

Congress–raijor dal alliance finalised in Assam; six-party opposition bloc takes shape

Guwahati, Mar 19: After prolonged discussions, the alliance between the Indian National Congress and Rajior Dal in Assam was finally sealed on Thursday night at Jorhat. The agreement was signed by state Congress president Gaurav Gogoi and Rajior Dal chief Akhil Gogoi.

Congress has released three lists of candidates, while Rajior Dal has announced two. Both parties had earlier fielded candidates in three Assembly constituencies. Akhil Gogoi said that Rajior Dal will now work as part of the opposition alliance to project Gaurav Gogoi as the next Chief Minister, alleging “extreme disorder and corruption” in Assam under Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. The Congress has already tied up with Assam Jatiya Parishad, Communist Party of India (Marxist), Communist Party of India, and APHLC from Karbi Anglong. With Rajior Dal joining in, a six-party opposition alliance is set to take on the NDA. While Congress had earlier indicated it would leave 15 seats for allies, it



has reportedly allocated 13 seats to Rajior Dal. The party has already

announced candidates for 87 constituencies, which may reduce the

number of seats it contests directly. Gaurav Gogoi called for uni-

ty, stating, “We must join hands and ensure each other’s victory. I apologise to those who could not be given tickets. For the sake of Assam and to free the state from BJP’s divisive politics, we must fight unitedly. Not just political parties, but civil society and neutral citizens must also come forward.” Congress has ceded seats including Sivasagar, Mariani, Dalgaoon, Kaliabor, Dhing, Margherita, Tezpur, Manas, Sissiborgaon, Digboi and Bokakhat, among others. Friendly contests will take place in Gauripur and East Goalpara.

Meanwhile, NDA ally Bodoland People’s Front released a list of 11 candidates late at night and will contest all 11 seats. Reacting to the development, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said Congress is unlikely to even emerge as the principal opposition party. “I want there to be an opposition in the state, but people do not seem to want one. It is doubtful whether they will vote for Congress,” he remarked.

Spot painting competition on ‘Stop Child Marriage’ conducted

Imphal, Mar 19: Under the aegis of the Manipur State Legal Services Authority, the District Legal Services Authority, Thoubal and the Legal Aid Clinic, Kiyam Leitanpok jointly organised an inter-school spot painting competition on the theme ‘Stop Child Marriage’ for students from Class VI to X on Wednesday. The competition was held at Little Star English Hr. Secondary School, Thoubal Haokha. A total of 138 students from various schools participated in the competition. The first, second, and third prize winners were Laishram Ocini Devi, son of Laishram Jackey Singh, from Little Star English Hr. Secondary School, Thoubal Haokha; Mutum Pushparani Devi, daughter of Mutum Somen Singh, from Changkhonba Institute, Thoubal Kiyam Siphai; and Macdonald Yumnam, son of Ratan Yumnam, from Little Star English Hr. Secondary School, Thoubal Haokha, respectively. They were awarded certificates and cash prizes of Rs. 2000, Rs. 1500, and Rs. 1000. Students who secured the 4th to 8th positions also received consolation prizes.

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Furthermore, all participating students were awarded participation certificates. Speaking about the organization of the Spot Painting Competition, Thingujam Arunkumar Singh, Coordinator, Legal Aid Clinic, Kiyam Leitanpok, stated that child marriage for underage girls is a form of abuse.

This competition is part of the movement to eradicate the practice of child marriage, which is a growing concern across India. The aim of the competition is to further inspire young students and highlight the talents and knowledge within every section of society, working towards a Child Marriage-free India. The competition is expected to enhance the students’ creativity, skills, and awareness regarding child marriage. A legal awareness program was also conducted on the topic ‘Prohibition of Child Marriage Act-2006’ in connection with this competition. Advocate Thokchom Bishworjit Singh shared various points related to the topic, followed by an interactive session with the participating students.

Revolt brews in BJP for fielding Pradyut Bordoloi from Dispur seat; Dholai MLA resigned over ticket denial

Guwahati, Mar 19: Two prominent BJP ticket aspirants for the Dispur constituency -- sitting MLA Atul Bora and Jayanta Das -- have raised the banner of revolt against the party and Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma for giving the party ticket to Pradyut Bordoloi to contest from the prestigious seat.

A six-time MLA from Dispur, Bora expressed strong dissatisfaction over the move, alleging betrayal and questioning the party’s candidate selection process.

“I have been representing Dispur since 1985 and have defeated three Chief Ministers during my political journey. Naturally, I expected the party to consider my track record,” Bora said, highlighting his long political association with the constituency.

However, Bora said the current situation within the party has left him disillusioned.

“Today, there is no environment to work in the BJP. Workers are

confused about where to go. The party claims to be the largest, yet it is now importing candidates and distributing tickets,” he alleged.

Taking a direct swipe at Bordoloi, Bora accused him of political opportunism.

“Pradyut Bordoloi was once an MLA from Margherita, later moved to Nagaon and became an MP. Now he wants to contest from Dispur. This is a betrayal of the people of Margherita and Nagaon, and I fear the same could happen in Dispur,” he said.

Echoing him, Jayanta Das launched a scathing attack on Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma by accusing him of sidelining longtime committed BJP workers by importing corrupt and inefficient leaders from the Congress.

He said CM Sarma has given preference to turncoats like Bordoloi who joined the party only yesterday over dedicated workers

who have been toiling for the party for decades.

Das also accused Sarma of being neck-deep in corruption, and running a mafia raj and cattle smuggling syndicate in the state.

He said that he would form a new party with all the disgruntled BJP workers from across the state.

On the other hand, BJP MLA from Dholai Nihar Ranjan Das has resigned from the party after he was denied a party ticket.

“I have the honour to state that being an MLA, Dholai LAC, I worked honestly and most sincerely. I have raised the parties image before the people of Dholai LAC within short period of time. But unfortunately BJP has not recognized me and has deprived me of the party ticket. As such, I am tendering my resignation from the primary membership of BJP,” he said in his resignation letter submitted to Assam BJP president Dilip Saikia.

Govt allocated Rs 5 crore for each AC to improve road connectivity: MLA Rameshwar

Imphal, Mar 19: The newly formed government led by Chief Minister Y. Khemchand has initiated major infrastructure development works across the state despite unwarranted recent political developments in the State, including the imposition of President’s Rule. As part of this effort, a sum of ₹5 crore has been allocated to each constituency to improve road connectivity and related infrastructure. Under this initiative, newly constructed roads using paver block technology near the Multipurpose Hall at Kakching Mayai Leikai were inspected on Wednesday by Kakching Constituency MLA, M. Rameshwar. During the inspection, MLA Rameshwar stated that the new government under the leadership of Yumnam Khemchand is giving top priority to road development and is committed to ensuring quality and durability in all projects. He mentioned that roads constructed using modern methods are expected to last between 7 to 10 years. Areas prone to waterlogging are being developed using paver block technology for better durability, while roads extending up to 600 meters are being upgraded with machine-based blacktopping, the MLA said. He further highlighted that efforts are also underway to



improve water supply for the people of Kakching. Under the AMRUT 2.0 scheme, pipeline installation work has already begun to ensure adequate water supply.

In areas where gravity-based water supply is not feasible, overhead tanks are being installed to provide sufficient water to residents. Additionally, new road construction projects are being taken up in areas such as Irengband, Sora, and Pal-

l under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY). A project worth ₹7 crore has also been submitted to the Central Government under the Central Road and Infrastructure Fund (CRIF). MLA Rameshwar emphasized that ahead of the upcoming elections, efforts are being made to maximize development across Manipur, with special focus on Kakching Constituency. He appealed to the public to extend coop-

eration so that development works can be carried out efficiently for the benefit of all. Meanwhile, a local resident, Yengkhom Randhoni, expressed happiness over the newly constructed road, stating that the earlier road condition was poor and prone to accidents. She appreciated the initiative taken by the MLA and urged that similar development works be extended to other localities for the welfare of the people.

Field day on biofortified lentil carried out in Chandel

Imphal, Mar 19: In a significant move toward enhancing nutritional security and boosting farm income in the region, ICAR-Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) Chandel organised a specialized “Field Day” on Wednesday at M. Gannom Village, situated within the Sajiktampak-Chakpikarong block, Chandel District. The event focused on the performance and benefits of the IPL 220 lentil variety, drawing 20 progressive farmers from the village and its surrounding areas. Addressing the gathering, Ts. Leenda Monsang, Subject Matter Specialist (Plant Breeding), provided an in-depth technical overview of the IPL 220 variety. She emphasised that this specific variety has been meticulously developed for the North East Plain Zone (NEPZ) of India, making it ideally suited for the local agro-climatic conditions of Chandel. She highlighted that unlike traditional varieties, IPL 220 is biofortified, which is naturally bred to contain higher levels of essential micronutrients. She explained that the lentil variety is rich in Iron (Fe), Zinc (Zn), and Selenium (Se) and that “the variety is not just a crop; it is a tool to combat ‘hidden hunger’ and micronutrient deficiencies, particularly among women and children in our rural communities.” The variety boasts high resistance to major threats such as Rust, Fusarium Wilt, and Stemphylium Blight, significantly reducing the need for chemical interventions. It reaches maturity within 120–125 days, offering a substantial potential yield of 15–20 quintals per hectare. The programme was graced by the presence of the Village Chief, Lunghopao, along with representatives from the Kana Area farmers.

From the KVK side, Ps. Lavid Anal, SMS (Horticulture), and Dehkhohao Doungel, Technical Officer (CA), were present to facilitate the interaction and address farmer queries regarding crop management, its diversification and mobile advisory. The Field Day concluded with a crop demonstration, where farmers observed the standing crop’s health and vigour. The successful showcase of IPL 220 underscores KVK Chandel’s commitment to introducing climate-resilient and nutritionally superior crop varieties to the doorsteps of tribal farmers.

In Brief

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Mizoram issues advisory due to bad weather

Aizawl: In view of the recent incidences of hailstorms and the prevailing low-pressure conditions affecting several parts of the State, and based on the latest meteorological inputs indicating continued unstable weather conditions over Mizoram, the state government has asked all Deputy Commissioners to remain in a state of heightened preparedness and to activate the respective District Emergency Operation Centres (DEOCs) with immediate effect. As per the latest weather forecast, fairly widespread to widespread light to moderate rainfall accompanied by thunderstorm, lightning and gusty winds is likely to occur over Northeast India with wind speeds reaching 30–50 kmph in several areas.

RSS appeals for 100 per cent voter participation in Assam elections

Guwahati, Mar 19: The BJP today released its first list of 88 candidates for Assam Assembly polls. Putting all speculations to rest, the ruling party has fielded two new entrants from the Congress, Pradyut Bordoloi and Bhupen Kumar Borah, from Dispur and Bihpuria constituencies. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma will contest from his longtime stronghold, Jalukbari seat. As per the list, Ranjeet Kumar Dass has been fielded from Bhowanipur-Sorbhog, Jayanta Malla Baruah from Nalbari, Chandra Mohan Patowary from Tihu, Biswajit Daimary from Tamulur, Ranaj Pegu from Dhemaji, Bijoy Malakar from Ram Krishna Nagar, Krishnendu Paul from Patharkandi, Ashok Singhal from Dhekiajuli, Dr Rajdeep Roy from Silchar, Pallab Lochan Das from Biswanath, Rameswar Teli from Duliaganj, Sushanta Borgohain from Demow, Bolin Cheta from Sadiya, Pulak Gohain from Tinsukia, Sanjay Kishan from Makum, Padma Hazarika from Naduar, Manab Deka from Lakhimpur, Taranga Gogoi from Naharkatia, Rupesh Gowala from Doomdooma, Dipu Ranjan Samraha from New Guwahati, and Vijay Kumar Gupta from Central Guwahati, among others. The BJP has also fielded six women candidates in the first list -- Madhavi Das from Birsing-Jarua, Jyotsna Kalita from Chamaria, Nilima Devi from Mangaldai, Ajanta Neog from Golaghat, Niso Terangpi from Diphu and Rupali Langthasa from Haflong. day evening.

NE/EAST

Arunachal CM welcomes Union Cabinet approval of small hydro power scheme

Itanagar, Mar 19: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on March 18 hailed the Union Cabinet’s approval of the Small Hydro Power (SHP) Development Scheme for 2026-31, describing it as a significant boost to clean energy generation and rural economic development in the northeast. In a post on X, Khandu said the initiative would help unlock the state’s vast hydropower potential and accelerate sustainable development in remote and border regions. “A very welcome decision by the Union Cabinet led by Hon’ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji approving the Small Hydro Power Development Scheme for 2026-31,” he wrote. Khandu emphasized that the scheme would particularly benefit hilly and frontier states like Arunachal Pradesh, where



several rivers remain untapped for energy generation. “This is a big boost for the northeast, especially Arunachal Pradesh,

where our rivers hold immense untapped potential. The enhanced financial support for hilly and border areas will help unlock

clean, decentralised energy in remote regions,” he said. The Chief Minister also highlighted the broader socio-economic benefits of small hydro projects, noting that they could create local employment, strengthen infrastructure, and improve livelihoods in rural areas without causing large-scale displacement. “With the right planning and execution, this scheme can transform rural economies, empower local communities, and position our region as a leader in sustainable hydropower,” he added. Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on March 18 hailed the Union Cabinet’s approval of the Small Hydro Power (SHP) Development Scheme for 2026-31, describing it as a significant boost to clean energy generation and rural economic development in the northeast.

Zubeen Garg case

Itanagar, Mar 19: The Gauhati High Court has appointed an exclusive fast-track sessions court to conduct day-to-day trial proceedings in the Zubeen Garg death case, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Thursday. However, following a request from the victim’s family for an expedited hearing, the government decided to support the creation of a fast-track mechanism. “While continuity in the existing court was an option, we have honoured the family’s request in the larger interest of justice,” he said. The Chief Minister added that the move would help accelerate the judicial process and reaffirm the government’s commitment to delivering timely justice. He also expressed gratitude to Chief Justice Ashutosh Kumar for accepting the State’s request and facilitating the arrangement. Baksa district judge Sharmila Bhuyan has been appointed to preside over the fast-track court. Announcing the development, Sarma described it as a significant step towards ensuring timely justice in the case. In a post on social media, the Chief Minister said the Chief Justice of the Gauhati High Court had nominated Sharmila Bhuyan, currently serving as District Judge of Baksa, to head the dedicated court for expedited trial proceedings. The State Cabinet had earlier approved the setting up of a special fast-track court in February. Sarma noted that the government had initially considered continuing the trial under the existing court, particularly as none of the accused had secured bail.

Pradyut Bordoloi joins BJP day after quitting Congress

Guwahati, Mar 19: Nagaon Lok Sabha MP Pradyut Bordoloi joined the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Wednesday, a day after resigning from the Indian National Congress. He was formally inducted in New Delhi in the presence of Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and state BJP president Dilip Saikia, who welcomed him into the party. A Congressman since 1975, Bordoloi said he had faced “humiliation” within the party over the past two years and cited the “positive work” of the BJP-led Assam government as a reason for his decision. He had submitted his resignation to AICC president Mallikarjun Kharge on Tuesday. Bordoloi’s son Prateek is a Congress nominee from Margherita constituency for the state polls. Meanwhile, Assam Pradesh Congress Committee president Gaurav Gogoi termed the development “un-

fortunate” but asserted that the party remained committed to unseating Sarma. Bordoloi, a two-term MP, four-time MLA and former Assam minister, had also chaired the Congress manifesto committee for the upcoming elections. “A few days ago, Bhupen Borah (former Assam Congress president) joined the BJP. I think in the coming days, more Congress leaders will join the BJP.” Asked why leaders from the opposition camp are joining the BJP in Assam, Sarma said it’s happening because the party is doing good work in the state. Want to bring all ‘good’ leaders of Congress in Assam into BJP: Sarma. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday took a swipe at the Congress, saying no person with self-respect will stay in the opposition party and he wants to bring all its “good” leaders in Assam

into the BJP for a brighter future of the state. Himanta’s remarks came after Congress Lok Sabha MP Pradyut Bordoloi joined the BJP here. Asked about the Congress alleging that the BJP is inducting its leader because it doesn’t have good leaders in the party, the Assam chief minister told reporters, “Let the Congress say what it wants. But, it is our goal to bring all good leaders of Congress into the BJP fold.” “We have to brighten the future of the BJP and Assam both. That’s why I want to gradually bring into the BJP fold all those Congress leaders who are assets, not a liability,” Sarma said, adding, “We started it (the move) in 2016 and we have achieved 99 per cent success in it.” He claimed that no “self-respecting individual” can remain with the Congress, particularly in Assam, given the condition of the party and the kind of ideology that it has been following today.

