

Gaurav Gogoi Visits Silchar RKM & Sets Congress Strategy



Guwahati, Jan 29: Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) President Gaurav Gogoi, who is currently on a tour of the Barak Valley, visited the Ramakrishna Mission in Silchar in the morning today. Accompanied by Assam Congress Observer Bandhu Tirkey, he offered service at the Mission and appreciated its longstanding contributions to social welfare.

On the occasion, Gogoi met Swami Ganadhishananda Maharaj, Secretary of the Ramakrishna Mission, and other members of the Mission. He enquired about their well-being and held discussions on various contemporary issues. Gogoi also

conveyed his best wishes for the good health and long life of Swami Ganadhishananda Maharaj. He remarked that the Ramakrishna Mission in Silchar has been making significant contributions for decades in the fields of education, healthcare, and social service. Meanwhile, APCC President Gaurav Gogoi attended a party workers' meeting organised by the Cachar District Congress Committee at Silchar. He held detailed deliberations with district Congress leaders and workers on preparations for the upcoming elections and provided necessary guidance. with several senior leaders and party workers.

Mizoram CM unveils venture capital fund to support startups

Aizawl, Jan 29: Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma launched the Bana Kaih (Hand Holding) Venture Capital Fund and the Startup Readiness Level (SRL) framework under the Startup Mission, with implementation led by the planning & programme Implementation Department in collaboration with the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT).

The scheme was launched at a function organised to mark National Startup Day – Mizoram Edition at Aijal Club on Wednesday.

The event was attended by Dr. Vanlalhlana, Minister for Higher & Technical Education; F. Rodingliana, Minister for Commerce & Industries; and Lalnginglova Hmar, Minister for Labour, Employment, Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (LESDE).

Addressing the gathering, the Chief Minister stated that for many years Mizoram has had individuals with strong skills and innovative ideas who ventured into entrepreneurship. However, due to lack of adequate support and guidance, many such ventures could not scale up and ideas often failed to translate into reality. Entrepreneurs frequently lacked start-up capital, proper mentorship, and clear pathways to build sustainable and successful enterprises. The Bana Kaih Venture Capital Fund, he said, has been designed to address these long-standing challenges. He clarified that the fund is neither a grant nor a donation, but an investment based on trust and confidence.



It aims to support entrepreneurs with strong growth potential and future prospects, particularly those working on scalable and innovative business models, skill-based and industry-oriented products, and technology-driven enterprises.

While financial support helps businesses grow, the Chief Minister emphasised that institutional trust and structured guidance

are equally important. In this context, the Startup Readiness Level (SRL) of Mizoram plays a crucial role. He explained that SRL is not merely a record-keeping mechanism but a significant tool to showcase the progress, capability, and seriousness of entrepreneurs and startups in Mizoram.

Through SRL, entrepreneurs will receive official recognition, enabling early-stage

and small ventures to become more visible to investors, banks, and large firms. Policymakers will be able to design more reliable and effective schemes using accurate data, while large firms can clearly assess startup activities, sectors, and maturity levels. Overall, SRL will help make Mizoram's startup ecosystem more transparent, credible, and support-worthy.

Conrad Briefs PM on Meghalaya's Growth

New Delhi, Jan 29: Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad Sangma met Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi to showcase the state's soaring economic trajectory and infrastructure milestones. During the high-level briefing, Sangma highlighted significant breakthroughs in maternal health, the strategic expansion of New Shillong City, and innovative market linkages designed to double farmers' income. The dialogue also focused on the upcoming 39th National Games in 2027 and the global prestige of the state's Living Root Bridges.

To secure Meghalaya's future, the CM submitted "Vision 2032," a roadmap seeking sustained Central support for capital investment and fiscal empowerment. Aligning with the Viksit Bharat mission, the Chief Minister emphasized a growth model rooted in community-led tourism and indigenous preservation, earning the Prime Minister's praise for successfully balancing modern development with rich cultural heritage.

Churachandpur intensifies road safety outreach



Imphal, Jan 29: In a bid to reinforce the message of responsible driving and reduce preventable road accidents, the Office of the Chief Medical Officer, Churachandpur, has announced a free eye check-up for all drivers as part of the ongoing National Road Safety Month 2026. The initiative, backed by the District Administration and scheduled for January 30, will be held at the Eye OPD of the District Hospital from 9:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. under the supervision of Dr. Ginthianmung, District Nodal Officer (NPCB&VI), NHM. The health camp, approved by the Medical Superintendent, aims to ensure that drivers, especially those operating passenger and commercial vehicles, maintain optimal vision, a critical factor in safe driving. Registration slips for the check-up can be obtained from the Departmental Registration Counter.

