informed to all stakeholders that due to a technical problem encountered on the CBSE website for post-verification facilities and to ensure sufficient time to the students, the last date for obtaining scanned copies of evaluated answer books has been extended from the current May 22 to May 23, 2026," read the CBSE statement.

With college admissions and cut-offs already creating pressure among students, the



technical glitches only added to the anxiety. Several students complained that the portal kept freezing midway, while others said even basic steps like captcha verification and page loading were taking unusually long. "Today's reevaluation portal opening was honestly quite frustrating. The website kept hanging and even the captcha took forever to load, which made the whole process unnecessarily time-consuming," said Ishanvi Bagga, a Class 12 student of Mount Carmel School, Sector 22, Dwarka.

Many students said they spent nearly their entire morning trying to access the portal properly. "I logged into the portal in

the morning thinking the process would take just a few minutes, but the website kept freezing again and again. Even after multiple tries, pages were loading very slowly," said Aarav Mehta, a Class 12 student of Bal Bharati Public School.

The rush came after CBSE released its official notice regarding the post-result process. In the notice issued on May 17, the Board said it remains committed to a "fair, transparent, student-centric and efficient" evaluation system and acknowledged concerns raised regarding this year's evaluation process and the On-Screen Marking (OSM) system. Alongside this, CBSE also announced a major reduction in re-evaluation-related fees. The fee for obtaining scanned copies of answer sheets has been reduced from Rs 700 to Rs 100, while verification charges have been cut from Rs 500 to Rs 100. Re-evaluation charges have also been lowered from Rs 100 per question to Rs 25 per question.

India, Vietnam ink pacts for free Indo-Pacific



New Delhi, May 20: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday held wide-ranging talks with his Vietnamese counterpart General Phan Van Giang in Hanoi as India and Vietnam reaffirmed their shared commitment to a "free, open and stable" Indo-Pacific, while also inking MoUs on artificial intelligence and quantum technology.

The meeting, part of India's broader Act East policy push, covered maritime security, defence industry collaboration,

military training, cyber security, capacity building and UN peacekeeping operations. "The two sides exchanged views on regional and global security developments of mutual interest and emphasised the importance of maintaining peace, stability, security, safety and freedom of navigation in the Indo-Pacific region," the defence ministry said in a statement. It added that both sides also agreed to strengthen engagement through regular dialogues and joint exercises.

Hidden Maoist IED network continues to haunt Bastar despite anti-Naxal gains in Chhattisgarh

Nearly 1,400 IEDs scattered across region

New Delhi, May 19: Despite the government declaring the country free of Naxal influence, security officials have warned that the Bastar region still faces a serious threat from a vast network of hidden explosives buried in its dense forests and hilly terrain.

The scale of the danger was underscored during recent de-mining operations in Chhattisgarh's Kanker and Narayanpur districts, where four security personnel were killed in an improvised explosive device (IED) blast while attempting to defuse it. Security experts said Maoist groups had, over the years, turned large parts of Bastar region into a heavily mined zone by planting explosives along forest tracks, hilltops and strategic routes. Intelligence estimates suggest nearly 1,300 to 1,400 IEDs may still be scattered across the region, particularly in areas where major recoveries of weapons and explosives were recently made.

Officials said some hill-top stretches had explosives buried every 20 to 25 metres, effectively creating vast minefields designed to obstruct troop movement and inflict casualties long after



Maoist cadres retreated from the area. Security forces have so far recovered 35 sophisticated firearms, around 450 IEDs and 899 bundles of cordex wire used to trigger blasts. During the ongoing operations, personnel also unearthed and destroyed 52 underground dump sites, 152 bunkers and 12 temporary hideouts that once functioned as logistical bases for Maoist operatives.

According to the officials, these underground facilities contained not only weapons and explosives, but also food stocks, machinery, communication equipment and materi-

als used in the manufacture of explosive devices, highlighting the depth of the Maoist network that had operated in Bastar for years. "Although hundreds of explosive devices have been detected and neutralised, de-mining operations are still continuing in several locations because the terrain remains extremely dangerous," a senior security official said.