Assam polls: BJP entrant Pradyut Bordoloi to contest from Dispur

Guwahati, Mar 19: Lok Sabha MP Pradyut Bordoloi on Thursday outlined his priorities for Assam after joining the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), stating that job creation and improvement in living standards would be central to his agenda ahead of the Assembly elections. Bordoloi, who recently resigned from the Congress and has been fielded by the BJP from the Dispur constituency, also praised Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, indicating a collaborative approach to governance in Assam and the wider North-East. Describing Sarma as an “accomplished and hardworking” leader, Bordoloi said he would work alongside him to advance development in the state and the region, with a focus on raising the standard of living. He emphasised that employment generation would remain a key priority. “We will work to create jobs, generate employment, and increase income. That will be my endeavour,” he said. The BJP has already announced its first list of candidates for the Assembly elections, naming Bordoloi as its nominee from Dispur, while Chief Minister Sarma will contest from his traditional Jalukbari seat. The political development has also had a ripple effect within the Congress. Prateek Bordoloi withdrew his candidature from the Margherita constituency, citing concerns over possible confusion among voters following his



father’s switch to the BJP. In a letter to All India Congress Committee president Mallikarjun Kharge, Prateek Bordoloi said continuing in the fray under the circumstances could raise questions about his commitment to the party. Assam is set to go to the polls for its 126-member Legislative Assembly in a single phase on April 9, with counting of votes scheduled for May 4, according to the Election Commission of India.

Without inclusive growth, there can be no stability: MNP CM



Dibrugarh, Mar 19: Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh emphasized that inclusive growth is the cornerstone of long-term peace and stability while launching the State Credit Focus Paper 2026-27 at the State Credit Seminar held at Sangai Hall, Hotel Imphal, on Wednesday. The seminar, organized by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), Manipur Regional Office, was held under the theme “Credit-Led Development in Manipur.” Addressing the gathering, Singh said, “Our government firmly believes that peace, stability, and development must go hand in hand. Without development, there can be no lasting peace. And stability cannot be sustained without inclusive growth. This is the foundational principle on which we will build our work.” During the event, the Chief Minister also virtually inaugurated the TRIBES project in Churachandpur, funded with a grant assistance of Rs. 1.6 crore from NABARD. He described credit as a powerful catalyst for grassroots development, stressing that institutional credit support is vital for bridging development gaps in the state. Highlighting Manipur’s potential in horticulture, fisheries, handloom, and handicrafts, Singh urged banks and financial institutions to actively support Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), rural start-ups, agri-entrepreneurs, and Self Help Groups (SHGs). He assured that the state government is committed to working closely with the banking sector to improve credit absorption capacity and ensure effective project implementation. The Chief Minister expressed appreciation for NABARD’s continued support and acknowledged the role of the Reserve Bank of India and other banks operating in the state. “Together, we must build a prosperous, resilient, and self-reliant Manipur,” he said.

State Chief Secretary Dr. Puneet Kumar Goel, also present at the seminar, noted that the event brought together government officials, banks, financial institutions, and community organizations to deliberate on mobilizing credit for inclusive growth. He highlighted the enduring partnership between the Government of Manipur and NABARD in strengthening the rural credit ecosystem. Dr. Goel revealed that the State Focus Paper projects a total credit potential of around Rs. 3,500 crore for 2026-27, with 51 percent earmarked for agriculture and allied activities, 37 percent for the MSME sector, and 12 percent for other priority sectors. He observed that while agriculture remains the backbone of livelihoods, fragmented land holdings and rising climatic risks necessitate diversification and value addition to enhance farm incomes. Partha Mandal, General Manager and Officer-in-Charge of NABARD’s Manipur Regional Office, described the State Focus Paper as a master document for planning and credit monitoring. He explained that it was consolidated from the Potential Linked Plans of all 16 districts of Manipur. Mandal also highlighted the TRIBES project inaugurated by the Chief Minister, calling it a testament to NABARD’s commitment to inclusive growth and community development in the hill districts. The seminar was attended by N. Sridhar, Chief General Manager and Officer-in-Charge of the Reserve Bank of India, Imphal, SLBC convenor, senior state government officials, heads of financial institutions, banks, and representatives of self-help groups. The launch of the State Focus Paper 2026-27 marks a significant step in aligning credit planning with Manipur’s development priorities, reinforcing the government’s vision of inclusive growth as the foundation for peace and stability.

Prasanta Phukan of Dibrugarh is fielded by the BJP for a fifth term in a row

Dibrugarh, Mar 19: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has fielded sitting MLA Prasanta Phukan from the Dibrugarh Assembly constituency for a fifth consecutive term, ending speculation over the party’s nominee for the seat. Prasanta Phukan, a senior BJP leader and Assam’s Power Minister, has remained a prominent figure in the constituency, where he enjoys considerable support among party workers and residents. Soon after indications of his candidature emerged, party workers and supporters began celebrating in the area, reflecting confidence in his renomination. In the 2021 Assembly elections, Prasanta Phukan had won the Dibrugarh seat by a margin of 38,005 votes, defeating Congress candidate Rajkumar Nilnetra Neog. Speaking to reporters, Prasanta Phukan thanked Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and the party leadership for reposing faith in him. He said he would continue to work towards the development of Dibrugarh,



which has been projected as Assam’s second capital. The renomination is being seen as a sign of the party’s emphasis on continuity and reliance on experienced leadership in key constituencies.

State Agriculture Conference on Jute MoU and tech integration are used to advance policy Northeast jute industry

Imphal, Mar 19: The Centre has sharpened its focus on the Northeast’s jute sector, with Assam, Nagaland, and Meghalaya taking centre stage at a national review meeting convened by the Ministry of Textiles to assess crop readiness and boost regional value chains. The State Agriculture Conference on Jute, chaired by Textiles Secretary Neelam Shami Rao, brought together key stakeholders from the Northeast, while major producers West Bengal and Bihar were notably absent, signalling a strategic pivot towards expanding jute cultivation beyond traditional belts. Senior officials from Assam, Nagaland, Meghalaya, and Odisha participated in the meeting, alongside representatives from the Directorate of Jute Development, ICAR-CRIJAF, National Jute Board (NJB), Jute Corporation of India (JCI), and ISRO’s National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC). A major outcome of the meeting was the signing of a tripartite MoU involving the North Eastern Handi-



crafts and Handlooms Development Corporation (NEHHDC), NJB, and JCI, aimed at strengthening the entire jute value chain in the Northeast. Improve market access and price realisation for farmers in the region. Strengthen procurement and aggregation systems. With the Northeast increasingly being positioned as a growth frontier for jute, the Ministry reiterated its commitment to enhancing productivity, improving fibre

quality, and raising farmer incomes through targeted, region-specific interventions. The latest initiatives indicate a clear policy shift, aiming to integrate the Northeast more deeply into India’s jute economy while building local value chains that can sustain long-term rural livelihoods. Promote local processing and value addition, reducing dependence on raw fibre exports

Officials said the move could be a “game changer” for jute growers in Assam and neighbouring states, where cultivation remains underdeveloped despite favourable agro-climatic conditions. The conference also reviewed sowing progress, seed availability, and adoption of improved farming practices, with a strong emphasis on the ongoing Jute-ICARE scheme, which supports farmers through certified seeds, mechanisation tools, and field demonstrations. In a significant tech push, NRSC-ISRO presented the Jute Crop Information System, a geospatial platform designed to enable real-time crop monitoring, acreage estimation, and data-driven planning, tools that could help states like Assam better track and scale cultivation. The Centre also stressed the need to improve retting infrastructure, a critical factor affecting fibre quality, and encouraged states to adopt mechanised solutions to reduce labour intensity.

Gunfight in Manipur’s Ukhrul sparks fresh tensions, security on high alert

Ukhrul, Mar 19: A gunfight broke out at multiple locations in Manipur’s Ukhrul district on Thursday, triggering fresh tensions in an already sensitive region, officials said. According to police sources, the firing began around 4 pm when suspected Kuki militants, reportedly armed with heavy weapons, attempted to enter Sirarakhong village, a Tangkhul Naga-dominated area. Local village volunteers resisted the entry, leading to a gunfight that lasted about 10 minutes. The violence later spread to the Lungter hill range near Sinakeithei village around 5 pm. Both areas fall under Litan Police Station. Officials also confirmed firing at a third location—Mongket Chepu village—indicating a possible coordinated escalation. A police official said the incident could be a planned attack. “We heard sounds consistent with automatic assault

rifles and single-barrel guns, but the exact groups involved are yet to be confirmed,” the official stated. No casualties had been officially reported at the time of filing this report. However, security forces have been put on high alert, and the situation remains tense with intermittent firing reported from multiple locations. Meanwhile, the village authority of Sinakeithei alleged that armed Kuki groups opened fire from previously dismantled bunker positions targeting their settlement. This claim, however, could not be independently verified. The incident comes amid ongoing tensions between the Kuki and Tangkhul Naga communities since February 7, when a drunken altercation escalated into larger clashes. In the aftermath, over 50 houses belonging to both communities were burned, further deepening mistrust.

Mizoram Indigenous Games & Cultural Festival Begins in Aizawl

Aizawl, Mar 19: The Mizoram Indigenous Games and Cultural Festival has commenced in Aizawl, aiming to revive and promote traditional Mizo games and cultural heritage. Speaking at the event, officials highlighted the importance of preserving indigenous traditions amid the growing popularity of modern sports at both national and global levels. They noted that traditional Mizo games face the risk of gradually being forgotten, and appreciated the joint efforts of Doordarshan and the Mizoram Indigenous Games Association (MIGA) in reviving and promoting these age-old practices passed down through generations. Emphasising the evolving nature of culture, speakers pointed out that while changes in lifestyle and food habits are inevitable with progress, such changes should not come at the cost of losing valuable traditional knowledge and practices. The younger generation, in particular, was urged to rediscover and actively promote indigenous games and cultural values.



The inaugural programme featured a welcome address by V.L. Thakima, Secretary of the organising committee, and a report presentation by Lalbiaknunga, General Secretary of MIGA. Cultural performances were presented by Chhaukhlei Cultural Club, while artists Lilac and David Darlong entertained the audience with musical performances.

The festival will continue till Saturday, featuring competitions in traditional games such as Inbuan (Mizo wrestling), Insuknawr, In-saihrupawh, Inarpasual, Kalchhet, Invawr, and Kawikah. Evening sessions will include performances by prominent artists from across Mizoram, celebrating the rich cultural diversity of the region.

Assam Assembly polls: BJP releases first list of 88 candidates

Guwahati, Mar 19: The BJP today released its first list of 88 candidates for Assam Assembly polls. Putting all speculations to rest, the ruling party has fielded two new entrants from the Congress, Pradyut Bordoloi and Bhupen Kumar Borah, from Dispur and Bihpuria constituencies. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma will contest from his long-time stronghold, Jalukbari seat. As per the list, Ranjeet Kumar Dass has been fielded from Bhowanipur-Sorbhog, Jayanta Malla Baruah from Nalbari, Chandra Mohan Patowary from Tihu, Biswajit Daimary from Tamulpur, Ranaj Pegu from Dhemaji, Bijoy Malakar from Ram Krishna Nagar, Krishnendu Paul from Patharkandi, Ashok Singhal from Dhekiajuli, Dr Rajdeep Roy

from Silchar, Pallab Lochan Das from Biswanath, Rameswar Teli from Dulaijan, Sushanta Borgohain from Demow, Bolin Cheta from Sadiya, Pulak Gohain from Tinsukia, Sanjay Kishan from Makum, Padma Hazarika from Naduar, Manab Deka from Lakhimpur, Taranga Gogoi from Naharkatia, Rupesh Gowala from Doomdooma, Diplu Ranjan Sarmah from New Guwahati, and Vijay Kumar Gupta from Central Guwahati, among others. The BJP has also fielded six women candidates in the first list -- Madhavi Das from Birsing-Jarua, Jyotsna Kalita from Chamaria, Nilima Devi from Mangaldai, Ajanta Neog from Golaghat, Niso Terangpi from Diphu and Rupali Langthasa from Haflong. The first list of candidates was finalised

by the BJP’s Central Election Committee at its meeting presided over by party president Nitin Nabin here on Wednesday evening. The meeting was attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and other members of the BJP Board. BJP Assam unit chief Dilip Saikia was also present at the meeting. The BJP has dropped 15 sitting MLAs, and prominent among them are Siddhartha Bhat-tacharya (New Guwahati) and Atul Bora (Dispur). Other such constituencies where sitting MLAs were denied party ticket include Bihpuria, Bijnai, Hojai, Katigora, Silchar, Udharbond, Abhayapuri, Palash-bari, Biswanath, Borsola, Bihali, Bokajan, Diphu and Haflong,

Mizoram issues advisory due to bad weather

Aizawl, Mar 19: In view of the recent incidences of hailstorms and the prevailing low-pressure conditions affecting several parts of the State, and based on the latest meteorological inputs indicating continued unstable weather conditions over Mizoram, the state government has asked all Deputy Commissioners to remain in a state of heightened preparedness and to activate the respective District Emergency Operation Centres (DEOCs) with immediate effect. As per the latest weather forecast, fairly widespread to widespread light to moderate rainfall accompanied by thunderstorm, lightning and gusty winds is likely to occur over Northeast India with wind speeds reaching 30–50 kmph in several areas.

The prevailing weather system may result in intermittent rainfall, thunderstorms and hailstorm events at isolated to scattered locations across Mizoram over the coming days. Further, recent warnings issued by the meteorological authorities indicate the likelihood of moderate rainfall (5–15 mm/hr), thunderstorms and gusty winds in certain districts, which may lead to localized waterlogging, slippery road conditions, traffic disruption and potential damage to vulnerable structures and standing crops. In this regard, the district authorities have been asked to take necessary measures on a priority basis, including immediate damage assessment, provision of relief assistance, preventive and preparedness measures, public communication, and monitoring of weather updates.

RSS appeals for 100 per cent voter participation in Assam elections

Guwahati, Mar 19: With reference to the upcoming Assam and other State Legislative Assembly elections, the Uttar Assam Prant of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh has called upon citizens to ensure 100 per cent voter participation, placing national interest above all. Addressing a press conference held today, RSS Assam Kshetra’s Kshetra Prachar Pramukh Dr. Sunil Mohanty appealed to all voters of the state to actively participate in the democratic process by voting in large numbers and becoming partners in national reconstruction. Speaking at the press conference held at the RSS Assam Kshetra office, Sudarshanalaya, Dr. Mohanty stated that the current year marks several significant historical and cultural milestones. These include the 150th anniversary of the national song Vande Mataram, the 350th martyrdom year of the ninth Sikh Guru, Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji, and the 650th birth anniversary of Sant Shriromani Ravidas Ji. Various programmes are being organised



to strengthen social awareness and cultural consciousness on these occasions. The press conference, conducted by Uttar Assam Prant Prachar Pramukh Kishor Shivam, also featured Prant Karyavah Khagen Saikia, who shared key discussions held during the Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh organised from March 13 to 15

at Samalkha in Panipat district of Haryana. He informed that the session commenced with floral tributes offered at the portrait of Bharat Mata by Sarsangchalak Dr. Mohan Bhagwat and Sarkaryavah Dattatreya Hosabale. A total of 1,438 representatives from 46 Prants across the country participated in the meeting. Under the centenary year programmes of the Sangh, 62,555 Vi-

jayadashami events were organised nationwide to mark the beginning of centenary year, witnessing participation from 3,245,141 people. Additionally, through the centenary Griha Sampark Abhiyan, contact was established with 1,002,12,162 citizens across 389,465 locations nationwide. In Uttar Assam Prant alone, outreach was conducted in 11,15,165 families across 13,061 villages.

AMMSO seeks welfare and educational advancement of Meitei Pangal

Imphal, Mar 19: A memorandum was submitted by All Manipur Muslim Students’ Organisation (AMMSO) to the Director of Department of University & Higher Education, seeking welfare and educational advancement of minority Muslim (Meitei Pangal) community. According to the memorandum, the Meitei Pangal community, being a recognised minority in the State, has long been striving for equitable opportunities in education and academic development. It requested the concerned department to ensure proper implementation of reservation policies for minority Muslims (Meitei Pangal) in higher education institutions including universities, professional colleges, and technical institutions in Manipur. It further requested enhancement of the existing 4% reservation for the OBC Meitei Pangal community to 8%, considering the socio-economic backwardness and educational disparity faced by the community. AMMSO also requested for promoting access to higher education for rural and economically weaker students and urged the government to establish a Boys’ Hostel in

a Meitei Pangal-dominated area to accommodate students pursuing higher studies. In order to encourage higher education among Muslim girls and ensure their safety and accessibility, the organisation strongly requested the establishment of a separate Girls’ Hostel in a Meitei Pangal area. It also urged upgradation of Lilong Haoreibi College to Postgraduate level to facilitate advanced studies within the community area and reduce dropout rates due to distance and financial constraints. It further requested upgradation of Abdul Ali High School to Higher Secondary level, which will particularly benefit Muslim girl students who face difficulties in accessing higher secondary education. The organisation requested the Director of Department of University & Higher Education to take necessary steps and place the matter before the competent authority for consideration in the interest of educational development and minority welfare in the State. AMMSO expressed hope that the concerned department will kindly examine these proposals and take necessary measures at the earliest.