Chief Medical Officer Dr. T Van-

lalkungi has urged all eligible drivers to avail themselves of the opportunity, stressing that visual health is not merely a personal concern but a public responsibility. Today, Churachandpur Police Station, led by Officer-in-Charge Inspector Thangpu Tonsing, conducted a public awareness drive along Teddim Road and Rengkai Road under the theme "Road safety, Life safety." The campaign focused on the compulsory use of helmets, the importance of valid driving licences, the dangers of drunk driving, and the necessity of seatbelt use. Meanwhile, Singnat Police Station, under the leadership of Inspector James Vaiphei, carried out a targeted awareness programme across three schools—Lyzon Friendship School, St. Joseph's High School, and Rayburn High School. Presentations covered a wide range of traffic violations and their penalties under the

Motor Vehicles Act (2025–2026), including driving without a helmet (Section 194D), triple riding (Section 194C), drunk driving (Section 185), operating without a licence (Section 181), dangerous driving (Section 184), speeding (Section 183), failure to wear seatbelts (Section 194B), mobile phone use while driving (Section 184(c)), lack of insurance (Section 196), and disobedience to traffic authorities (Section 179). Particular emphasis was laid on juvenile driving, which under Section 199A carries a ₹25,000 fine, three years' imprisonment for parents or vehicle owners, cancellation of vehicle registration for one year, and a ban on the juvenile obtaining a licence until the age of 25. Inspector Vaiphei underscored the importance of early education, noting that awareness at the school level could significantly reduce future violations and accidents.

Three held with leopard skin, bones in Assam's Goalpara

Goalpara, Jan 29: The Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB), in coordination with the Goalpara forest division, recovered a leopard skin and bones from three persons at Paikan village under the Krishnai forest division of Goalpara district on Wednesday.

The accused have been identified as Manirul Islam, a resident of Krishnai, Janik Ali of Goalpara, and Rakseng Sangma from Tukura village. The seized wildlife parts are believed

to have been sourced through illegal poaching activities.

Following their detention, the three men were taken into custody and booked under relevant provisions for poaching and trafficking of animal parts. Forest and WCCB officials said the recovery was made as part of ongoing efforts to curb wildlife crimes and dismantle trafficking networks operating in the region.

Mob Torches Murder Accused's Under-Construction Home After Woman's Killing in Aizawl

Aizawl, Jan 29: Angry mobs set fire to the under-construction house of a man accused in a sensational murder case involving a young woman and an elderly man, triggering unrest in Mizoram's capital earlier this week. The 62-year-old accused, who reportedly died by suicide last month, has been named as the prime suspect in the murder of a 26-year-old woman whose body was recovered on the western outskirts of Aizawl on December 1 last year. The arson took place Tuesday night at Tanhril locality, where the accused was building a house. The incident occurred hours after police announced they had cracked the mysteri-

ous murder case following an intensive investigation. News of the breakthrough led to public outrage, with residents assembling outside the rented apartment where the accused's family lived and demanding that they leave the locality. According to Aizawl SP Zosangliana, protesters also set ablaze a multi-storey structure belonging to the accused that was still under construction before police could reach the scene. He said law enforcement personnel acted swiftly to bring the situation under control and prevent further escalation. The family members of the accused were immediately evacuated to a safe location. Police said the

mob dispersed around 1 am on Wednesday following repeated appeals from authorities. Leaders of the Young Mizo Association (YMA) Tanhril branch said an emergency meeting of local council members and NGOs on Tuesday night decided that the accused's wife and children should leave the locality immediately and not return in the future. Earlier, state police had confirmed that the murder case had been solved after the highly decomposed body of the woman was recovered near Mizoram University (MZU) campus in Tanhril last month. Authorities are continuing to monitor the situation to prevent further unrest.

Sarma Says Remarks on 'Miyan' Based on Supreme Court Observations, Not Politics

Guwahati, Jan 29: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday defended his recent remarks on the term "Miyan," saying his position is based on observations made by the Supreme Court of India and not driven by political rhetoric or communal bias.