The officials said intelligence inputs indicate that Maoists systematically planted IEDs while withdrawing from strongholds under pressure from advancing security forces. The tactic, they

added, was aimed at slowing anti-insurgency operations, restricting troop mobility and sustaining an atmosphere of fear even after the insurgents lost territorial control. Experts cautioned that while Maoists may have suffered major setbacks and lost infrastructure in Bastar, the hidden explosive network continues to pose a serious challenge. Many devices remain difficult to detect, with some virtually invisible to standard metal detectors, making de-mining operations one of the most complex and hazardous phases of the anti-Naxal campaign.

Rajasthan, Karnataka, MP Key to Congress's Rajya Sabha Tally

New Delhi, May 20: Political parties are turning their focus to the Rajya Sabha polls, with 22 MPs set to retire in June 2026.

Those completing their terms are Congress president and Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, Mallikarjun Kharge; senior Congress leader Digvijaya Singh; JD(S) patriarch and former Prime Minister H. D. Deve Gowda; and Union Minister George Kurian. Of the 22 seats falling vacant, the BJP currently holds 11, while the Congress has four. The second round of Rajya Sabha elections gains significance following the five state Assembly polls, particularly in Karnataka. Four seats from the state, including those held by Kharge, Deve Gowda, and BJP MPs K. Narayan and Eranna Kadadi fall vacant. The Congress aims to secure three of the four seats, up from the single seat it currently holds.

Kharge is expected to be re-nominated. Discussions are underway over the remaining two seats. The Congress is also expected to retain one seat each in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, though it may

lose its lone Rajya Sabha seat in Gujarat. The party is also seeking a berth from Jharkhand through its alliance with the ruling Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM). In Rajasthan, leaders under consideration for renomination or candidature include former chief minister Ashok Gehlot, senior leader Bhanwar Jitendra Singh, and Congress spokesperson Pawan Khera. Sources said the party may also consider another term for sitting MP Neeraj Dangi. In Madhya Pradesh, the names of former chief minister Kamal Nath, Meenakshi Natarajan, and state Congress chief Jitu Patwari are being discussed. As Digvijaya Singh is reportedly unwilling to seek a third term, the leadership may opt for a senior candidate to avoid cross-voting and retain the seat.

The Congress has only a slender surplus of six votes in the Assembly, making the contest delicate. Meanwhile, the retirement of Shaktisinh Gohil is likely to leave the Congress without representation in the Rajya Sabha from Gujarat, given the BJP's majority in the state Assembly.

Neymar Makes Brazil Squad Despite Fitness



Rio De Janeiro, May 19: Neymar made Brazil's World Cup squad on Monday, a selection many local analysts and former footballers deemed unlikely only days ago. The striker will appear at his fourth World Cup. The 34-year-old Neymar is Brazil's all-time top goal-scorer with 79 but has struggled to return to top fitness since he tore his left ACL in October 2023. He's played eight matches for Santos this year with four goals and two assists. "He has improved his fitness, he will be an important player in this World Cup," Brazil coach Carlo Ancelotti said at a press conference in Rio de Janeiro. The coach added he preferred experienced players for some spots in his squad, including Neymar. "He can still improve his fitness until the first match of the World Cup," Ancelotti said. "He has experience in this kind of competition, the love of our group, he can create a better environment in this group."

Shortly before Ancelotti's squad was announced, Neymar changed his Instagram bio in a revealing way; he had only Santos as a reference of where he is currently playing and added Brazil to it. Brazil's 26-man squad also features its main players in recent years, Vinicius Júnior and Raphinha. Ancelotti who took over in May 2025 but had not summoned Neymar until Monday.