SSB personnel’s role in preventing wildlife crime highlighted in awareness session

Guwahati, Mar 19: An awareness session on wildlife crime mitigation for personnel of the Sashstra Seema Bal (SSB) highlighted the crucial role border guards can play in preventing wildlife crimes near international borders. The session was conducted at the Daranga Border Outpost (BOP) by Binita Baruwati, Deputy Manager in the Legal & Advocacy Division of Aaranyak, and was organised by the 64 Battalion SSB. The programme emphasized that effective border vigilance can serve as a strong line of defence against wildlife crime, particularly in sensitive frontier regions. It



aimed to enhance the understanding and preparedness of border personnel in tackling the rising threat of wildlife crimes across the Manas National Park landscape and other border areas of Northeast India. Discussions focused on the evolving nature of wildlife crime, including various

forms of illegal activities, emerging trafficking trends, and the complex networks involved in cross-border wildlife trade. Special importance was given to the role of security forces in intercepting such activities. The session began with an introduction to wildlife and its ecological importance,

followed by insights into why wildlife crimes occur, how they are carried out, and their long-term impact on biodiversity and ecological balance. To make the session more practical, real-life case studies from the region were presented, helping participants understand on-ground challenges. The ecological richness of Northeast India, along with the difficulties in combating wildlife crime in the region, was also highlighted. The programme saw support from Aaranyak, with active assistance from its official Mizing Boro, reflecting a collaborative effort to protect the region’s natural heritage.

Hindu Lunar New Year observed at Assam RGU with discourse on concept of time



Guwahati, Mar 19: The Assam Royal Global University (RGU) celebrated the beginning of the Hindu Lunar New Year on Thursday with a thought-provoking discourse on “The Concept of Time,” beautifully highlighting the harmony between science and culture while emphasising India’s rich astronomical heritage. The event featured a special address by eminent astrophysicist Dr. Kishor Kumar Baruah, former in-charge of the Tezpur University Observatory, Department of Physics, Tezpur University. Organised by the Centre for Indian Knowledge Systems and the Department of Physics, in association with the IQAC, the programme was graced by RGU Vice Chancellor Prof AK Buragohain, apart from other dignitaries and students. Delivering his address, Dr. Baruah

elaborated on the astronomical significance of this time of the year. He noted that March 19 falls very close to the Vernal Equinox—a major celestial event when the Sun is positioned directly above the equator, resulting in nearly equal durations of day and night across the globe. Highlighting on the concept of time in different religions and cultures, he said that ancient cultures such as Incan, Mayan, Hopi, Native American Tribes, Babylonians, Ancient Greeks and the Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and others have a concept of a wheel of time. “The Vedas, the earliest texts on Indian philosophy and Hindu philosophy, describe ancient Hindu cosmology, in which the universe goes through repeated cycles of creation, destruction and rebirth”, he added. Dr. Baruah said that such observanc-

es are not merely cultural traditions but are deeply rooted in precise astronomical observations made by ancient Indian scholars, reflecting the scientific temper embedded in India’s traditional knowledge systems. Earliest, welcoming the distinguished guest and the gathering, Prof. Anirudha Chatterjee, Dean of the Royal School of Applied and Pure Sciences, remarked that Assam’s historical identity as Pragiyotishpur reflects a long-standing tradition of advanced understanding of celestial phenomena. “Carrying forward this rich legacy, RGU places strong emphasis on integrating Indian Traditional Knowledge Systems with modern scientific approaches, fostering a culture where ancient wisdom and contemporary science complement each other,” he stated.

BJP campaign to start from March 24: Himanta

Guwahati, Mar 19: After the BJP released its first list of candidates for Assam polls, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma today said national BJP leaders like Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and party president Nitin Nabin will spearhead the assembly poll campaign that will start from March 24, a day after the completion of the nomination filing process. Union ministers Sarbananda Sonowal, Pabitra Margherita, BJP state president Dilip Saikia and party management committee convenor Pradan Ba-

ruah will also participate in the campaign in Assam, Sarma told reporters at the party headquarters here. The campaign will continue till 5 pm on April 7. The elections to the 126-member Assam assembly will be held on April 9, and votes will be counted on May 4. Sarma said several state party functionaries will also participate in the canvassing. “I am sure the people of the state will give us overwhelming support and blessings so that we can take the state to a new horizon of development,” he said.

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The Importance of Self-Motivation

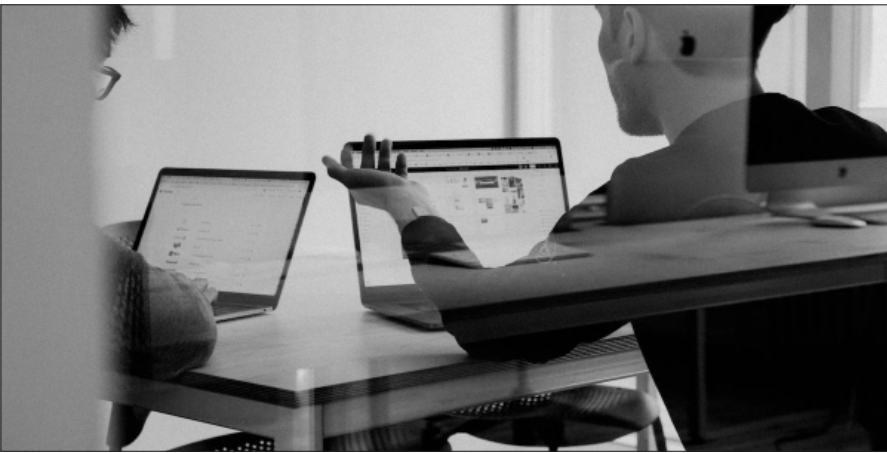
Self-motivation is the inner drive that encourages individuals to pursue their goals without external pressure. It plays a crucial role in achieving success in both personal and professional life. In many situations, individuals must rely on their own initiative to complete tasks or overcome challenges. External encouragement may not always be available. Self-motivation helps individuals remain focused and committed even in the absence of supervision. In education, self-motivated students often perform better because they take responsibility for their learning. They set goals, manage their time effectively, and maintain consistent effort. In professional environments, self-motivation contributes to productivity and innovation. Employees who take initiative often identify new opportunities and contribute positively to organisational growth. Developing self-motivation requires clear goal-setting and a positive mindset. Individuals must identify their objectives and remind themselves of the reasons behind their efforts. Breaking tasks into smaller steps can make goals more manageable. Challenges and setbacks may reduce motivation, but resilience helps individuals regain focus. Maintaining a balanced lifestyle and celebrating small achievements can also strengthen motivation. Self-motivation empowers individuals to take control of their progress. A society that encourages independent effort and initiative fosters innovation, productivity, and personal growth.

Any growing economy suffers from having too many holidays

Amid the prevailing Middle East crisis and economic lull, Bangladesh is heading into a prolonged holiday period around Eid-ul-Fitr. Officially, the government has declared a seven-day holiday beginning on March 17 and ending on March 23. Offices will reopen briefly on March 24-25, but the Independence Day observance on March 26, followed by the Friday-Saturday weekend, will effectively extend the holiday atmosphere across the country. In reality, many officials and employees are likely to take additional leave on the two working days in between, meaning that economic activity would considerably slow down for 12 consecutive days. At first glance, extended holidays during festivals appear harmless, even desirable. Festivals are deeply embedded in the country’s social fabric. Eid, in particular, is not merely a religious event but a powerful cultural moment that reconnects families and communities. However, the economic implications of long, veritable shutdowns are often underestimated.

Our recent experience suggests that extended holidays can disrupt supply chains, slow down production, and ultimately contribute to inflationary pressures. The country witnessed a clear example of this in 2025. During Eid-ul-Fitr that year, it observed a nine-day holiday between March 28 and April 5. Later in the same year, the Eid-ul-Azha holiday stretched even longer from June 5 to June 14, effectively suspending economic activities for 10 days. In the weeks that followed, prices of essential commodities such as rice, eggs, poultry, and vegetables increased noticeably. Various surveys and studies confirmed that the extended holidays had disrupted agricultural supply chains and contributed to price increases.

One important factor behind these price movements is the seasonal shift in consumption patterns during Eid. Millions of people travel from major cities to their



hometowns and villages to celebrate the festivals with their families. This mass migration alters the geographic pattern of demand for food and consumer goods. Goods that are usually consumed in urban centres must suddenly be transported to rural markets located far from traditional supply hubs. This shift increases pressure on the transport system and raises logistics costs. When goods need to travel longer distances within a limited time frame, freight charges inevitably rise.

This year, however, the situation is further complicated by fuel shortages caused by the ongoing Middle East crisis. Business leaders and transport operators report that many filling stations are struggling to meet demand, even after the withdrawal of fuel rationing. Drivers are forced to wait in long queues to refuel, and transport operators are already reporting freight cost increases by 20-25 percent. Truck shortages are also emerging in long-distance routes, a problem that may intensify once the Eid holiday progresses. Such developments matter because Bangladesh’s economy is currently navigating a fragile macroeconomic phase. High inflation, weak investment growth, rising unemployment, and concerns about energy security have already placed the economy under stress. In

such circumstances, extended nationwide shutdowns can amplify vulnerabilities. The economic logic here is straightforward. Each additional day of nationwide closure interrupts production, slows trade, and weakens supply chains. Factories suspend operations, banks close their counters, administrative decisions are delayed, and port activities slow down. Even if these disruptions are temporary, their cumulative impact can be significant. Trade and logistics are particularly sensitive to such interruptions. For example, if a cargo vessel is forced to remain idle at a port for several days due to reduced operations or banking closures, demurrage charges begin to accumulate. Eventually, these additional costs are passed on to consumers through higher product prices.

Agricultural supply chains are even more vulnerable. Following the extended Eid-ul-Azha holiday last year, the Bangladesh Bank conducted a study covering 61 upazilas across 18 districts to examine the efficiency of agricultural value chains. The findings were revealing. During the survey period, the retail price of coarse rice stood at Tk 61 per kg, compared with Tk 55 in the same period of the previous year. Fine rice was selling at Tk 78 per kg, up from Tk 70 a year earlier. In other words,

prices increased by around 10.9 percent for coarse rice and 11 percent for fine rice within a single year. The study indicated that extended holiday closures were one of the contributing factors. Many rice mills remained closed for around 10 days during Eid. At the same time, banking services were suspended, preventing normal transactions between farmers, traders, and mill owners.

As a result, farmers and wholesalers delayed selling their paddy and instead held onto their stocks. When the mills reopened after the holiday, they attempted to resume production simultaneously. This created a sudden surge in demand for paddy while supply remained limited. The imbalance pushed up paddy prices, which quickly translated into higher rice prices for consumers. Of course, extended holidays were not the only reason behind the price increases. Rising labour costs, higher irrigation expenses, shrinking arable land, and import duties also played roles. Nevertheless, the study clearly highlighted that prolonged holiday shutdowns can aggravate supply disruptions.

China, for example, observes a long holiday during the Lunar New Year but maintains a strong work culture during the rest of the year. Bangladesh, apart from regular earned, casual, and sick leave, however, experiences multiple extended holidays throughout the calendar, each of which temporarily slows economic momentum. Government-declared special holidays particularly impact the growing private sector most. This does not mean that cultural traditions should be diminished. For us, the challenge is not to eliminate holidays but to manage them more strategically. A balanced approach, where cultural priorities co-exist with economic efficiency, would be essential. Otherwise, celebration may gradually translate into supply disruptions, higher inflation, and additional pressure on an already strained economy.

Rising progressive force or rich kid socialism? Zohran Mamdani’s case

New York City has elected its new mayor, a 34-year-old Muslim, Indian-Ugandan, proLGBT, pro-Palestine Zohran Mamdani, who calls himself a “Democratic socialist.” His victory margin of 50.4 per cent of the vote and the election itself marked a historic turnout. Mamdani became the first New York mayoral candidate since 1969 to secure over one million votes. He presents himself as a champion of the working class—someone whose entire campaign was premised on fixing the affordability crises in New York City. Mamdani’s improbable rise, the generational excitement, and the ideological packaging are a masterclass in social media messaging in the age of Internet politics. At first glance, this feels less like a local mayoral race and more like a global referendum on a new kind of politics.

The contest around Zohran Mamdani has drawn unusual attention far beyond the United States’ borders, especially in South Asia, where his story of transnational identity, activism, and intersectional politics strikes a familiar chord. A sophomore at the National Law University, Delhi, said: “He is a charm. He brings India-like social security freebies to the crown of the capitalistic US, the NYC.” Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) freshmen described him as “the first politician who sounds like he grew up in our algorithm.” For Gen Z, Mamdani’s biography alone feels engineered for an internet age. For a generation that experiences politics primarily through screens, he represents something rare: a politician who speaks their language and doesn’t sound like a bureaucrat from the past century. However, the optics of his campaign and the promises attached to it expose a familiar paradox: privilege preaching equality. Critics point to his elite background—elite education, well-connected and celebrated family, Manhattan property—prompting

an important question: Is this “Rich Kid” Socialism? Or is Mamdani offering something sturdier that is politically durable, capable of moving from Instagram grids to actual governance? New York is an overwhelmingly liberal constituency. The young-ish, middle-class-ish New Yorkers are juggling precarious work and crushing rents, and feel their future is being negotiated somewhere far from their reach. In the past four years, the cost of living in New York City has surged by nearly a quarter, while wages have crawled up barely 12 per cent.

Rent alone has grown almost twice as fast as income, turning the city’s working class into a generation that works harder only to afford less. Between 2021 and 2025, rents across New York’s five boroughs have risen by nearly 40 per cent—a rate triple that of wage growth. Even outer boroughs once considered affordable, like the Bronx and Staten Island, have seen a dramatic rise in the cost of living. In Manhattan, the median has breached \$4,400. Mamdani spoke to the voters’ anxieties and tapped into their frustrations and grievances. This is the economic stage on which Zohran Mamdani’s politics of redistribution plays out. He has been successful in picturing New York as a city where even survival has become a luxury. Besides highlighting the city’s affordability crises, he understood what the city’s young voters most resonate with. A CNN exit poll indicated that Zohran Mamdani performed especially well among younger male voters, securing about 65 per cent of votes from men aged 18 to 29. His views on Israel and Palestine have served as a central flashpoint, both fuelling controversy and helping rally his early base of supporters. A poll captures the city’s moral compass: 44 per cent of New York voters now say they sympathise more with Palestinians. And a clear majority reject the idea



that criticising Israel is inherently antisemitic. It’s a sentiment that neatly aligns with Mamdani’s politics—and partly explains why his rhetoric resonates so deeply with the city’s progressive flank. Mamdani has also positioned himself as New York’s most vocal champion of queer and transgender rights. He is seen as “a hard-left sexual revolutionary” by his critics. His campaign has been steeped in the language of “queer liberation,” complete with pro-transgender ads and calls for taxpayer-funded surgeries to help trans individuals transition. “New York will not sit idly by while trans people are attacked,” he asserted, drawing both praise and pushback for the force of his rhetoric. Mamdani also proposed a \$65 million plan to expand and protect

gender-affirming care city-wide that includes funding for minors, setting up local “access hubs,” and creating telehealth options to bypass federal restrictions.

The initiative, framed as an answer to Trump’s rollbacks, has become a lightning rod in its own right: hailed by progressives as a moral imperative and derided by conservatives as an expensive gesture of ideological overreach. Overall, the optics of his politics are immaculate. The question is whether the politics underneath can breathe outside the frame. The problem with politics as performance is not moral, it’s material. Zohran Mamdani has mastered the aesthetics of dissent. He has confused the mayor’s office with the United Nations podium. However, governance demands

arithmetic, not applause. The promises that made Mamdani a darling of the online left—rent freezes, universal childcare, free public transport—sound refreshing until they meet the bureaucratic reality of budgets. Critics argue that Mamdani’s assertion that everyone has a “right” to live in New York City sounds ethically appealing but collapses under reasonable logic. A global city—especially one as dense, expensive, and competitive as New York—cannot promise residence as a right. Housing, like every other resource, is bound by scarcity and economics. Every year, New York City’s wealthiest 1 per cent (individuals earning \$900,000 or more annually) account for roughly 40 per cent of the city’s \$18 billion in income tax col-

lections. Mamdani vouches for redistributive arithmetic, but it comes with its own risk. Push the rich any harder, and they don’t disappear—they relocate, taking both tax dollars and jobs with them.