In a post on X, Sarma said critics of his comments should refer to what the apex court has stated in the past regarding Assam and the issue of illegal migration.

He clarified that the term is used in Assam in the context of Bangladeshi Muslim illegal migration and asserted that his remarks were in line with concerns previously expressed by the judiciary.

Quoting from Supreme Court observations, Sarma referred to the court's warning about what it described as a "silent and invidious demographic invasion of Assam."

He said the court had cautioned that unchecked illegal migration could result in the loss of geostrategically important districts of lower Assam.

According to the Chief Minister, the court had observed that a continuous

influx of illegal migrants could alter the demographic balance in certain districts, potentially leading to demands for their merger with Bangladesh.

Such a development, he said, could isolate the Northeast from the rest of India and pose risks to the country's territorial integrity and natural resources.

Sarma argued that when the country's highest constitutional court uses expressions such as "demographic invasion" and warns of threats to national unity, acknowledging those concerns should not be branded as hatred, communalism, or an attack on any particular community. He maintained that illegal migration is a long-standing and serious issue that Assam has grappled with for decades.

The Chief Minister further stressed that the state government's actions are not aimed at any religion or Indian citizens. Instead, he said, the focus is on protecting Assam's identity, security and future, in line with judicial observations.

Ignoring such warnings, he added, would amount to a greater injustice to both Assam and the nation.

TYCM serves ultimatum over non-functioning of tribal girls' hostel

Imphal, Jan 29: The Tribal Youth Council Manipur (TYCM), Council Headquarters, has served an ultimatum to the Governor of Manipur, Chief Secretary, Addl. Chief Secretary, Tribal Affairs & Hills Department, Government of Manipur, Chairperson, Manipur State Commission for Scheduled Tribes (MSCST), and the Director, Tribal Affairs & Hills Department, Manipur, for the commencement of the functioning of the Tribal Girls' Hostel at Old Lambulane, Imphal, on or before February 28. According to a press release of TYCM, the entire Tribal Girls' Hostel located at Old Lambulane, Imphal was occupied by the para-military forces since May 3, 2023, following the outbreak of the ethnic clash in Manipur. The organisation had demanded the Government of Manipur to remove the para-military forces from the Tribal Girls' Hostel. After due consideration, the Government of Manipur removed the para-military forces from

the premises of the Tribal Girls' Hostel on September 29, 2025. After the para-military forces were removed from the premises of the Tribal Girls' Hostel, the TYCM-Women & Child Wing submitted appeals to the Director, Tribal Affairs & Hills Department, Manipur on October 28, 2025 and to the Additional Chief Secretary, Tribal Affairs & Hills Department, Government of Manipur on December 19, 2025, requesting the commencement of the functioning of the Tribal Girls' Hostel to resolve the inconvenience faced by tribal girl students of Manipur. However, the concerned authorities of the Tribal Affairs & Hills Department, Manipur have not commenced the functioning of the said hostel till date. Such non-commencement of the functioning of the Tribal Girls' Hostel clearly amounts to a violation of the right to education, it said. The tribal girl students from far-flung and remote areas are staying in rented houses in Imphal, tirelessly paying rent.



The parents of these students struggle to support and sponsor their children's education while also struggling to manage their families and sustain their day-to-day livelihood through paddy cultivation. With the commencement of the new academic session in the coming New Year, these tribal girl students from far-flung and remote areas will again have to stay in rented houses in Imphal, continuing to bear the financial and logistical burden.

If the said Tribal Girls' Hostel does not function for tribal

girl students from far-flung and remote areas, the very purpose of the hostel becomes meaningless, the organisation said. As no positive action was taken by the authorities of the Tribal Affairs & Hills Department, Government of Manipur, despite repeated appeals, the Tribal Youth Council Manipur (TYCM), Council Headquarters, filed a complaint before the Chairperson, Manipur State Commission for Scheduled Tribes (MSCST), on January 6, 2026, seeking necessary instructions and directions to the concerned authorities for the commencement of the Tribal Girls' Hostel at Old Lambulane, Imphal, at the earliest. However, the concerned authorities have not taken any positive action till date, even though four months has been completed, it said. If the Government of Manipur does not take positive action within the stipulated time given, the TYCM-CHQ will be compelled to resort to democratic forms of agitation, it cautioned.