He extended his contract with the Brazilian Football Confederation last week to the 2030 World Cup but he has had a troubled spell in Brazil so far with many injured players out of his World Cup squad; strikers Rodrygo and Estevao are the ones he will miss the most in North America. Brazil opens its World Cup campaign against Morocco in New Jersey on June 13, followed by Haiti and Scotland in Group C.

The Suryakumar Yadav quandary and way forward for Indian T20I team

Chennai, May 19: In Indian cricket, it is rare for a T20 World Cup-winning captain's place in the squad to be questioned almost immediately after lifting the trophy. Yet, in 2026, just two months after leading India to a momentous T20 World Cup triumph in Ahmedabad, Suryakumar Yadav finds his future under the scanner. Suryakumar, who rose to prominence through consistent IPL performances between 2018 and 2021, established himself as India's premier T20I batter over the subsequent four years. Despite an unbeaten series record as captain and securing an ICC title, his recent form has sparked intense debate. While Shubman Gill captains the Test and ODI formats, Suryakumar remains the T20I skipper. However, his prolonged lean patch has raised alarm bells, continuing into the ongoing IPL season where he has managed just 195 runs across 11 matches, averaging a meager 17.72 with a strike rate of 144.44.

Following India's successful title defense in March, Suryakumar expressed clear intentions to lead the side into the 2028 T20 World Cup and the subsequent Los Angeles Olympics. "Definitely the next goal is the Olympics, Olympic gold, and also the T20 World Cup that year," he had stated. However, considering he is 35, carries persistent injury concerns, and with the next major T20 event two years away, informal discussions regarding his future are expected when selectors meet on Tuesday to announce squads for the upcoming Afghanistan ODIs and lone Test.

Indian cricket is navigating a heavy transition phase. The Test side is bleeding new talent, and the ODI team has a new leader, even as veterans Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli remain available. Gill, previously named Suryakumar's T20 deputy, was recently dropped from



the shortest format as the national focus shifts toward ODIs. This leaves a massive question mark over India's T20I roadmap. Former chief selector MSK Prasad advocates for patience, suggesting Suryakumar should stay on until a successor is groomed. "Only a few months back he won the World Cup," Prasad noted. "I do understand that his form is definitely a cause of concern... but barring a few, everybody is looking mentally fatigued. It would be very harsh to take a call on Surya immediately." Conversely, former selector Devang Gandhi believes it is time to look ahead given the influx of young talent. "This game is all about form. After a certain point, you have to be consistent," Gandhi argued, suggesting Shreyas Iyer or Ishan Kishan as potential leadership candidates. "You can try out a couple of options... Not that you have to have somebody leading the side now straight away." Both selectors agree that the next six months offer a prime window for experimentation. Gandhi emphasized building bench strength with fresh legs, while Prasad suggested shortlisting a pool of 20 players to rotate and prepare for the 2028 cycle, ensuring a settled core for the critical 18 months leading up to the next World Cup.

Svitolina Wins; Sinner Reaches Final



Rome, May 17: Elina Svitolina captured her third Italian Open title on Saturday after a grueling, three-hour battle against world No. 3 Coco Gauff, prevailing 6-4, 6-7 (3), 6-2. The hard-fought victory marks the Ukrainian's 20th career title and her first WTA 1000 crown in Rome since her consecutive wins in 2017 and 2018.

Gauff opened the match brilliantly, breaking early and holding to love with a chance to lead 5-2. However, Svitolina denied three crucial break points, mounting a four-game surge to steal the opening set. Though Gauff struggled with her serve, she rallied to force a second-set tiebreak and level the match.

Svitolina confidently dominated the deciding set, breaking the American twice before sealing the win on her third match point with a clinical net volley. Gauff suffered her second straight Rome final defeat, while the men's final awaits a clash between local favorite Jannik Sinner and Casper Ruud.