What’s left is a hollowed-out tax base, a frozen housing market, and the illusion of equity. Experts claim that even the departure of a handful of billionaires or major employers could significantly erode the city’s tax base and strain its municipal finances. American political commentator Rob Henderson coined the term “luxury beliefs” to describe opinions that confer moral status on the upper classes at little to no personal cost, while imposing tangible costs on those lower down the social hierarchy. In his view, Zohran Mamdani’s

brand of politics fits neatly within this paradigm. Henderson argues that policies like Mamdani’s proposed citywide rent freeze or fare-free public transit are emblematic of progressive moral signalling detached from economic realism. Take housing, for instance. Henderson warns that blanket rent controls may lead to unintended consequences: disincentivising property maintenance, driving units off the market, and ultimately deepening urban decay. The same logic, he notes, applies to the “free buses” proposal, which the city estimates would cost over \$630 million per year. New York City’s bus network serves about 1.4 million riders each week-day and operates at an annual cost of roughly \$700 million. Citing an analysis by the U.S. Transportation

Research Board, Henderson points out that similar zero-fare experiments in other U.S. cities have led to spikes in disorder, overcrowding, and service unreliability—ironically undermining the very inclusivity such policies aim to achieve. Besides, the state-run MTA manages both buses and subways; Mamdani will have to win over Governor Kathy Hochul, whose administration has so far resisted proposals to raise taxes on the wealthy. The Mamdani phenomenon sits at the crossroads of socialist egalitarianism and performative digital politics. His socialism is not rooted in class struggle as Marx conceived it, but in a kind of affective politics, moral urgency packaged as aesthetic rebellion to woo young voters. It borrows the moral clarity of the old left while bypassing material discipline. In this sense, it is what scholars of postmodern political culture have called “expressive socialism”: a belief system that seeks solidarity through symbols rather than structures. This is also why his campaign feels transnational. For young audiences, Mamdani’s politics resonate not because of municipal policy details, but because they mirror the global language of intersectional justice, issues within post-colonial societies, racial reparations, class struggle, and anti-capitalist rhetoric that circulates freely across the Anglophone internet. In the end, Mamdani’s politics embody a fascinating paradox: a revival of socialist idealism thriving within the capitalist machinery of social media—a politics that critiques the system even as it depends on its circuits to survive.

The future of Mamdani’s experiment depends on whether he can convert generational energy into institutional outcomes. Visions into budgets. Hashtags into housing. The city is his stage, but it is also his test. A wealthy kid promising a working-class revolution. For now, Zohran Mamdani remains an open question.

Is the EMS narrative finished JP Morgan respond Dixon Tech, Amber:

Mumbai: JPMorgan on Tuesday said its domestic Electronics Manufacturing Services (EMS) coverage delivered widely divergent outcomes since the September quarter results, with Keynes Technology India Ltd (down 35 per cent) and Dixon Technologies (India) Ltd (down 29 per cent) substantially lagging Avalon Technologies Ltd (down 8 per cent), Amber Enterprises India Ltd (down 9 per cent) and Syrma SGS Technology Ltd(11 per cent). The foreign brokerage said the sector story is not over, as it suggested five ‘overweight’ calls and one ‘Neutral’ rating, upgrading Amber Enterprises and Cyient DLM to ‘Overweight’ from ‘Neutral’. Syrma SGS Technology remained its top sectoral pick. “We see every stock, barring Dixon, delivering over 20 per cent revenue growth over FY26-28E. Further, we see evidence of the sector upping value addition, evolving from finished product assembly to component and PCB manufacturing. Both of these suggest longer-term gains in the names, after underperformance,” it said. JPMorgan said India EMS stocks are down 8-35 per cent in the last 4 months, painting a gloomy picture for the sector. This is mainly because Dixon and Keynes, the market favorites for a long time, started to disappoint, which skewed the narrative. It said Syrma, Amber and Keynes have received the required approvals for their bare PCB foray while Dixon has received approval for component manufacturing, thereby providing growth visibility. “Our bottom-up modelling of the various projects and approvals that these companies have already obtained gives us confidence that growth will be over 20 per cent over the next 2 years,” it said.It sees Syrma as a cleaner way to play EMS given the absence of any cyclical verticals“However, Syrma, Amber and



Avalon have been doing better than expectations and surprising positively. Story moving from FG to components and bare PCB. We continue to expect strong growth for the EMS universe, but the story is moving from finished goods assembly to component and bare PCB manufacturing,” it said. The brokerage cited government’s introduction of the electronics component manufacturing scheme last year with an outlay of Rs 22,900 crore, recently increased to Rs 44,000 crore in the budget.JPMorgan said it sees evidence of bottoming in that. YTD,

none of the stocks are underperforming, and Syrma, Amber and Avalon are all now outperforming by 10-12 per cent in 2026 so far. “We see more to come. Our FY27E EPS for Syrma/Amber is 12 per cent/3 per cent ahead of the Street. Valuations have eased post underperformance but remain a risk at 32-60 times FY27E for stocks that miss expectations. We see Syrma and Amber as most likely to beat Street expectations and they head our pecking order of Syrma, Dixon, Amber, Keynes, Cyient DLM and Avalon,” it said.

Under the DPDP Act, departments are unlikely



Mumbai: Government ministries and departments are unlikely to be classified as significant data fiduciaries (SDFs) under the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, signalling a lighter compliance framework for public authorities even as stricter obligations are expected to apply to large private-sector platforms, officials aware of the discussions said. Officials, however, indicated that the option of classifying government entities as SDFs remains open and could be exercised in specific cases if required. Officials were also briefed on provisions in the Act that provide operational flexibility to the State. These include the ability to process personal data without fresh consent where it has been voluntarily provided, or where existing records are used for delivering subsidies, benefits, licences or certificates. Exemptions are also available in specific contexts such as legal proceedings, regulatory functions and law enforcement.

NIC DilemmaAt the same time, officials emphasised that government entities are not outside the scope of the law and will be required to comply with its provisions except where exemptions apply. Discussions also touched on the allocation of responsibility for data handling within the government ecosystem. Officials from the National Informatics Centre indicated that the organisation functions largely as a data processor, managing infrastructure on behalf of ministries rather than determining the purpose and means of processing. As a result, accountability under the

law is expected to rest with the concerned ministry or department acting as the data fiduciary.The indication emerged during a meeting convened on Wednesday by the Secretary, ministry of electronics and IT (MeitY), S Krishnan, with representatives from multiple ministries and government agencies to review the implementation of the data protection framework. Participants included officials from the ministries of home affairs, mines, heavy industries, and AYUSH, along with the department of posts, department of pharmaceuticals, the Defence

Research and Development Organisation, and the department for promotion of industry and internal trade.According to sources, the government does not, at this stage, intend to notify its ministries or departments under the SDF category despite the scale of personal data handled by these entities. Instead, the designation is expected to be applied primarily to large private-sector entities such as social media platforms, e-commerce marketplaces and technology service providers that process significant volumes of personal data. Under the Act, entities classified as SDFs are subject to additional compliance requirements, including the appointment of data protection officers, periodic data audits and the implementation of enhanced safeguards. The law allows the Centre to notify such entities based on factors such as the volume and sensitivity of data processed, risks to individuals’ rights and the potential impact on sovereignty and integrity.

Converting, corporate and industrial canteens wait for an LPG supply

Mumbai: Industrial and corporate caterers are currently facing difficulties procuring commercial LPG cylinders, forcing them to turn to coal and wood as alternative fuels to continue supplying food to industrial canteens and other corporate facilities.

Although the government assured a quota for commercial cylinder refilling, Bindra said supplies have been minimal, covering only about 10% of caterers’ demands. While the government has committed to providing up to 70% of the commercial LPG cylinder requirements for their industry, Bindra indicated that their members have not been able to obtain the promised supplies. The catering industry in the region comprises about 200 large caterers, 700-800 mid-sized caterers, and over 1,000 small catering vendors, along with 200 outdoor catering companies. The industry is struggling to manage this sudden transition from LPG to coal and wood. Bindra’s company supplies food to 20,000 people daily and had to relocate one central kitchen and implement bulk cooking methods. They have started



cooking with coal, which has proven challenging, as kitchen staff are not trained to handle it. This method is a slow cooking process, and existing exhaust systems and other equipment cannot effectively manage the smoke and soot produced.

According to data from the caterers’ association, corporate and industrial caterers feed close to one million employees daily, with about

50% of these workers employed in the manufacturing sector across industrial estates in and around Pune. While IT and ITES employees can work from home, factories cannot halt their production lines and require a steady workforce to operate, Bindra explained. To assist caterers in transitioning to alternative fuels, companies have actively supported them by trimming menus to offer ba-

sic, no-frills meals. A few companies have also begun to deploy electric cooking equipment such as combi ovens, tilting pans, griddles, deep fryers, and induction pans. For example, vaccine manufacturer Serum Institute of India has ordered electric combi ovens and induction cooktops to ensure that employees do not experience changes in their food menu. However, the shift to electric cooking comes with a high cost. A ten-tray oven costs around Rs 8 lakh, while a 20-tray oven can range from Rs 20 to 25 lakh. Most of this equipment is imported from Germany and Italy, with only a couple of Indian manufacturers operating in this market. There is a shortage of this equipment, and the companies would take a month to deliver, Bindra said.The caterers are in a crisis management mode. They have approached the city administration and gas distribution agencies seeking clarity on the supplies so they can plan accordingly, but have not got any assurances. The catering companies and their clients are now trying to cope with these changes, hoping the supply situation improves.

US GDP Growth Reduced to 0.7%, Dollar Rises Over 100

Mumbai: The US economy grew more slowly than previously estimated in the final months of last year. The US Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) said on Friday that Gross Domestic Product (GDP) expanded at an annualised rate of 0.7% in the fourth quarter, lower than the earlier estimate of 1.4%The revised figure also fell short of market expectations. The slowdown shows weaker activity across several parts of the economy, including exports, consumer spending, government spending and investment.

“Real GDP was revised down 0.7 percentage point from the advance estimate, reflecting downward revisions to exports, consumer spending, government spending, and investment. Imports decreased less than previously estimated,” the BEA explained in its press release. The Commerce Department also confirmed that the economy grew at 0.7% during the October–December period, a sharp drop from the initial estimate. According to the department, the downgrade mainly came from weaker exports, consumer spending, government spending and investment. The weaker growth comes during the first full year after President Donald Trump returned to office. The economy had grown much faster earlier in the year, expanding at an annual rate of 4.4% in the third quarter. When the first GDP estimate was released, Trump blamed the slower growth on the impact of a prolonged government shutdown that took place late last year. The shutdown lasted 43 days and economists say it weighed on economic activity.Domestic demand “An already large

headache for the Federal Reserve is going to turn into an even larger one, and it’s likely the Fed will not cut rates in 2026 and may even start talking about rate hikes later this year,” he added.Regardless of the slower economic growth, personal income and spending both increased by 0.4% in January. Economists had expected income to rise 0.5% and spending 0.3%.Another key measure of demand in the economy also weakened. Final sales to private domestic purchasers, which excludes government spending, trade and inventories, grew at a 1.9% pace in the fourth quarter. This was revised down from the earlier estimate of 2.4%.This measure is closely watched by policymakers because it indicates underlying domestic demand. In comparison, the same measure had grown 2.9% in the July–September quarter, showing a clear slowdown in economic momentum. Inflation pressures are still a concern for policymakers. The personal consumption expenditures (PCE) price index, the Federal Reserve’s preferred inflation measure, rose 0.3% in January, bringing the annual rate to 2.8%. “The soft January durable goods data also suggests the economy entered this crisis weaker than hoped. This creates challenges for investors with PCE inflation still running well above the Fed’s target,” he added.Energy prices and global tensions

The data also comes at a time when global tensions are rising. Energy prices have surged since the United States and Israel launched attacks on Iran on February 28.Brent crude, the

international oil benchmark, touched \$100 per barrel on Thursday, raising concerns about higher inflation and slower economic growth.The report also comes ahead of a US Supreme Court decision that voided several tariffs imposed by President Trump under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act. Economists believe those tariffs had added around half a percentage point or slightly more to inflation.“The inflation data tells us that the inflation picture wasn’t looking good even before the Middle East crisis,” said Sonu Varghese, chief macro strategist for the Carson Group to CNBCEconomists had expected a yearly rate of 2.9When food and energy prices are excluded, core PCE inflation rose 0.4% in January and 3.1% over the past year. The core figure is closely watched by the Federal Reserve as it provides a clearer picture of long-term inflation trends. The monthly reading was 0.1 percentage point higher than December.Another report from the Commerce Department showed that orders for durable goods, products such as transportation equipment, appliances and computers were unchanged in January.Economists had expected orders to rise 1.3%, though the latest figure was still better than the 0.9% drop in December. When transportation equipment is excluded, orders increased 0.4%.“The big downward revision in GDP is a gut check going into this energy crunch, increasing the risk of stagflation,” said David Russell, global head of market strategy at TradeStation to CNBC.

INTERNATIONAL

Fuel rationing and no air conditioning: Southeast Asian nations battle to preserve energy



Asia: In Thailand, news anchors removed their coats on air as the government urged citizens to minimize their usage of air conditioning to save energy. In the Philippines, many government employees now work a four-day week. In Vietnam, regulators have pushed firms to let employees work from home. Across Southeast Asia, governments are trying to find methods to preserve energy and protect the public from rising expenses as the Middle East war produces what the International Energy Agency calls the greatest supply interruption in the history of the global oil market. Asia, which relies significantly on imported oil, much of which comes via the Strait of Hormuz, is particularly hard hit by the problem. In the Philippines, which relies on the Gulf for 90% of its oil supply, the government is implementing cash handouts for public transportation drivers and has directed government entities to reduce power and gasoline use by 10 to 20%. Price rises are already causing suffering for many people. Elmer Carrascal, 58, who drives a jeepney, the backbone of the country's transportation system, claims his salary has decreased by more than half since the conflict. "Before,

I spent 700 pesos [£8.80] on diesel and earned about 1,000 pesos each day. I now make barely 400 pesos. "It's not even enough for food," said Carrascal, who has been driving in Mandaluyong City, the capital district, for 35 years. "How far can your 400 go?" Rice alone costs 65 per kilogram. On Tuesday, the Philippine Senate gave President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. emergency powers to temporarily suspend or lower oil excise rates, but has cautioned that the duration of the situation is unknown. "We are victims of a war that is not of our choosing," Marcos said earlier this month. "But we control how we will protect the Filipino," he said, as he announced a series of energy-saving measures. Governments across the region are racing to conserve energy, find alternative supplies and protect the public from punishing price increases. The Thai and Vietnam governments have encouraged steps to reduce energy use, introducing work-from-home policies for many public sector workers. The Thai government has suspended most overseas trips for bureaucrats, and has instructed officials to wear short-sleeved shirts without neckties, except during ceremonies, to reduce the

need for air conditioning. Government offices have been urged to set air-conditioning temperatures at 26-27C to reduce the use of elevators and promote carpooling. If the energy crisis worsens, other measures, such as dimming billboard brightness from 10pm onwards, and closing petrol stations, will be considered. The Thai government is also increasing the ratio of biofuels blends from 5% to 7% and suspending most oil exports, while Indonesia is also accelerating a biodiesel programme that blends 50% palm-oil-based biodiesel with 50% conventional diesel. Vietnam has asked Japan and South Korea to help increase its access to crude oil. Thailand, the Philippines, and Vietnam – large net importers of oil and gas that depend on Middle East supplies – are major economies especially vulnerable to price rises, according to recent analysis by Eurasia Group. Many countries in the region have introduced temporary subsidies and price caps, though Eurasia Group warned in its analysis that budget pressure make subsidies "difficult to maintain beyond one to two months". Diesel subsidies are costing the Thai government more than 1bn baht (£22m) a day. Petrol stations across Thailand

have experienced panic buying, as consumers fear further price increases. Some shops have put up "out of stock" signs, introduced rationing or banned customers from filling up containers to conserve stock. According to Thai PBS, a large temple in north-eastern Thailand stated this week that cremation services will be discontinued because gas stations refused to allow it to fill jerry cans with petrol. In the historic Thai city of Ayutthaya, an elephant camp reported that its elephants were now trekking 5 kilometers to work due to fuel shortages at local gas stations, which prevented them from traveling in a trailer truck. On Tuesday, tricycle drivers in the Philippines queued up to receive cash handouts intended to mitigate the impact of gasoline price increases. Financial assistance will also be provided to jeepney drivers such as Carrascal, though he believes the 5,000 peso handout will make little difference in the long run. "It will only last a few days and then it will be gone," he said, adding that more ongoing assistance was required. The cost of riding in jeepneys is also rising, but Carrascal is concerned that increased pricing would dissuade consumers. "There are fewer passengers currently because many organizations have instituted work-from-home policies. "It's a double blow; fuel prices have risen, and we've lost passengers," he explained. He added that before the conflict in Iran, fuel was 52-53 pesos per litre. It is now steadily rising by the day. "Last week, it was 79.40 pesos at the gas station where I usually get diesel," according to him. Diesel now costs more over 100 pesos at several fueling stations. "Tomorrow there's another increase."