NE/EAST

Cong is expected to suffer a “bad defeat” in the Assam elections: CM Sarma

Guwahati, Jan 29: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, on Wednesday, launched a sharp political attack on the Congress and State Congress President Gaurav Gogoi, asserting that the party would face a “very bad defeat” in the upcoming state Assembly elections and would not even secure the position of the principal Opposition in the state.

Speaking to reporters, Chief Minister Sarma claimed that the Congress today survives only on the support of a “particular section of voters” and has lost its wider acceptability among the people of Assam. “The people of Assam will once again vote decisively in favour of the BJP. The public will not allow the BJP to sit in the Opposition,” the Chief Minister said, expressing confidence about the ruling party’s prospects in the upcoming state polls. Targeting Gaurav Gogoi, Chief Minister Sarma alleged that the Congress leader has no real sense of responsibility towards Assam and Assamese society. “Gaurav Gogoi has no emotional or political commitment to Assam or its people,” he said, adding that Gogoi’s aspirations would be fulfilled “in Pakistan and not in Assam”, a remark that has been part of an ongoing war of words between the BJP and Congress in the state. The Chief Minister also questioned Gogoi’s understanding of Assam’s geography and politics, particularly in Upper Assam.

Chief Minister Sarma claimed that Gogoi could not correctly name the Assembly constituencies of Upper Assam and accused him of making inaccurate statements about the number



of seats in the region. “There are 42 Assembly seats in Upper Assam, but Gaurav Gogoi has publicly said that there are 50. This itself exposes his lack of knowledge about the state he wants to lead,” CM Sarma said. He also made a personal attack, alleging that three members of Gogoi’s family are “foreigners”, without elaborating further, and said such issues raise serious questions about the Congress leader’s credi-

bility. Reiterating his confidence in the BJP’s governance record, CM Sarma said the people of Assam have seen development, stability and decisive leadership under the BJP government’s leadership in the state and would reject the Congress decisively in 2026.

“The mood of the people is clear. Assam will once again give a strong mandate to the BJP,” the Chief Minister added.

An ISIS warning poster from Garos appears in Tura

Shillong, Jan 29: Meghalaya Police have initiated an investigation after a provocative poster, purportedly pasted by Islamic terrorists surfaced in Tura warning the indigenous Garo communities residing in the plain belt areas of Garo Hills to vacate the areas, triggering concerns over attempts to disturb communal harmony.

The poster purportedly issued in the name of ISIS-K and attributed to an individual identifying himself as Aminur Islam, described as a “Plain Belt Area Commander” was found pasted on an electric pole near the New Tura Matchakolgre Field under West Garo Hills district on Wednesday morning. A police official said the poster contained a message titled “Warning to Garos”, threatening members of the Garo community and warning them to vacate certain areas of West Garo Hills, including both hill and plain belt regions, by the year 2027. The message claimed that Garos residing in Tura, Phulbari, Rajabala, Tikrikilla, Selsella and Garobadha must leave the area before 2027. “The incident appeared to be a deliberate attempt by unidentified individuals or groups to create fear and disrupt law and order,” Abraham Sangma, the district police chief of West Garo Hills. Police have registered a case at Aramile Police station, and investigation is underway to identify those behind the pasting and circulation of the poster.

“Strict legal action will be taken against anyone found involved in spreading panic



or communal disharmony,” Sangma assured. Meanwhile, police have appealed to the public to remain calm, avoid spreading rumours or unverified information, and cooperate with the investigation as it progresses. Senior Cabinet Minister Marcuise N Marak has strongly condemned a poster warning Garos to vacate their land. “Meghalaya has always stood for harmony, mutual respect, and unity among all communities, irrespective of religion or caste, and we remain firmly committed to these values. Such attempts to spread fear and division have no place in our society,” he said. Marak assured that the district administration of West Garo Hills has been informed and is on the job to take action against those responsible.