'Made for Test cricket', Manav earns India call-up

Chennai, May 19: "It was always a matter of when and not if." Talk to anyone in Indian cricketing circles about Manav Suthar in the last two years, this is the line one would hear. Manav's time has arrived as the senior selection committee on Tuesday named the left-arm spin bowling all-rounder from Rajasthan in the India squad for the lone Test against Afghanistan. Understandably, Jagdish Suthar, Manav's father, was a happy man. Hoping and expecting that the dream would come true, the entire family was sitting in front of the television at their home in Sri Ganganagar, a small village in Rajasthan. "We had been waiting to see it on TV, then saw it on social media. We are very happy. Very proud of him," an emotional Jagdish told this The New Indian Express.

Manav's journey started at 11 when his cricket fanatic father — who works as a physical education teacher — saw his interest and signed him up in an academy near his hometown. His rapid strides over the decade that followed had one common theme — Manav's love for cricket and more importantly, bowling long spells day in and day out.

Known as someone who is quiet and unassuming, Manav can be relentless with the ball in hand. He can turn up day in and day out and deliver the red cherry on the same spot — a trait he developed at a very young age. Rajasthan head coach Anshu Jain remembers the conversation he had once whilst sharing a cup of coffee with the youngster. "When we were catching up over a coffee one day, he told me how even when he was playing in Sri Ganganagar district-level, he used to bowl long spells. He used to bowl 30-25 overs a day. (6:12) He enjoys bowling. He does not get tired. I think his muscle memory, his bowling fitness, developed because of that. He was never hesitant in bowling," Jain recalled.

One other instance for his love for bowling and contributing to the team happened in 2022-23. Jain was with the Rajasthan U23 team but Manav had already played Ranji Trophy. After Rajasthan's Ranji match against Services ended on January 27, 2023 in Jodhpur, Manav travelled to Jaipur the day after to turn up for the U23

team two days later. He then went on to help them beat Madhya Pradesh in the pre-quarters, taking 11 wickets in the match. "He never showed any hesitation that he was tired or needed rest. But if the

team



needed him, he used to come from Ranji Trophy. I remember that we played against MP in the pre-quarterfinals. He came to play when we did not qualify for Ranji Trophy. And he won us the pre-quarter finals single-handedly,"

Jain said. Regarded as someone more suited to red-ball, in the classical mould, Manav was spotted not long after and soon he came up the ranks. One of the moves he made to explore and establish himself during the off-season was coming to Chennai and playing in the senior TNCA league. About a week after the 2024 Indian Premier League (IPL), Manav, who played one match for Gujarat Titans, turned up for Grand Slam CC in the TNCA I Division Raja of Palayampatti Shield. In their very first match against Vijay CC, Manav took 8/67, giving immense confidence, not just to himself, but also to his teammates and coach Palani Amarnath. Those long spells in Chennai in the weeks that followed, along with a camp at the CoE with Sairaj Bahutule, meant Manav was reaping rewards in Duleep Trophy. An India A call-up followed where he took a fifer in Australia later that year. Such had been his rise in the last 18 months that Manav was soon named as Rajasthan skipper in both white-ball formats last season. Even in the ongoing IPL season, he has picked R Sai Kishore

as first-choice spinner for Gujarat Titans. Even as he continues to deliver in white-ball, Manav's true love lies with the red cherry. His ability to land the ball in the same spot, generate drift, use angles has brought him all the accolades in the multi-day format. Jain believes Manav's repetition has brought him this far. "He has developed the feel of how to drift the ball, how to spin it, and how to vary the pace in different conditions. He even uses angles. Sometimes he bowls over the wicket, sometimes round the wicket. Repetition plays a role here. The more you bowl, the more you develop the idea, the more you develop the feel of where to drop the ball," he explained.

While there is no doubt that Manav has made a mark at a very young age, he has shown patience in waiting for a chance, be it with Titans or with India A. Now, with Harsh Dubey also in the mix, it remains to be seen if he gets to play against Afghanistan in New Chandigarh. However, one thing can be said with certainty. Whether he plays or not, this is just the beginning and Indian cricket could hear a lot more about Manav in the years to come.