Hungary's Orbán will face criticism over Ukraine loan rejection at the EU meeting

Europe: Viktor Orbán, Hungary's prime minister, will face pressure from other EU leaders to quit stalling a crucial €90 billion loan for Ukraine over a political disagreement over an oil pipeline. Ahead of an EU summit on Thursday, Orbán, who faces elections next month, showed no signs of backing down from his rejection of the loan. He stated that he would not accept it until the dilapidated Soviet-era Druzhba pipeline, which supplies Hungary with Russian oil via Ukraine, is restored. "If there is no oil, there is no money," Orbán stated in a video message released on Tuesday following the publishing of a letter from Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, stating that "all possible efforts" to restore the Druzhba pipeline were underway. Orbán stated that he had informed the European Council president, António Costa, that Hungary's position remained unchanged. "If President Zelenskyy wants to receive his money from Brussels then he must reopen the Friendship [Druzhba] oil pipeline," according to him. Zelenskyy said on Wednesday that he hoped EU leaders would keep their agreement to give Ukraine €90 billion for urgently needed military equipment and general budget help. "We are really counting on the countries and the EU to find ways to resolve this issue," he stated during a visit to Madrid. Zelenskyy informed EU leaders earlier this week that Ukraine was "undertaking all possible ef-

orts to repair the damage and restore operations" to the pipeline, which Kyiv claims was destroyed by a Russian attack. Hungary and Slovakia are the only two EU nations to profit from Druzhba, as they received a temporary exemption from the EU's import restriction on Russian oil, which was imposed following the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Hungary's last-minute blockade of the €90 billion loan has enraged other EU leaders, as Orbán agreed to the financial accord in December as long as Budapest did not have to participate. Hungary, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic committed not to oppose a decision by 24 EU member states to take out the loan. The loan offer was a hard-fought plan B agreement after an original proposal to use Russian assets as collateral for a loan was rejected by Belgium and a few other nations. EU ambassadors emphasized that there was no alternative to what Hungary had previously agreed upon. "A deal is a deal," a senior EU diplomat stated. "There's no plan B, no plan C, and no plan D. This [€90 billion loan] is what needs to happen." A second senior diplomat stated, "We cannot discuss plan B because doing so would open ourselves up to blackmail." The source stated that criticism of the Hungarian government was becoming increasingly open. "The fact that the €90bn loan is blocked after Prime Minister Orbán had explicitly approved it with his colleagues is a turn-



ing point and that [criticism] it is clearly expressed now in a way I had not heard or seen before." An EU official said Costa, who will chair the EU summit, held a long phone call with Orbán on Tuesday morning. "The message was very clear: 'I expect from you that you respect the commitments you have taken at the European Council and that this decision on the €90bn loan is respected,'" the official said, reporting Costa's words. While some diplomats voiced scepticism that Orbán would back down before elections, a leaked draft of the post-summit communicate states that EU leaders look forward "to the first disbursement [of the €90bn loan] by the beginning of April". Hungary, along with Slovakia, is also blocking the EU's 20th round of sanctions against Russia, which were meant to be passed last month to mark the fourth anniversary of the full-scale invasion. In Hungary's elections on 12 April, Orbán faces the most serious political challenge of his 16 years in power. Polls show his main rival, Péter

Magyar, up to 20 points ahead, while Orbán is seeking to capitalise on the dispute with Ukraine. The European Commission announced on Tuesday that EU funds and technical support would be available to restore the flow of Russian oil to Hungary and Slovakia. While the move is aimed at overturning the Hungarian veto, the offer has raised eyebrows at a time when the bloc is committed to phasing out Russian oil imports by the end of 2027. "We are preparing to repair a pipeline Russia itself bombed – to restart the flow of Russian oil we claim to be phasing out – for Hungary which is blocking €90bn for Ukraine that we're funding – sans Hungary," wrote Rihards Kols, a Latvian nationalist conservative MEP, who described the policy as "delusional". The summit in Brussels on Thursday is meant to be dedicated to revitalising Europe's waning competitiveness against the US and China. That agenda is likely to be overshadowed by the dispute with Hungary and the war in the Middle East.

Damaged Russian ship transporting natural gas drifts into Libyan seas



Libya: A severely damaged Russian tanker carrying liquefied natural gas that has been adrift in the Mediterranean for two weeks, sparking fears of an ecological calamity, has entered Libyan seas, according to Italy's civil protection service on Wednesday. The Arctic Metagaz was part of a Russian "shadow fleet" that was intended to avoid sanctions placed on the country's oil and gas during its full-fledged invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. It was damaged in a suspected drone strike near Maltese

waters earlier this month, leaving a massive crater. The crew is said to have been rescued between Malta and Libya. Earlier this week, the tanker was adrift between Malta and the Sicilian island of Lampedusa, prompting the governments of Italy, France, Malta, Spain, Greece, and Cyprus to write a joint letter to the European Commission president, Ursula von der Leyen, warning that the vessel posed a "imminent and serious risk of a major ecological disaster". A spokeswoman

for Italy's civil protection service, which has been monitoring the situation, told the Guardian that the vessel was now in Libyan territorial seas and so under the control of the north African country's authorities. According to sources in the Italian press, Libya issued a navigation alert to all vessels operating in the region on Wednesday, encouraging them to exercise extreme caution due to present adverse sea conditions. While no leaks had been identified, the basic concern, according to an Italian civil protection spokeswoman, was the "dispersion of the hydrocarbons onboard" into the water. They stated: "There are around 90 tons of heavy oil or fuel onboard, therefore we are more certain of this risk. The other threat is connected to the gas that the truck was hauling. We are unsure about the quantity, but there may be gas dispersion." Russia's foreign ministry admitted that the Arctic Metagaz, which was transporting LNG from the Arctic port of Murmansk, was adrift in the Mediterranean and stated that Moscow's role in resolving the problem was contingent on "concrete circumstances". Russia's transport ministry claimed the vessel was attacked by Ukrainian naval drones launched from the Libyan coast.

Jihadist violence in Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo climbed substantially last year, although global terror deaths declined

Nigeria: Jihadist violence increased dramatically in Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo last year, although global terrorist deaths fell to their lowest level in a decade, according to a new analysis. Nigeria saw the highest rise in terrorist deaths internationally in 2025, with fatalities climbing by 46% from 513 in 2024 to 750, ranking fourth in the Global Terrorist Index after Pakistan, Burkina Faso, and Niger. Africa's most populous country is dealing with a multilayered security problem as extremist organizations like Boko Haram and its offshoots aim to seize control of vast areas of land. Several ethnic militias and other criminal elements, including "bandit" gangs, are also active, primarily in northern and central Nigeria. Newer threats like terrorists from the Lakurawa group are also emerging. In February, 162 people were massacred in Kwara state near the border with the Benin Republic, one of the deadliest single attacks in the country's recent history. On Wednesday the army said troops backed by air support had repelled a coordinated assault by Islamist insurgents on a military base in the north-eastern state of Borno, killing at least 80 fighters including senior commanders. The assault comes after multiple suicide bombings on Monday in Maiduguri, the capital of Borno, that killed at least 23 and left more than 100 wounded. In the DRC, terrorism-related deaths increased by over 28% in 2025, from 365 to 467, propelling the central African state to eighth position on the index, its lowest rating. The surge was



mostly led by the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), which are linked with the Islamic State. Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo are outperforming the rest of the globe in terms of growth. The Australian thinktank Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP) created the index, which showed a 28% drop in global deaths to 5,582, as well as a roughly 22% decrease in overall attacks. There has been a 280% rise in terrorism-related deaths in the West, with 57 documented in 2025. Terrorist acts killed twenty-eight individuals in the United States, the highest number since 2019. The rise, the index reveals, is increasingly driven by youth radicalisation and lone-wolf actors. "Viewed in totality, these trends point to one sobering conclusion: a fracturing world order risks erasing the hard-fought gains made against terrorism over the past decade," said Steve Killelea, IEP's founder. Despite a decrease

from the previous year, the Sahel, which is regarded as the epicenter of global terrorism, will account for more than half of all terrorist-related deaths by 2025. Burkina Faso, where the junta controls just about a third of the area, saw the greatest decline in terrorist deaths globally, with fatalities falling by half by 2025. Civilian casualties dropped at 84 percent. Experts believe the move indicates that al-Qaida affiliate Jamaat Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM) is purposefully limiting civilian assaults in order to win "hearts and minds" and solidify its geographical gains with greater sophistication. Killelea said: "For JNIM, the change in tactics can perhaps best be explained by the 'value v vulnerability' trade-off. Military forces and political figures are considered high-value targets. As JNIM now controls more territory, it is better able to carry out attacks on higher value

targets." The tactical shift fits into a pattern of jihadists launching coordinated and sophisticated assaults on military bases across the region, as counterinsurgency missions ramp up. JNIM, which launches drones frequently, has used them in more than 100 cases of drone violence in the last three years across the Sahel. According to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data (ACLED), there have also been 16 drone incidents involving the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) since 2014. "Ten [of the ISWAP incidents] involved drone attacks and the remainder were intelligence-gathering or surveillance missions used to prepare ground offensives against military targets," said Ladd Serwat, ACLED's senior analyst for Africa. The report also reveals a growing concentration of attacks in border regions, including the Central Sahel tri-border area, and the Lake Chad Basin.

The US and Israel's attempt to eliminate Iran's senior leaders may be counterproductive

Iran: Israel's decision to allow its military to assassinate any top Iranian person on its assassination list has generated serious new doubts about its so-called decapitation policy and its goals. Israeli officials have privately informed their US colleagues that if there is an uprising, Iran's opposition will be "slaughtered". That appears to contradict Benjamin Netanyahu's plan of pursuing regime change by targeting key officials in

Iran's political and security infrastructure. Even before full-scale war broke out, Iran academics and commentators, as well as some former Israeli officials, were skeptical that such strikes could remove Iran's religious dictatorship. So far the targeted attacks have killed the supreme leader Ali Khamenei, the security chief Ali Larijani and the intelligence minister Esmaeil Khatib, among others. At the heart of the issue is

the structure and resilience of Iran's regime – and how both the regime and the Iranian public respond to such attacks. Before the US and Israel commenced their strikes three weeks ago, analysts predicted that the government would stagnate in the face of demonstrations, and that change was imminent. That dynamic has altered. "This isn't a personalised regime," said Saman Vakil, an Iran analyst at Chatham House. "There

are institutional layers behind each individual, and I believe that the solution to decapitation strikes would be to simply [advance] from inside, but this risks bringing up unknown and untested individuals. Given Israel's success record, you may expect lower-level employees to be less willing to advance in what is perilous employment." Thus far, Vakil does not consider Israel's decapitation policy to be successful.

Planning A Valentine’s Glow-Up? Read This Before Booking A Cosmetic Treatment

The days leading up to Valentine’s Day often come with an urge to refresh – clearer skin, sharper contours, a little extra glow. But when it comes to cosmetic treatments, last-minute bookings rarely deliver last-minute miracles. In fact, the most seamless results come from something far less glamorous: planning.

From lasers and peels to injectables and skin rejuvenation beauty procedures, timing quietly shapes everything – healing, texture, even how natural the final look feels. Rush it, and you risk redness or uneven results. Plan it well, and the change looks effortless.

Start With Realistic Goals

“Timing plays a quiet but vital role behind the scenes. Preparation often shapes outcomes more than expected. While skincare procedures can enhance brightness, texture, or tone, they rarely bring sudden transformation,” says Dr. Gaurav Garg, Consultant Dermatologist and Founder of Dermalife Skin and Hair Clinic, New Delhi.

Skin and Hair Clinic, New Delhi. He stresses that cosmetic procedures enhance rather than transform overnight.

That means identifying specific concerns – dullness, fine lines, pigmentation or acne marks, and choosing treatments designed for those targets instead of chasing dramatic changes.

Consultation First, Always

According to Dr. Garg, the most important step happens before any treatment begins: a proper dermatology consultation. Skin behaviour varies widely depending on health history, medications and even daily skincare habits.

“Seeing a licensed dermatologist ensures your skin gets properly evaluated. Results from treatments can vary in timing and effect,” he explains. Discussing recovery periods, side effects and when results will actually peak can help avoid awkward scheduling, especially if you have an event circled on the calendar. Medical details matter more than most people realise. Supplements, blood thinners or certain prescriptions can increase bruising or swelling, extending downtime.

Respect The Recovery Window

Not all procedures fit neatly into a packed social schedule. Some treatments cause only mild redness; others need days or even weeks for the skin to settle. Sun avoidance, barrier-strengthening skincare and gentle routines often begin weeks before the procedure. “Starting mild skincare habits early supports the skin’s protective layer while lowering chances of discomfort later,” says Dr. Garg. Post-treatment care is equally critical. Sunscreen, hydration and soothing ingredients like ceramides and hyaluronic acid help maintain results, while harsh scrubs and actives should be avoided until healing is complete.

Choose Subtle Over Sudden

For first-timers, experts recommend starting conservatively. Small, gradual tweaks tend to look more natural than aggressive changes close to an important date.

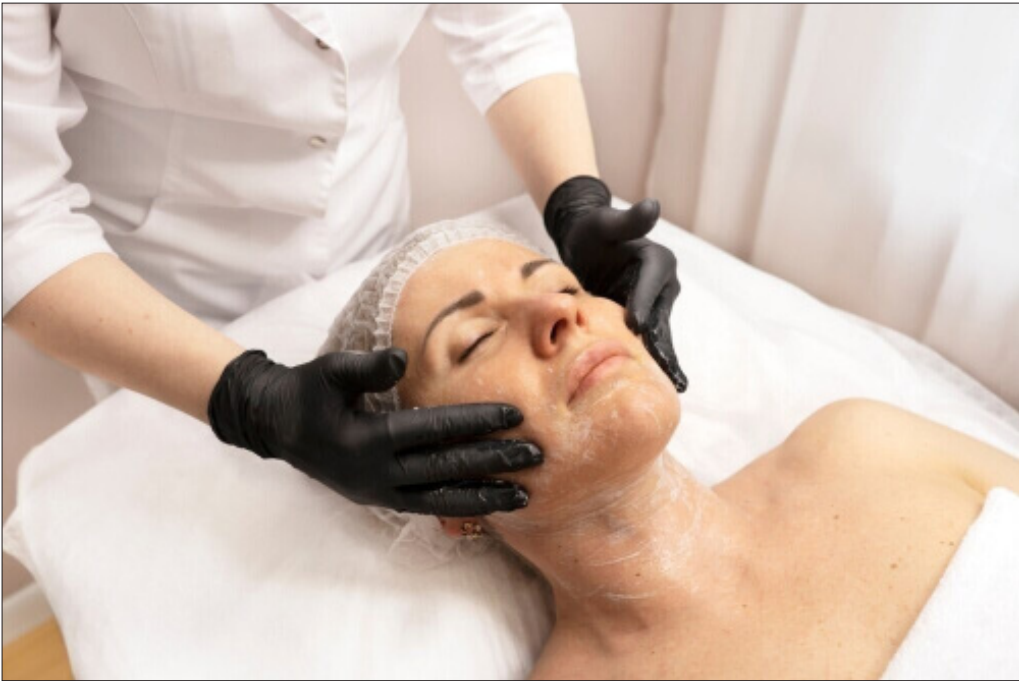
That philosophy extends to injectables, too. “It’s important that you seek an expert injector who can explain the treatment that will aim to provide the best clinical outcome. The reality is the overall facial messages that detract from facial attractiveness and youthful-

ness to look less tired, look less sad, look less saggy, and look less angry,” says Dr. Satish Bhatia, Board-Certified Dermatologist, MD, FAAD, at the Indian Cancer Society, Mumbai. He notes that patients often ask for dramatic transformations, but the real goal is softer.

In other words, refinement beats reinvention.

The Art Of Looking Like Yourself – Only Better Great aesthetic work should be almost invisible. As Dr. Bhatia puts it, “The facial treatments are focused to produce a balanced and harmonious outcome, both at rest and dynamic movements of the face.” That harmony takes time, skill and thoughtful scheduling.

When planned early, cosmetic treatments can quietly elevate your look without the tell-tale signs of last-minute intervention. Because the best Valentine’s glow isn’t dramatic – it’s confident, natural and entirely your own.