Nagaland: FPV drone training underway at Drone Centre of Excellence



Imphal, Jan 29: A 14-day First Person View (FPV) Drone Training Programme, organised by the Nagaland GIS & Remote Sensing Centre (NGISRSC) through its Drone School – Drone Centre of Excellence, commenced on January 27, 2026, under the Nagaland Skill & Entrepreneurship Development Mission (NSEDMD) at Kohima. According to DIPR, the training aims to equip participants with high-precision piloting skills and immersive control techniques essential for real-world drone applications. Ten selected candidates are undergoing the intensive module, which includes FPV drone assembly, simulator-based flight training, live operations, aerial manoeuvring, safety protocols and basic troubleshooting. On successful com-

pletion, trainees will be awarded a Certificate of Completion, certifying their proficiency and readiness for entry-level drone operations and services. Droneverse Aviation Pvt.

Ltd., the Industry Partner for NGISRSC, will provide placement support along with practical exposure in drone-based service sectors. Officials informed that the initiative marks a significant step in the State’s broader strategy to empower youth, create technology-driven livelihood opportunities and build a robust drone ecosystem. The FPV training also complements upcoming DGCA-certified Remote Pilot Courses and other specialised non-DGCA modules in drone maintenance and sector-specific operations.

CoTU suspends bandh on NHs hours after NPO imposes counter-blockade

Guwahati, Jan 29: Tensions in parts of Manipur’s hill districts eased on Wednesday after total bandh on national highways by Committee on Tribal Unity (CoTU) was lifted hours after a counter-blockade bandh was imposed by Naga People’s Organisation (NPO). It may be recalled that tensions were running high in Kangpokpi district after the burning of some structures belonging to the Kuki tribe in Waphong area under Sadar Hills region of the district on January 26. Kuki based CSOs claimed torching of K Songlung Part II village by armed cadres of ZUF(S Kamson). However, the armed faction rejected the claim, linking the arson incident to illicit poppy cultivation despite repeated warnings. The controversy deepened when Foot-hills Naga Co-ordination Committee (FNCC) described K Songlung as “an illegal self-style village”. Amid the claims and counter-claims, the Kangpokpi based Committee on Tribal Unity (CoTU) imposed 24-hour total bandh on Wednesday, severely affecting normal vehicular movement along AH-2 (Imphal-Dimapur section) and NH-37 (Imphal-Jiribam section). The CoTU imposed the bandh which commenced from last midnight in protest against the government’s inaction in arresting members of the ZUF-S Kamson group accused of setting K Songlung village.

Supporting the bandh, protesters came out and blocked vehicular movement along the national highways, causing severe inconvenience to the residents of Naga dominated Senapati district, particularly those commuters travelling to Imphal for medical treatment and flight-related



purposes. Terming the shutdown condemnable and irresponsible, the Naga People’s Organisation (NPO) imposed a counter-blockade along the national highways with immediate effect which led to the escalation of the tension. The organization alleged the imposition of the bandh reflected disregard for public welfare as the CoTU went ahead with its stir despite a joint appeal for restraint by the United Naga Council (UNC) and the Kuki Inpi Manipur (KIM) earlier. The NPO urged authorities to ensure the safety and free movement of the public and appealed to people to maintain discipline and unity during the period. The escalating tension however showed signs of easing following CoTU’s reported announcement on the suspension of the bandh with immediate effect in the afternoon. A statement of the CoTU widely circulat-

ed on the internet stated that it has decided to suspend the stir following a positive assurance from the concerned authorities. It, however, did not give further details. In the statement, the CoTU also appreciated the support extended by the general public, church leaders and various civil organisations during the bandh. The committee added that it decided to reconsider the stir after detailed discussions and deliberation with its stakeholders on the joint declaration issued by the United Naga Council (UNC) and the Kuki Inpi Manipur (KIM) on January 27, calling for amicable dialogue. CoTU unanimously resolved to uphold the decision of the two tribal apex bodies in the interest of maintaining cordial relations between the two communities, and accordingly suspended the stir with immediate effect, it added.

Congress now led by pro-Pakistan elements, indigenous leaders

Guwahati, Jan 29: The Assam unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Thursday, January 29, strongly criticised Congress, alleging that the party in the state is being steered by what it described as “pro-Pakistan elements” and has drifted away from the interests of Assam’s indigenous communities. Addressing a press conference at the Assam Pradesh BJP headquarters, Atal Bihari Vajpayee Bhawan, state BJP spokesperson Kamal Kumar Medhi accused senior Congress leaders Gaurav Gogoi and Rakibul Hussain of harbouring pro-Pakistan leanings and conspiring to marginalise indigenous Assamese communities for electoral gains.