Are We Treating Skin Too Much And Caring Too Little? A Dermat’s Advice For 2026 Skincare Routine

Skincare has become a business that includes a lot of fancy creams and serums, with videos pushing multi-step routines on one day and simple regimens on the other. Somewhere in this constant noise, the reality might get missed – could we actually be hurting skin by trying so hard to help it?Dr Gaurav Garg – Consultant Dermatologist, Hair Transplant Surgeon & Dermato-Surgeon, and Founder and Director of Dermalife Skin and Hair Clinic, New Delhi, says, “A growing number of my appointments lately have involved people whose problems started not from ignoring their complexion, but from doing far too much to it.” fast brightness, flawless texture. This has added fuel to the rise of multi-step routines, active-heavy products, and in-clinic procedures at younger ages than ever before. Science can only help – if it’s applied right.

The Rise of Skin Overload

Dr Gaurav Garg says, “Some folks spread different skincare products through their weekly routine – retinoids one night, acids another, then vitamin C, sometimes peptides. Done right, with advice from an expert, it might help. But plenty decide on their own, influenced by videos they see online, and their skin often pays the price as the barriers weaken. Reactions show up as breakouts, dark spots, constant irritation, and stinging sensations.” What they wanted to feel like progress turns into damage. Young adults, patients in their 20s and 30s, keep repeating treatments – peels, laser sessions, injections – one after another without any recovery gaps for the skin. Our skin is alive; it breathes, reacts, and heals; it does not just endure. For skin that is healthy, rest matters,



and repair happens only when it is left alone while being nourished. If you push it too hard that balance can break.

The Forgotten Skin Barrier

At the heart of most over-treatment problems lies a damaged skin barrier. This outer wall does two jobs: it holds water in and blocks bad stuff out. Too much scrubbing breaks it down. Harsh soaps chip away at it. Strong products used too often weaken defence, and what’s left can’t protect the skin.Dr Gaurav Garg says, “Right now, words like ‘barrier repair’ pop up everywhere – and for a solid cause. Skin thrives not through harsh routines but by staying steady. Doing less can mean more help when it’s about letting skin fix itself.”

Influencer Advice vs. Individual

Skin

A single post on skincare tips and tricks spreads fast, yet clarity of-ten gets lost in the noise. Just because a routine glows on camera does not mean it suits every face. Skin thrives under different rules – humidity, genes, and daily habits all shift the balance. A fix for dark patches might worsen redness without context. Real care digs into personal patterns, not what’s trending today. Dr Gaurav Garg says, “I often remind my patients that irritation is not a sign that a product is ‘working’. Tingling, peeling, and redness are warning signals, not milestones. Caring for skin means listening to it.”

Caring Is Not Passive—It Is Preventive

Taking care of your skin starts

long before lotions hit the shelf. Shielding it from the sun each day matters just as much as rest. When tension eases, the body responds – silently, steadily. What you eat plays a role, too, shaping how skin behaves over time. Scientists now link slow-burning internal reactions to an older-looking complexion. Choices made at breakfast, bedtime, and even during work breaks – they leave marks not seen right away.Scientists are now seeing how gut health ties into skin problems such as eczema, psoriasis, and acne – mindset plays a part too. Fixing only what’s visible, while ignoring deeper causes, ends up just covering flaws instead of healing them. The most powerful skincare decision is knowing when to do less—and care more.

When Hospitals Make Patients Sicker: The Hidden Risk Of Hospital-Acquired Infections

Hospitals are meant to heal. Yet, for millions of patients globally, they can also become sites of new illness often preventable, often overlooked.Hospital-Acquired Infections (HAIs) represent one of the most persistent paradoxes in modern healthcare. Even as medical technology advances, a significant proportion of patients, up to 15% in low- and middle-income countries continue to develop infections during hospital stays. These are not complications of disease, but consequences of care itself.The problem is not simply clinical; it is systemic.HAIs, which develop 48 hours or more after admission, range from bloodstream infections and pneumonia to surgical site infections and urinary tract infections. Increasingly, they are driven by antibiotic-resistant organisms such as Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA), making them harder to treat and more dangerous in outcome. But the real concern lies in how easily they can occur.As Dr Kushal Bangar, Consultant Physician at AIMS Hospital, Dombivli, points out, these infections are often linked to routine processes, medical devices, surgical interventions, or lapses in hygiene protocols. “Though preventable, they can lead to serious complications such as sepsis, organ damage, and prolonged hospitalisation,”

he notes.This is where the conversation often stops: at clinical protocols.What remains under-discussed is the environment in which care is delivered.From frequently touched surfaces to air quality, and from equipment handling to linen processing, hospitals operate as complex ecosystems. Each element contributes to infection risk. Among the most underestimated factors is hospital textile management. Bedsheets, gowns, and surgical drapes come into constant contact with patients. A single bed can generate up to 15 kg of soiled linen daily, while large facilities process tonnes each month. Without strict segregation, thermal disinfection, and controlled processing, these textiles can become silent carriers of pathogens.Anshul Gupta, Founder and CEO, Quick Clean, underscores this gap. “Hospital-Acquired Infections often stem from small gaps in everyday processes. While clinical care is critical, environmental hygiene and linen management play an equally important role,” he explains. The issue, then, is not the absence of protocols but the inconsistency of their execution. Modern healthcare systems are beginning to recognise this. The shift is toward measurable hygiene, where processes are tracked, audited, and validated through technology. Monitoring wash tempera-

tures, chemical dosing, and sterilisation cycles can reduce process deviations significantly, limiting human error.This matters because the consequences of failure are far-reaching.A single infection can extend hospital stays by up to 20 days, increase antibiotic use, and contribute to the growing global crisis of antimicrobial resistance. For patients and families, it adds emotional and financial strain. For hospitals, it impacts compliance, accreditation, and trust.And yet, for all its scale, the solution lies in something deceptively simple: discipline.Infection prevention is not a one-time action but a system built on consistent hygiene practices, accountability, and awareness at every level. It requires doctors, nurses, support staff, and even visitors to play their part.For patients and families, awareness is equally important. Clean surroundings, proper handling of linen, visible hygiene practices, and transparent communication are not just signs of good service, they are indicators of safety. Ultimately, Hospital-Acquired Infections expose a deeper truth about healthcare: that safety is not defined solely by expertise, but by the systems that support it. Because in hospitals, as in life, it is often the smallest lapses, the unseen, routine ones that carry the biggest consequences.



Eating more ultra-processed foods linked to higher Crohn’s disease risk

In 2019, about 4.9 million people around the world were living with inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) — an umbrella term for two conditions called Crohn’s disease and ulcerative colitis. There is currently no cure for IBD.

Symptoms are managed through medications, surgery, and lifestyle changes such as managing stress, not smoking, getting enough exercise, and eating an IBD-friendly diet.Previous studies show that eating a diet high in ultra-processed foods can be problematic for people with IBD.Now, a new study recently published in the journal Nutrients provides more information on how eating ultra-processed foods physically impacts the gastrointestinal system, leading to IBD-related issues. For this study, researchers analyzed findings

from previously published studies from January 2010 to March 2025 in the databases PubMed/MEDLINETrusted Source, Embase, and Scopus.Scientists focused on data that corresponded with one of the three themes of this study: At the study’s conclusion, researchers found that a higher consumption of ultra-processed foods was consistently associated with a greater risk of Crohn’s disease.

“There is something in the industrial world, in developed countries, that predisposes people to Crohn’s disease,” Ashkan Farhadi, MD, a board certified gastroenterologist at Memorial-Care Orange Coast Medical Center in Fountain Valley. Researchers also reported findings on the mechanistic pathway, or how ultra-processed foods affect the body, which may contribute to

the development of Crohn’s disease.For instance, scientists found certain ingredients commonly found in ultra-processed foods, such as emulsifiers, carrageenan, and maltodextrin, can negatively impact the integrity of the epithelial barrier in the gastrointestinal system, alter the gut microbiome, and lead to inflammation.

“These findings build on a growing body of evidence linking higher intake of ultra-processed foods with gut dysbiosis — that is, a less diverse and more inflammation-promoting microbiome — an imbalance — and disruptions to the gut barrier that can trigger immune activation and inflammation,” Monique Richard, MS, RDN, LDN, a registered dietitian nutritionist and owner of Nutrition-In-Sight — who was not involved in this study “Studies show

ultra-processed food consumption is associated with reduced beneficial microbes, impaired gut lining integrity, and increased signals that contribute to inflammation, all symptoms and pathways observed in IBD and Crohn’s disease,” she added. “From a clinical perspective, I also observe those consuming diets higher in ultra-processed foods see an exacerbation in current symptoms or have increased risk of developing IBD, Crohn’s, or a variety of other gastrointestinal conditions.” Richard continued. Farhadi commented that studies like this are helping to provide more evidence on how ultra-processed foods may impact IBD risk, which can help doctors better guide their patients.“Most patients, when they walk in, that’s their first question — what should we eat?” he

explained. most of them are not based on substantive scientific data. Now it’s a little bit more coherent, and we are having a lot of studies coming in regards to [the] benefit of a plant-based food, particularly in disease, to put it into remission and reduce the flare.”

“And now with this study, less use of ultra-processed food could also be very helpful in [reducing] the rate of development of the disease, and at the same time have the disease put under control,” Farhadi added. However, Farhadi did point out that this study is correlational and there are factors that could be easily missed or biased. For example, Farhadi said that people who eat more ultra-processed foods tend to lead a very busy work-centered life, which may lead them to have more stress and not exercise.

Raj, the father of Sara Arjun, talks about their bond

Mumbai: With her debut in Dhurandhar, Sara Arjun—once regarded as a gifted kid actor—entered the international spotlight. The young actor, who co-stars with Ranveer Singh, has risen quickly, and her father, Raj Arjun, recently talked about how she has affected his life. As the expectation for Dhurandhar: The Revenge grows, Sara’s father’s emotional thoughts are keeping pace with her increasing prominence in the industry. He attributes his career and personal growth to Sara. Raj Arjun discussed how Sara’s birth changed his life while giving a speech at Kommune India’s SpokenFest. “A soul entered my life in 2005. I was fortunate enough to experience what I had heard about daughters being a blessing. He disclosed that although he had secured his first major role shortly after her birth, the project never came to pass. Nevertheless, he was unfazed by the defeat. Rather, it made him more determined. “I wouldn’t be this person or this artist today if this soul hadn’t entered my life,” he remarked. The years that followed, according to Raj, were a time of great difficul-



ty and uncertainty. Sara served as his emotional support system throughout that period. He said, “Year after year, she was growing up while I was struggling, but she didn’t just hold my finger, she held my soul.”Raj discussed how their bond transcended the conventional roles of parent and child in one of the most poignant sections of his speech. He emphasized how Sara became his rock through-

out his darkest moments by saying, “She took care of me like a Dhurandhar.”He also discussed adjusting to the responsibilities of fatherhood. You have to be the wind beneath her wings at times.

He continued, “I did it too and remained optimistic. Raj also recalled a moment that changed his life in 2016 when he went with Sara to the office of casting director Mukesh Chhab-

ra. What came next turned out to be crucial. She dragged Mukesh outside while holding his hand. I got a part in Secret Superstar because she flipped her fate in my favor,” he remarked. With Aamir Khan’s support, the movie signaled a significant change in his career. “She would explain things to me, hold me, and brighten up my world,” he continued, reflecting on Sara’s significance in his life.Raj thinks it is quite satisfying to watch Sara Arjun flourish as she continues to receive acclaim. “That daughter shares that spotlight with me too when she is spreading her light in the world as a Dhurandhar,” he remarked. “People say daughters hold their father’s hand and move forward, but I reached my destination holding my daughter’s hand,” he continued, summarizing his feelings. Sara is the bright spot in my life.Sara made her Hindi cinema debut in Aditya Dhar’s Dhurandhar, and she will play Yalina again in the follow-up. The movie, which debuted in theaters on March 19, also stars performers including R. Madhavan, Arjun Rampal, and Sanjay Dutt.

Saif Ali Khan eventually starred in Hum Tum after Hrithik Roshan rejected the film



Mumbai: Bollywood actor Saif Ali Khan had a terrific time in the 2000s. He became well-known and solidified his career as an actor. Hum Tum (2004) was one of his most beloved releases at the moment. The Kunal Kohli-directed film, which also starred Rani Mukerji, won Saif a National Award for Best Actor in a Leading Role. Hum Tum became a cult classic due to Saif and Rani’s believable on-screen chemistry, the music, and the script. However, did you know that a number of stars, including Hrithik

Roshan, turned down Hum Tum before Saif was cast as the main character? Filmmaker Kunal Kohli was asked in a recent interview with SCREEN if it’s true that many stars, including Aamir Khan, turned down the role in Hum Tum before Saif Ali Khan. “No, Aamir actually didn’t hear the script, to be fair to him,” the director retorted after hearing this. At the time, he was divorcing Reena Dutta for the first time. He was therefore not in the proper frame of mind. Hrithik Roshan thought the script was fantastic. He simply wasn’t prepared to do it, though. He stated, “I’m not sure how my character in Main Prem Ki Diwani Hoon (2003) would come out or be accepted,” which was untrue. “My own film, Mujhse Dosti Karoge! (2002), hadn’t worked with him (Hrithik),” Kunal continued. However, he declared, “This movie is gold! Right now, I lack the confidence to accomplish it. I’m not in that area. He decided to give it a pass. At the time, Vivek Oberoi

was a huge celebrity. He is now a highly skilled actress as well. However, this came immediately after Saathiya (2002) and Company (2002). He continued to come and depart for different reasons. After that, we focused on Saif. Saif’s National Award for Hum Tum was criticized at the time, with many claiming that Amitabh Bachchan, who was nominated for Black, or Shah Rukh Khan, who was nominated for Swades, were more worthy. Saif’s mother, Sharmila Tagore, was the CBFC chairperson, according to some. In a 2024 conversation with Bollywood Hungama, Saif addressed this accusation by saying, “My mother didn’t get it for me.” Because my mother would have given me a lot more if she could have. If she had done anything like that, I suppose she wouldn’t have been my mother. In terms of movies, Saif will next be seen with Akshay Kumar in Haiwaan.

An edited photo of himself and Sridevi was released by Boney Kapoor



Mumbai:Producer Boney Kapoor thinks that seeing him in shape would have made his late wife, diva Sridevi, very happy.The director posted an altered photo of himself standing next to Sridevi on his official Instagram account.“I am sure Sri would have been too happy to see me in this shape” Boney captioned the photo

with three red heart emojis. It should be mentioned that Boney has been overweight for the majority of his life. He only recently lost those excess pounds, shocking everyone with his toned appearance.In addition to changing his weight, Boney also obtained a completely new clothing and changed his hair. To refresh your

mind, Janhvi Kapoor disclosed on the Kapil Sharma program that Sridevi made every effort to get her husband, Boney, to take a walk when she was still alive. The “Mili” actress acknowledged that despite her best efforts, she was unable to achieve success. For those who don’t know, Boney and Sridevi fell in love while filming “Mr. India” in 1987.After being married in 1996, they had two children, Janhvi and Khushi Kapoor.Sadly, Sridevi drowned accidentally in Dubai in 2018 at the age of 54.Boney’s sentimental social media posts are a constant reminder of his late wife.

The Supreme Court dismisses the FIR against Elvish Yadav in the snake venom case

Mumbai: Elvish Yadav, a Bigg Boss OTT 2 champion and YouTuber, was arrested in March 2024 for allegedly using snake venom at a rave party in Noida, Uttar Pradesh, in November 2023. The criminal proceedings against him were canceled on Thursday by the Supreme Court of India, which ruled that the FIR could not be upheld in court based on the narrow legal problems that were considered. The applicability of Section 2(23) of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 and the legitimacy of proceedings under Section 55 of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 were the only two questions that a bench made up of Justices MM Sundresh and N Kotiswar Singh could address.Regarding the NDPS Act, the Court took note of the appellant’s senior counsel’s claim that the purported psychotropic substance found on a co-accused was not included in the Act’s Schedule. The Bench noted that the material was not included in the statutory schedule.

Additionally, the charge sheet merely indicated that Yadav had placed orders through an acquaintance, and no recovery had been obtained from him directly. The Bench noted that Section 55 of the Wildlife (Protection) Act mandates that a properly authorized officer register a complaint before any prosecution can proceed.