Medhi alleged that Gaurav Gogoi had links with Pakistan, while claiming that Rakibul Hussain inherited pro-Pakistan sentiments from his father, Nurul Hussain, whom he accused of being a volunteer of the Muslim League during the pre-Independence period. According to Medhi, Nurul Hussain had allegedly campaigned for Muhammad Ali Jinnah and hoisted the Pakistani flag at his residence.

Today, Gaurav Gogoi and Rakibul Hussain are together attempting to fulfil the unfinished agenda of the erstwhile Muslim League,” Medhi claimed, asserting that under their leadership, the Congress no longer prioritises the interests of Assam or its indigenous people. The BJP spokesperson further alleged that

the two Congress leaders were aligning with what he termed “aggressive migrant Miya Muslims” and accused them of orchestrating a long-term political conspiracy. Medhi claimed that elections were merely being used as a tool to implement an agenda in Miya-dominated constituencies, leading to what he described as the Congress being transformed into a “Miya-centric party.” He went on to allege that this political alignment

posed a threat to indigenous communities and people of Indian origin, accusing the Congress leadership of attempting to suppress them through communal polarisation and targeted mobilisation. Issuing a direct appeal, Medhi urged all indigenous, patriotic, and Assam-loving individuals within the Congress to sever ties with the party. “No person who truly loves Assam and its people should

remain associated with the Congress any longer,” he said, calling upon such leaders and workers to dedicate themselves to the protection of “Mother Assam.” Highlighting internal party dynamics, Medhi claimed that of the 720 applications received by the Congress for tickets in the upcoming Assam Assembly elections, more than 600 were submitted by candidates from a single, unnamed community. He further asserted that if current trends continue, the next Assam Legislative Assembly would not have a single Congress MLA from indigenous or Indian-origin communities



Nagaland: Convergence is the theme of the KVK SAC meeting

Dimapur, Jan 29: The Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) meeting of ICAR-KVK Dimapur and ICAR-KVK Kiphire was held on January 28 at the ICAR Regional Centre, Nagaland, with Mhathung Yanthan, advisor of Agriculture as the chief guest. The meeting was attended by senior officials including Limanenla, Joint Secretary, Government of Nagaland; Sanuzo Nienu, Director, Agriculture; Dr. A.K. Mohanty, Director, ICAR-ATARI VII; Dr. Girish Patil S, Director, ICAR-NRC on Mithun; Prof. Pauline Alila, Dean, SAS, Nagaland University; and James Suw, ADC, Medziphema. Welcoming the gathering, Dr. H. Kalita, Head of Regional Station, ICAR Research Complex for NEH Region, Nagaland Centre, Medziphema, reiterated KVK’s mandate of promoting sustainable farming practices at the grassroots level. On the occasion, three technical bulletins and a newsletter were released by chief guest Mhathung Yanthan. Yanthan emphasized the importance of climate-resilient technologies, interdisciplinary collaboration, and rural entrepreneurship development, particularly for women-led SHGs. Addressing the meeting, Dr. A.K. Mohanty highlighted the need for convergence between departments



to better serve farmers in Nagaland. The meeting was attended by officials from SAS and key line departments including Agriculture (DAO), Horticulture (DHO), Veterinary & Animal Husbandry (Deputy CVO), Forestry (DFO), and Fisheries, alongside 60 participants, including six progressive farmers from Dimapur and Kiphire. Reports on the implementation of recommendations from the previous SAC meeting, achievements of the KVKs, and progress for 2025 were presented by Dr. Phool Kumari, Senior Scientist & Head, ICAR-

KVK Dimapur, and Dr. Lahar Jyoti Bordoloi, Senior Scientist & Head, ICAR-KVK Kiphire. Dr. Bendangla Imsong, CTO, Plant Breeding, KVK Dimapur, along with Subject Matter Specialists of KVK Kiphire, outlined achievements and proposed the action plan for 2026. During the interactive session, officials underscored the crucial role of KVKs in addressing farmers’ challenges through scientific interventions and stressed the importance of interdepartmental collaboration to foster inclusive agricultural development in the region.

1st Manipur Digital Media Conclave held, awards presented

Imphal, Jan 29: Beyond Silence: 1st Manipur Digital Media Conclave 2026, was organised today at Sangai Hall, Hotel Imphal, by Manipur Update. On the occasion, Digital Journalism Awards 2026 were presented. Speaking as the Chief Guest of the function, Ahanthem Subash Singh, Director, Directorate of Information and Public Relations (DIPR), Government of Manipur, stated that journalism in the present day is no longer confined to the printing press. He asserted that digital journalism has enabled news to be disseminated globally with ease. He said that producing fast, fact-based, and responsible reporting has become a major challenge in the digital age, as digital media holds significant influence in shaping public perception. A. Subash Singh pointed out concerns over whether some individuals identifying as digital journalists function primarily as content creators for monetisation. “Digital journalists should use the power available to them to produce genuine reporting and disseminate fact-based news, rather than working solely for likes or views on social media platforms”, he said. He emphasized that independent journalism is essential, particu-



larly at a time when paid news is increasingly being disseminated, and stated that journalists have a crucial role to play in countering such content and safeguarding the credibility of news. He also spoke about the adverse effects of unverified news, noting that such reporting can tarnish an individual's image and even cause mental distress. A. Subash Singh further shared his personal experiences, mentioning instances where positive news and government achievements were sometimes unpublished. Suggesting the introduction of a Journalism Award for coverage of useful government scheme that benefit the

public, he noted that such reporting will facilitate in raising public awareness about existing schemes and further expressed his willingness to sponsor the proposed award. Giving his address, Sobhapati Samom, Senior Journalist and Founding Editor, Manipur Update, spoke about the publication's initial stage as a magazine several years ago. He recalled how the introduction of television led to concerns that radio would become obsolete, and later, with the rise of the internet, both radio and print media were believed to be at risk. He added that the present era has now evolved into a rapidly

expanding digital age. Reflecting the DIPR's Tableau on the theme “Digital Responsibility for Social Stability and Harmony” showcased on Republic Day, he spoke in line with the theme and emphasized that with the growth of digital media, ensuring digital responsibility has emerged as one of the major challenges of the present time. Ngangom Uttam Singh, Joint Secretary, Tribal Affairs & Hills, Government of Manipur, noted that social media has become highly influential in the present time, with a large section of the public relying on it for information. He spoke about the dangers of irresponsible or unethical reporting, stating that unverified news can cause harm to individuals, society, departments, and even the government as a whole. He added that while journalism has the potential to create significant positive impact, mistakes and misinformation can result in serious consequences. Irengbam Arun, Senior Editor and Jury Member of the function, stated that a large number of promising entries were received for the Digital Journalism Awards at the conclave, and added that with proper guidance and mentorship, such digital journalists have the potential to further improve and set higher standards in the field.

Sunbird Trust team visits IDP camp, reaffirms support

Imphal, Jan 29: A team from Sunbird Trust, led by its founders Col Christopher Rego (Retd) and Myrna Rego, visited the IDP camp at Ideal Girls' College, Akampat for a meeting jointly organised by Akampat Relief Camp Committee and the NGO. In partnership with NTT Data, Sunbird Trust currently facilitates educational scholarships for over 500 IDP students, including 182 students from the Akampat camp. More than 150 parents and children attended the interaction. Col Lokendra Singh (Retd), Ningthoujam Samananda Singh (Convenor) Relief Camp, L Inaocha Meetei (Chairman COPMEV) and N Pulindro Singh (Advisor MCM) and others associated with welfare activities for internally displaced persons were also present. During the meeting, team members engaged closely with parents and students, attentively listening to their concerns and suggestions. Many parents expressed deep appreciation for the financial assistance being provided, noting the positive impact it had on their children's education. Some parents requested additional support, particularly for tuition fees for Class 10 students, as well as for vocational training opportunities. Addressing the gathering, Col Christopher Rego (Retd), Founder of Sunbird Trust, empathized with the hardships faced by displaced families. He highlighted that Sunbird Trust has been working in Mani-

pur for over a decade and reaffirmed the organization's commitment to supporting children for the long term. He assured the audience that team members would visit the camp regularly to better understand individual challenges and work towards resolving students' academic difficulties. Myrna Rego expressed her pride in sharing that eight students who were previously sponsored by Sunbird Trust—including two present at the event—had, after completing their graduation and post-graduation, become full-fledged members of the Sunbird Trust team. The two students shared their personal testimonies, describing how the Trust's support had positively transformed their lives. Col Lokendra Singh (Retd) deeply appreciated the work of the Sunbird Trust team, stating that he was amazed by the dedication of individuals who had travelled from far away to support the affected persons in Manipur during such a challenging period. He encouraged the students to make the most of the opportunities made available to them. It may be noted that Sunbird Trust has been at the forefront of relief efforts since the onset of the conflict, providing essential supplies to IDP camps across the region. These include dry rations, thermal clothing, play materials, stationery for students, blankets, emergency lamps, sanitary pads, baby diapers, and nutritional supplements for infants.