The Court determined that the FIR was not viable in its current state by citing established legal practice. The Bench also considered arguments that offenses under the Indian Penal Code were connected to a prior case that had already been closed, therefore they were not made out independently.The Court decided that the FIR could not withstand judicial examination on these grounds and ordered the



proceedings to be dismissed. Additionally, it gave the appropriate authority the freedom to start new legal actions, including, if necessary, filing a legitimate complaint under Section 55 of the Wildlife (Protection) Act. The Supreme Court had previously chastised Elvish for the accusations in February. “It might convey a very negative message to society if famous people are permitted to utilize silent victims like snakes. You play with the snake. The Bench had said, “Did you deal with the snake or not?” “Can you go to the zoo and play with animals there?” was another inquiry it posed to his advice. Is it not going to be a crime? You cannot claim to be free to do as you like. The Wildlife (Protection) Act complaint is of importance to us. Elvish is presently a part of Laughter Chefs Season 3, which is presented by Harpal Singh Sokhi and Bharti Singh. Aly Goni, Tejasswi Prakash, Karan Kundra, Abhishek Kumar, Jannat Zubair, Krushna Abhishek, Kashmera Shah, Ankita Lokhande, Samarth Jurel, Nia Sharma, and Arjun Bijlani are among the other cast members. You can watch the show on JioHotstar and Colors TV.

Nora Fatehi responds angrily to trolls who criticize her clarification video

Mumbai: In response to the uproar surrounding her new song Sarke Chunar from the Kannada pan-Indian film KD: The Devil, actor Nora Fatehi said on Wednesday that she was not aware of the song’s Hindi version. Her explanation was questioned by a number of social media users, who described it as a nebulous justification. In order to defend her position, Nora decided not to remain silent and retaliated against trolls. Nora clarified on Instagram that she had signed only for the original Kannada version of a song and was unaware of a Hindi version being produced. Her explanation led to mixed reactions on social media, with users questioning her claims. Nora responded to criticism, emphasizing that she had not performed to the Hindi lyrics and had never seen or heard them until their release. She urged detractors to direct their concerns to those responsible for attaching her image to the Hindi version without her consent. When challenged about legal action against the song’s makers, Nora confirmed intentions to sue, highlighting the misunderstanding of her video by critics. She defended her absence from social media due to personal circumstances while addressing concerns surrounding her attire and dance moves in the video, arguing that these elements are common in the entertainment industry and not unique to her. Nora acknowledged calls for her to do individual music, agreeing that she is focusing more on personal projects while ensuring to be more careful in her future collaborations.

Daisy Shah wants Palaash Muchhal and Smriti Mandhana to reconcile following their disastrous marriage

Mumbai: Palaash Muchhal, a music composer who is also a director, was recently in the news due to allegations that his wedding to cricket player Smriti Mandhana had been called off. Actor Daisy Shah is taking a measured approach, stating that since she doesn’t know what really happened behind the scenes, she wouldn’t judge him based on his personal life. Daisy stated in an interview with Miss Malini that Palash was reluctant to approach her directly about his film project following the cancellation of his wedding to Smriti Mandhana. Daisy will be the lead in Palaash’s upcoming film. Daisy said that she got two or three calls from unidentified people who said Palash was filming a movie and wanted her to be in it. She did, however, find the strategy dubious because she is close friends with Palash’s sister, Palak. She reasoned that it was weird that strangers were attempting to deliver the message as Palash would have gotten in touch with her personally or through Palak if he truly wanted to get in touch. “So, I happened to drop a message to Palash, asking about the same,” she stated. “Yeah

ma’am, this is true, but because of the situation lately, I am not personally calling anybody because it might go on a different tangent altogether,” he said. Daisy indicated that she was interested in moving on with the project, and they later arranged a narrative. Daisy was also questioned about whether she had ever been unsure about working on a project with Palash during the interview.“I can switch off from personal life to professional life, and I don’t think your personal life should affect your professional life,” Daisy said. To begin with, I have no idea what the real story is. Every coin has two sides. Since it’s between two families, we really don’t know what went wrong; we’re only speculating based on what we’ve heard from the media. I’m not discounting the woman’s version of the tale just because we don’t know the whole truth. I’m merely being impartial. “I hope everything gets well on both sides, and they come together because they actually make a lovely pair,” she said, acknowledging that she hopes the couple reunites. Palash and Smriti were scheduled to get married on



November 23 of last year, but due to a medical situation involving Smriti’s father, the festivities were abruptly postponed. When Palash was also admitted to a Mumbai hospital, the situation became much more concerning. The rumor mill has now flourished, with some even claiming that Palash cheated on Smriti. Palash later addressed everything in an Instagram statement. “I have decided to move on in my life and step back from my personal relationship,” he wrote. “Seeing people react so quickly to unfounded rumors about some-

thing that has been most important to me has been really tough for me. This is the most challenging time in my life, but I will handle it with grace while clinging to my convictions. I sincerely hope that as a society, we would learn to think twice before passing judgment on someone based on unsubstantiated rumors whose origins are never revealed. Palash continued, “Our words can hurt in ways we may never comprehend.” After putting off their wedding, Palash and Smriti unfollowed one another on Instagram.

Rajpal Yadav wants to litigate rather than reach a settlement

Mumbai: After being jailed to Tihar Jail in relation to a ₹9 crore debt and check bounce case, actor Rajpal Yadav has been at the center of a legal maelstrom. In a recent development, the Delhi High Court granted the actor relief on Wednesday, extending his interim bail until April 1. It has now come to light that the actor is getting ready to take the case to court, opting to do so rather than reach a settlement. The Delhi High Court ruled on Wednesday that the actor will not be imprisoned for the time being since he had made significant payments to the complainant in the instances involving the bounced checks. The court prolonged the respite until April 1 and declined to revoke its previous ruling that granted Rajpal Yadav an interim postponement of punishment in cases involving bounced checks.Rajpal Yadav’s attorney, SK Sharma, spoke to the media outside the courtroom after the hearing and discussed the actor’s plan for the subsequent hearing. He disclosed that Rajpal is preparing to argue the case in court rather than pursuing a settlement. The attorney also

provided more information regarding the actor’s future plans. Court ne Rajpal ji se pucha ke aapne samay samay pe kahan hai ke aap paise dena chahthe ho, toh aap settle kar rahe ho nay nahi? Rajpal ji ne kaha ki ab settle nahi karna chahte, dispute karne hai. Ab uski argument hoi. Aur phir uski application de di. Court ne April 1 ki date di hai (The court asked Rajpal ji whether he now intended to resolve the matter or not, given that he had previously stated at various points that he was willing to pay the money. In response, Rajpal ji stated that he would prefer to defend the matter rather than reach a settlement. An application was then filed. The court has now set April as the next hearing date. “The court has now set April 1 as the next hearing date,” the attorney stated. Rajpal stated after a Delhi High Court hearing that the next hearing is on April 1, expressing confidence in the Indian judicial system and a commitment to uncovering the truth. The court, presided by Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma, noted that Rajpal was present, not evading justice, and had made signif-

icant payments, thus granting him bail instead of incarceration. The legal issues stem from a 2010 loan of ₹5 crore for his film debut, which failed commercially, leading to a financial dispute and a past conviction for cheque dishonor. His interim bail was recently extended, contingent on a ₹1.5 crore deposit, which was confirmed by the complainant’s lawyer. Several celebrities have publicly supported Rajpal throughout the case.



India’s next ambassador to China will be Vikram Doraiswami



New Delhi, Mar 19: The new Indian ambassador to the People’s Republic of China is Vikram Doraiswami, who is currently India’s high commissioner to the United Kingdom.”Vikram K. Doraiswami (IFS:1992), currently India’s high commissioner to the United Kingdom, has been appointed as the next ambassador to the People’s Republic of China,” the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) announced in an official statement. He is anticipated to take over soon.In an effort to mend the strained relations caused by the more than four-year border impasse in eastern Ladakh, India has decided to send a top envoy to Beijing. Pradeep Kumar Rawat will be replaced by Doraiswami. Other significant appointments include Nagesh Singh’s relocation from Thailand to Australia,

Additional Secretary Puneet Agarwal to Thailand, and Secretary (East) P. Kumaran to London.India’s high commissioner to Bangladesh, Pranay Verma, will relocate to Brussels. In Dhaka, where the position is now unfilled, a political appointee cannot be completely ruled out.In 1992, Doraiswami enlisted in the Indian Foreign Service. He worked as a journalist for a year prior to it. MEA claims that he graduated from Delhi University with a master’s degree in history.at May 1994, Doraiswami was appointed third secretary at the Indian Embassy in Hong Kong following his completion of his in-service training in New Delhi in 1992–1993. At the Chinese University of Hong Kong’s New Asia Yale-in-Asia Language School, he earned a diploma in Chinese. He was posted to the Indian

Embassy in Beijing in September 1996, and he worked there for around four years. Doraiswami was named Deputy Chief of Protocol (Official) upon his return to the Ministry of External Affairs in New Delhi in 2000. He was elevated to the position of prime minister after two years. He later worked as the Indian prime minister’s private secretary.Fomer journalist Doraiswamy returned to the Ministry of External Affairs in New Delhi in July 2011, where he oversaw the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Division.

Doraiswami held the position of joint secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs’ Americas Division for two years, from 2012 to 2014. Before being named India’s ambassador to Korea in April 2015, he served as the country’s ambassador to Uzbekistan in October 2014. He headed the Bangladesh and Myanmar department from July 2018 until April 2019. He was given the responsibility of establishing a new department for the Indo-Pacific area under the ministry of external affairs.Prior to beginning his tenure in the UK, he assumed leadership as the Indian high commissioner to Bangladesh on October 5, 2020.

Before FIFA World Cup date, Inter continues their Serie A title chase

Milan: Inter Milan seeks to strengthen its Serie A title bid against Fiorentina while also focusing on the national team’s World Cup qualification. After AC Milan’s recent loss allowed Inter to extend their lead to eight points, they face a motivated Fiorentina, who have distanced themselves from relegation. Coach Christian Chivu’s first full season has been largely successful, yet recent appointments, including

a derby loss and a Champions League exit, have raised concerns. Key players like Alessandro Bastoni and Pio Esposito are crucial for Italy’s upcoming playoff matches as morale is low due to both club and national team’s struggles in recent competitions. Meanwhile, rivals Milan aim to secure a Champions League spot as tight competition ensues with Juventus and Napoli. Esposito, touted as Italy’s new striker



ing talent, hopes to contribute effectively despite limited playtime at Inter. His recent performances may be pivotal as Italy prepares for crucial encounters.

The circumstances surrounding MS Dhoni at CSK are similar to those in the book Misery

New Delhi: With all due respect, MS Dhoni’s continued participation in the Indian Premier League (IPL) feels like a sick joke that the Chennai Super Kings (CSK) are pulling on both the player and their supporters.At times, he feels as though he is being held captive or subjected to blackmail. What other explanation is there for his yearly participation in the league when he has completely run out of steam and is simultaneously cutting a miserable figure?We’re talking about a really intelligent and clever gamer. Unlike Prithvi Shaw or S Sreesanth. In the world of cricket, this player is highly regarded for his skill both on and off the wicket. whose lightning-fast stumpings and match-winning skills have become legendary. Furthermore, the man in issue has achieved extraordinary achievement. He is the first captain in history to have won the 2007 T20 World Cup, the 2011 World Cup, and the 2013 Champions Trophy—the three ICC white-ball competitions. He has guided the Chennai team to an incredible five IPL championships. Along with Kumar Sangakkara, the captain of Sri Lanka, he is one of just two wicket-keeper batsman who have amassed 10,000 runs or more in One-Day Internationals. Yes, this man would know when to hang up his gloves and boots. For the first time in history, CSK placed tenth in the IPL last year. They had placed



fifth the previous year. Additionally, Dhoni has essentially batted in every lower-order position over the past two seasons, indicating that he no longer believes in his own abilities. The alternative viewpoint is that he is the team’s mentor and doesn’t care about the outcome. He is training athletes.

That seems like a nice purpose, but regrettably, there aren’t any outstanding outcomes. CSK has every right to retain Dhoni in one role or another. He might work as a coach or mentor full-time. He might be their cricket director. CSK has numerous options for keeping Dhoni on board. Instead, when he is unable to play, he is asked to do so. when the color of his beard

surpasses the gray.Again, no offense intended, but it appears that he is receiving punishment akin to that of a whiny child. Furthermore, he has done nothing improper. His lengthy relationship with Chennai was only marred by the team’s two-year ban for engaging in spot-fixing and betting. Although it was believed that Dhoni and a number of other players knew, they were ultimately cleared. The Dhoni situation also brings to mind Stephen King’s novel Misery, in which the protagonist, a woman, is so enamored with a writer that she kidnaps him following an accident and tortures him in a variety of ways, including amputating his thumb and foot for the most ridiculous of reasons. because

In the murder case of Baba Siddique, the SC declines to revoke the accused’s bail

New Delhi, Mar 19: Akashdeep Karaj Singh, one of the defendants in the murder of former Maharashtra minister and NCP politician Baba Siddique, was granted bail on Thursday. The Supreme Court declined to intervene, stating that the Bombay High Court’s decision was “well-reasoned” and did not need to be overturned. Shehzeen Ziauddin Siddique, the late leader’s widow, filed a case contesting Singh’s relief, but the court rejected it. Justices JB Pardiwala and KV Viswanathan’s bench emphasized that the high court had used considerable consideration when granting bail on February 9 and advised against taking a broad stance in criminal matters.The judge, Justice Neela Gokhale, made a well-reasoned decision. You can’t apply the same standards to everyone. The bench informed senior lawyer Nitya Ramakrishnan, who was representing Shehzeen, that “there is nothing to connect this person with the crime in question.” Ramakrishnan tried to connect Singh to the Bishnoi

gang, which the prosecution claims was responsible for the murder, but the bench was not persuaded, citing the fact that the high court had already considered the evidence and determined that it was insufficient to prove prima facie culpability. The Supreme Court noted that, given the high court’s comprehensive findings, the appeal did not seem to have a solid foundation. A Maharashtra government attorney attempted to intervene during the hearing, telling the court that the state was also contesting the bail order. The bench reacted sharply to this, saying, “Now since the wife of the deceased is here before us, the state has also woken up from its slumber.” In the end, the court rejected Shehzeen’s plea and declined to consider the challenge. Singh, 22, was granted bail by the Bombay High Court, making him the first defendant to obtain relief in the case concerning the murder of Siddique, a three-time MLA who was shot and killed on October 12, 2024, outside his son

Zeeshan Siddique’s workplace in Mumbai’s Bandra (East) neighborhood. After a sessions court denied Singh’s previous bail request in July 2025, he was taken into custody in November 2024 from a Punjabi border village.

The top court identified serious weaknesses in the prosecution’s case in its comprehensive ruling. It stated that the main accusation against Singh was that he had made two international calls that were allegedly connected to sympathizers or members of the Bishnoi organized criminal group. The court noted that the prosecution had not established any connection between the calls and the claimed conspiracy, nor had they identified the recipients of these calls. The high court also looked at co-accused people’s confessions and concluded that none of them connected Singh to the murder’s preparation or execution. It was determined that even other evidence presented by the prosecution, such as a picture purportedly showing

Singh brandishing a gun and allegations of financial transactions connected to the gang, lacked substantial supporting evidence or a connection to the crime. While recognizing the serious nature of the offenses and the involvement of an organized crime syndicate, the high court ruled that the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA) conditions could not be applied without evidence showing prima facie guilt.

Allegations without verifiable proof were deemed insufficient to deny bail. The court considered the accused Singh’s young age, absence of a criminal record, and no indication of potential reoffending, thus allowing bail under MCOCA. The prosecution alleges that Anmol Bishnoi orchestrated the murder of Siddique, tied to a broader criminal conspiracy, with 26 arrests made. Anmol, deported from the U.S., is wanted for multiple violent crimes, including the aforementioned murder and other high-profile criminal incidents.

Online gaming regulations will shortly be softened by the Center for the industry

New Delhi, Mar 19: According to two IT ministry officials, the Center will announce the final regulations under the Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming (PROG) Act, 2025, with important clauses relaxed to make the framework more industry-friendly.Online social game registration will be entirely optional, which is a major departure from the October draft. The industry had pointed out ambiguities in the draft regulations, pointing out that while rule 4(3) said that online social games could be given without registration, rule 4(2) suggested that such games would need to register with the Online Gaming Authority of India in order to function lawfully. One of the executives stated that registration for online social games is now completely voluntary.

Following discussions with industry stakeholders, who had requested a less complicated and onerous registration procedure, the action was taken. The official continued, “It was evident from industry feedback that the registration process needed to be made easier, and that has been addressed in the final rules.”The official explained that the government does not wish to discourage non-monetized gambling. “Our approach earlier was to encourage companies to register, but the larger goal is to make India a gaming hub. The official described it as a significant relaxation and stated, “We don’t want to create friction if companies are offering social games, as long as they are not operating money gaming platforms.” However, as stated in the proposed regulations, e-sport

game registration would still be required. According to one official, the authority is responsible for determining whether or not e-sport games qualify as money gaming and for taking appropriate measures. According to officials, the framework still divides games into three groups: online money games, e-sports, and social games. “Subscriptions and other similar models can generate revenue in social games, but user payouts are not possible.” Pre-declared awards may come in and go out of e-sports, but they must first be acknowledged as athletic events. Money gambling, which involves staking money and winnings, is the third type.

This is prohibited,” the official clarified. The overall regulatory framework is mostly unaltered. The regula-

tions will establish an Online Gaming Authority of India, which would have the same authority as a civil court to summon people and conduct investigations. “The authority’s powers have not changed significantly.

It will still perform quasi-judicial duties, according to another official. Determining the nature of games and upholding the law will be major responsibilities of the authority. “The authority will decide whether a game qualifies as an online money game if a platform requests clarification. Additionally, it will respond to user concerns and intervene when infractions are discovered, the source stated. According to one of the authorities, the entire regulatory process is anticipated to be digital, and the gateway for it is nearly complete.

A reminder about one-format players is a new IPL 2026 warning for Virat Kohli

New Delhi: Virat Kohli, who has now retired from Tests and T20Is and is concentrating only on ODIs, will have a slightly different IPL season, according to former India all-rounder Irfan Pathan. Midway through the most recent IPL, Kohli declared his retirement from Test cricket. Since then, he has been playing ODIs, a format he focused on during the second half of 2025. His presence has created interest around ODIs despite his departure from other forms, and he hasn’t showed any symptoms of slowing down, scoring hundreds against New Zealand and South Africa. When he wears the RCB colors once more this season, there will be a lot of excitement surrounding him. In 15 innings, he struck at 144.71 and averaged 54.75 while scoring 657 runs. He was RCB’s most reliable player, finishing among the top three run scorers in the competition with eight fifties.Pathan emphasized how Kohli’s exclusive concentration on ODIs will alter the equation. Speaking on his YouTube channel, Pathan praised Kohli’s steady efforts in one-day cricket while also considering the difficulties he would encounter while returning to T20 cricket after a hiatus. For Kohli, things will be a little different this time. He has fully retired from Test cricket and will participate in the IPL for the first time.

He only plays in one format. Nobody finds it easy. However, his performance has been outstanding and he has scored. It hasn’t been hard for him in one-day cricket, even when he returns after a hiatus.

In T20s, when you play the aggressor and come in not having played a lot, it will be challenging. However, he has also encountered numerous difficulties in the past. Pathan posted on his YouTube channel, “I am really excited to see how he will go forward this season.” He also discussed Kohli’s long history with RCB, highlighting his influence on the team throughout the years. He emphasized Kohli’s outstanding performances, including as his aggressive style from the previous season, which helped RCB win and was a turning moment in his career. “RCB and Virat Kohli share a common identity. He began his career with RCB and continues to play for them. He has given outstanding performances. His time as team captain was also a golden age in his career, with several outstanding performances. His strike rate increased after their victory last season. He assumed the position of an aggressor rather than an anchor. It played a significant role. They’ll want him to maintain the same form even this time,” Pathan said.

Delhi-NCR is under clouds, and rain and wind are predicted through Friday

New Delhi, Mar 19: A day after dust storms, thunder, lightning, and rains provided relief to the area, the skies remained cloudy on Thursday as temperatures in Delhi and the surrounding areas hovered around 19 degrees Celsius. winds and rain interfering with daily life and affecting electric grids throughout Delhi and the National Capital Region, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) issued an orange signal for the city.It is anticipated that the weather will continue until Friday.

Due to inclement weather on Wednesday night, at least sixteen aircraft at the Indira Gandhi International Airport were rerouted to other destinations. It was suggested that residents stay inside and stay away from windows, power wires, and electrical poles. Additionally, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) advised against leaving loose items unattended. At Pragati Maidan, wind speeds peaked with a gust of 68 kmph. Palam reported 52 kmph, while Pusa recorded 65 kmph. Other locations, including as Pitampu-

ra, IGNOU, and Lodi Road, also recorded speeds between 43 and 48 kmph.

A cyclonic circulation over South Haryana was caused by a western disturbance, according to meteorologists. “The system is expected to intensify over central Pakistan and adjoining parts of Punjab and Haryana from Thursday, leading to further rainfall over the next two days,” Mahesh Palawat, a meteorologist. He also mentioned the likelihood of isolated hailstorms, thunderstorms, and pre-monsoon rains.

R Ashwin Gives Team India a Serious Warning



New Delhi: R Ashwin gave the Indian cricket squad a sobering warning about life after Jasprit Bumrah. When it comes to pace bowling, Bumrah has been the team’s best player, and his performances have made the difference in a number of well-known games. Ashwin, however, thinks the squad may suffer after Bumrah retires and noted that even though India has a potent batting unit, the next generation could not find bowling as interesting in a format where hitters predominate. “We have an exceptional lineage of white-ball hitters. Over the next ten years, India will undoubtedly win a number of white-ball titles. “That will come from our batting,” Ashwin stated “After Bumrah, what happens? He is a key player on this white-ball side,” he continued.Ashwin continued by discussing the current state of the game, which is dominated by batsmen on favorable pitches. In such case, he thinks that even though bowlers win competitions for their teams, young people might no longer find the idea of becoming bowlers appealing. “I’m concerned that kids might not take up bowling because it’s not as appealing as batting.” I consider batting and bowling to be distinct sports. The sport of bowling is not appealing enough. Giving those sixes is like amusing people. “So, who would really want to think that bowling will help us win series or tournaments?” he asked. Ashwin also discussed the Indian dressing room culture and the significance of looking past particular players. “Indian cricket is about more than a few individuals,” he stated.Additionally, he agreed with Gautam Gambhir’s strategy of prioritizing the team over the individual.

Ashwin remarked, “I like Gautam, and many people may have different opinions about him, but he is someone who always puts the team ahead of individuals.” “I respect that he gives credit to the team rather than specific individuals.”

Knight Riders Become First Franchise With Dedicated Own California Cricket Stadium



California: The Knight Riders have a new home, but this time it's not in Kolkata. The LA Knight Riders will now play at their own dedicated ground in California, marking a first for any IPL-owned franchise. The franchise announced the Knight Riders Cricket Field at Fairplex in Pomona as their official home for 2026, a big step in their global expansion. Speaking about the development, Knight Riders owner

and Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan said the moment was special for the franchise. "Over the years, the Knight Riders have grown into a truly global family, and every new milestone is special for us," Shah Rukh Khan said. He added that having a home base in Los Angeles is something the team hopes to build on. "Seeing the Los Angeles Knight Riders have a home of their own is

incredibly exciting. The USA is a great sporting market with passionate fans, and we hope this field becomes a place where people come together to celebrate the game and support the team," he said. Knight Riders Sports CEO Venky Mysore said Los Angeles is an important market for the franchise. Los Angeles is one of the world's most dynamic sports markets and an important home for the Knight

Riders brand," Mysore said. He added that the partnership with Fairplex is a long-term move to grow the sport. "Establishing the Knight Riders Cricket Field in partnership with Fairplex is a major milestone for our franchise, and we look forward to building the sport in this region," he said. This move is not just about having a ground, but about setting up a proper base in the USA. With a fixed venue in Southern California, LA Knight Riders can now build a local fanbase instead of shifting venues. The ground is expected to host Major League Cricket matches, giving fans regular access to top-level cricket. What makes this move stand out is that no other IPL-owned franchise currently has a dedicated stadium of its own. The LA Knight Riders' new stadium is located at the Fairplex in Pomona, California. The venue is officially known as the Knight Riders Cricket Field and serves as the team's dedicated home ground for the 2026 season. The facility marks a major milestone as the first dedicated stadium in California for an IPL-owned franchise. Shah Rukh Khan, the owner of the Knight Riders, expressed that establishing this home base in Los Angeles is a significant step in the team's global expansion. The venue is expected to host Major League Cricket matches.

Galatasaray's Noa Lang Undergoes Surgery After Freak Finger Injury in Liverpool Match



New Delhi: Galatasaray's Champions League campaign ended on a painful note as Noa Lang suffered a freak finger injury and Victor Osimhen picked up an arm problem during their heavy defeat to Liverpool. The Turkish side were beaten 4-0 at Anfield, crashing out of the competition. The result saw Liverpool progress to the quarter-finals with a 4-1 aggregate win, overturning Galatasaray's first-leg advantage in dominant fashion. The night, however, was overshadowed by a worry-

ing injury to Lang, who had to be stretched off after a bizarre incident near the touchline. The Netherlands international was involved in a challenge with Curtis Jones in the 75th minute before stumbling into the advertising hoardings. In the process, his thumb appeared to get trapped, leaving him in visible agony. Lang was seen clutching his hand with blood streaming from the injury as Liverpool players rushed to check on him before medical staff intervened. The injury occurred when Lang lost balance

during a duel and collided with the hoardings near Liverpool's goal. His thumb was caught awkwardly between the boards, resulting in a deep wound. Galatasaray's medical team immediately attended to the forward, and play was halted as he received treatment on the pitch. "He's going to the hospital right now, an important issue he has with his finger," Galatasaray coach Okan Buruk said after the match. Buruk added that the severity of the injury could require surgery, with a decision expected.

Commonwealth Youth Games in Malta Set to Begin Next Year on October 29

New Delhi: The eighth edition of the Commonwealth Youth Games will be held in Malta and Gozo from October 29 to November 4 next year. The opening ceremony will take place on October 29, followed by an action-packed six days of sport programme from October 30 to November 4. The Games will feature eight sports — swimming and para swimming, athletics and para athletics, netball, sailing, squash, triathlon, water polo and weightlifting.

Malta 2027 promises an electrifying and competitive atmosphere, showcasing the home of Maltese sport. World class facilities will provide our young athletes with a truly transformative experience, helping to inspire and develop the stars of tomorrow," Commonwealth



Sport Chief Executive Katie Sadleir said in a media release on Thursday. The Games will mark the largest para sport programme in the competition's history, building on the landmark inclusion of para athletics at the most re-

cent Commonwealth Youth Games in Trinidad and Tobago in 2023. The Games will also see the debut of sailing and water polo at a Commonwealth Youth Games. Malta is expecting to host approximately 1,200 athletes, aged 14-18 from

across the Commonwealth's 74 nations and territories. The venues include Cottonera Indoor Pool, Tal-Qroqq National Pool, Marsa Athletics Stadium, Marsa Sports Centre, Mellicha Bay, Gozo Indoor Sports Pavilion, Marsalforn Bay.

Ashutosh Sharma Claims Pressure Immunity While Aiming To Excel As Delhi Capitals' Specialist Finisher

New Delhi: Ashutosh Sharma doesn't feel the pressure of performing on a grand stage like the IPL and remains focussed on finishing more games for Delhi Capitals (DC) in 2026 than the last season. In his first season for DC, Impact Player Ashutosh began the tournament with a bang, smashing 31-ball 66 not out to pull off a thrilling win over LSG. However, he and his team and were not able to ride the initial momentum created in the tournament, failing to make the play-offs. Speaking to PTI, Ashutosh spoke about his preparation for his third season in the IPL beginning on March 28.

"The preparation is going very well. We have attended 3-4 pre-season camps. My role would be similar to last year, finishing games for the team at number 6 or 7. I want to win as many games as possible," said Ashutosh, who rose to prominence with his exploits for Punjab Kings in 2024. The 27-year-old from Madhya Pradesh who plays domestic cricket for Railways surprisingly doesn't feel the pressure when he is playing in front of a packed crowd, a usual scene in the IPL. The finish-



er's role is all about keeping calm in high-pressure situations and Ashutosh seems to have figured out that part of his game. "I don't feel the pressure when I am in the middle. I believe in my ability and my hardwork. This sea-

son I have not developed a new shot or something. It is just about perfecting the game I already have," he said. With the inclusion Lungi Ngidi and David Miller in the side, Ashutosh feels the unit is well balanced.

Yuzvendra Chahal Quits Alcohol To Boost Punjab Kings' Fitness Levels

Chahal Quits Alcohol To Prepare For IPL 2026



New Delhi: In a bid to enter the upcoming IPL 2026 season with better confidence and fitness levels, Yuzvendra Chahal has made a personal lifestyle change and decided to quit consuming alcohol. Chahal, who will be part of the Punjab Kings squad for the new season, revealed about his personal life during a podcast with AB de Villiers. Chahal enjoyed a decent outing during his first season with PBKS in 2025, after having a lacklustre start. The leg-spinner

picked up 16 wickets in 14 matches as PBKS went to the final, where they were beaten by RCB. Chahal told De Villiers that he is aiming to break the IPL title jinx with Punjab and is eager to perform well during the tournament. The spinner also said that the decision to quit alcohol stemmed from the fact that he wanted to be a role model for the young players in the squad. "I've stopped drinking alcohol, and it's been more than six months. I am now 35, so I want to be more ac-

tive and give my 150% for my team. As a senior player, I want people in the IPL to learn something from me," said Chahal. Chahal revealed that he was disappointed with himself during IPL 2025 as he was unable to perform well due to rib and knuckle injuries. The spinner said that in the upcoming season, he wanted to keep his body first and ensure that he is playing at the peak of his powers. I was a bit disappointed with myself. After the KKR game, I had a rib fracture, and later,

my knuckle got fractured. So in the semifinal and final, I wasn't able to bowl my proper leg-spin. This year, I want to take care of my body first," said Chahal. Chahal will also be hoping to use IPL 2026 as a way to get back into the Indian team contention. Chahal last played an international game for India in 2023 and has since be left on the sidelines. Yuzvendra Chahal decided to quit alcohol for IPL 2026 to improve his fitness and serve as a role model for younger players. After suffering rib and knuckle fractures during the 2025 season, the 35-year-old Punjab Kings spinner is prioritizing his health to give his "150%" to the team. Lifestyle changes focusing on long-term health and preventive care are significantly shaping the 2026 sporting landscape, as seen in the Indian team's recent defensive victory at the T20 World Cup. While no specific sources detail the 2026 IPL season, current trends emphasize that athletes like Suryakumar Yadav are adopting disciplined fitness philosophies that prioritize longevity over mere aesthetics.

Iran Retracts World Cup Boycott Threat But Refuses To Play Group Matches In America

New Delhi: Iran has withdrawn their threat to boycott the FIFA World Cup 2026, but remained adamant with their demand not to play matches in the USA amid the ongoing West Asia conflict. Iran's football chief Mehdi Taj said that the team is going ahead with its preparations for the upcoming tournament, even if they won't travel to America for their matches. Iran was one of the first teams to qualify for the FIFA World Cup, which will run from June 11 to July 19 and is being staged in the US, Mexico and Canada. Team Melli's participation has been in doubt ever since the conflict with the USA started in late February. Taj was present to welcome the Iranian women's team back home after their journey from Australia and said that the men's team will hold a training camp in Turkey and play two friendlies there. "The national team is holding a training camp in Turkey, and we will also play two friendly matches there," FFIRI President Taj was quoted as saying by the Fars News Agency on Wednesday.

The latest statement from Taj comes days after the sports minister, Ahmad Donyamali, said that Iran won't participate in the World Cup after the assassination of the Islamic Republic leader Ali Khamenei. Iran's demand for a change in venue of matches comes amidst the ongoing conflict and after Donald Trump's statement that the men's team should skip playing their matches in the US for their own safety. Taj has used the statements from Trump to ask for a venue change for the matches of Team Melli. Mexico President Claudia Sheinbaum said on March



17 that Iran are free to play their matches in the country, but stressed that final decision was in the hands of FIFA. Iran are scheduled to play Belgium, Egypt and New Zealand in June in the US. FIFA said that they have been in touch with FFRI but said that they want all participating teams to stick by the original schedule. Geopolitical tensions significantly impact the FIFA World Cup 2026 through cultural disputes between host cities and participating nations, as well as broader regional conflicts that disrupt international sports governance. A major point of contention involves the June 26 match in Seattle, where local plans to celebrate LGBTQ+ Pride have triggered formal protests from the football federations of Egypt and Iran. Both nations have cited religious and cultural values in their rejection of the festivities, leaving FIFA to navigate a complex dispute between a host city's local norms and the conservative stances of competing member associations. Beyond specific match scheduling,

escalating military conflicts in West Asia have forced international sports bodies to alter their operational calendars. For instance, the International Cricket Council was recently forced to cancel in-person board meetings in Doha due to travel risks and airspace disruptions caused by regional instability, highlighting how geopolitical volatility can shift high-level administrative discussions to virtual formats. Iran has withdrawn its threat to boycott the FIFA World Cup 2026 following assurances from Donald Trump that the national team is welcome to compete in the United States. Football chief Mehdi Taj confirmed that while the team will no longer boycott the tournament itself, they remain firm in their refusal to play matches on American soil due to the ongoing West Asia conflict. The Football Federation Islamic Republic of Iran has requested that FIFA relocate their scheduled matches against Belgium, Egypt, and New Zealand from the U.S. to Mexico.