Governor graces 1st convocation of Manipur Technical University

Imphal, Jan 29: Governor of Manipur, Ajay Kumar Bhalla, who is also the Chancellor, presided over the 1st Convocation of Manipur Technical University (MTU). Held at the City Convention Centre, the convocation marked the first such ceremony of the University since its establishment in 2016. Prof. W. Chandbabu Singh, Vice-Chancellor (Hr. & Tech. Education), Government of Manipur; and Ramananda Nongmeikapam, Registrar, MTU, also graced the occasion. The Governor formally declared the convocation open and conferred degrees upon undergraduate and postgraduate students

from various streams for the academic years 2020 to 2025, with over 250 students in attendance. Addressing the convocation, Governor Bhalla congratulated the graduating students and said the convocation was a moment of pride and energy. Reflecting on the addresses delivered at the ceremony, he highlighted the importance of resilience, discipline, and hard work, emphasising that there are no shortcuts to success at any stage of life. The Governor encouraged graduates to remain open to diverse career paths beyond government service, including entrepreneurship and emerging professions, while underscoring the need for integrity and perseverance in all pursuits. Stressing that students, faculty, and institutional



discipline together shape a university's reputation, the Governor urged the institution to aspire to national prominence through quality education, research, innovation, and market-oriented courses aligned with the National Education Policy. The Governor concluded by reminding graduates of their responsibility to give back to society and use their knowledge to uplift others, while commending the Vice-Chancellor for ensuring that convocations were held on time, including the successful conduct of long-pending convocations. The convocation ceremony was attended by graduating students and their parents, senior government officials, members of the academic fraternity, and other distinguished guests.

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Assam Petro, Deendayal Port Ink e-Methanol Deal

Dibrugarh, Jan 29: In a landmark move for India's green energy landscape, Assam Petro-Chemicals Ltd (APL) and Deendayal Port Authority (DPA) have entered into a strategic partnership to establish a cutting-edge 150 TPD e-Methanol plant at Kandla Port, Gujarat. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed in the presence of Union Minister for Ports, Shipping & Waterways, Sarbananda Sonowal, and Assam Chief Minister, Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma. This ambitious project involves a capital investment exceeding ₹1,200 crore and is expected to catalyze the local economy

by creating approximately 3,500 direct and indirect jobs. E-methanol, or electro-methanol, represents a breakthrough in sustainable fuel; it is produced by combining green hydrogen with captured \$CO_2\$ using renewable power. As a low-carbon alternative, it is essential for decarbonizing “hard-to-abate” sectors like heavy industry and long-haul maritime shipping. Under the agreement, DPA will provide the specialized pipeline connectivity and storage infrastructure at Kandla, while APL leverages its decades of production expertise to manage the facility. This synergy transforms Kand-

la Port into a premier Green Bunkering Hub, strategically positioned to supply international trade routes, including the critical Singapore-Rotterdam corridor. Union Minister Sonowal emphasized that this collaboration is a vital pillar of the National Green Hydrogen Mission and a giant leap toward the Prime Minister's Net Zero 2070 vision. By integrating Assam's industrial strength with Gujarat's maritime infrastructure, the initiative bolsters the “Methanol Economy” and reinforces the Aatmanirbhar Bharat mission, positioning India as a global leader in green marine fuel production.

Togadia Calls for ‘Decisive Action’ And DNA Test

Bongaigaon, Jan 29: Antar Rashtriya Hindu Parishad leader Dr Pravin Bhai Togadia on Thursday called for what he termed “decisive action” against alleged illegal immigration from Bangladesh, urging the Assam government to take strong steps ahead of the upcoming Assembly elections. Speaking to reporters after attending a workers' conference organised by the Antar

Rashtriya Hindu Parishad and Rashtriya Bajrang Dal units of Bongaigaon and Chirang districts at Abhayapuri Kala Parishad Bhawan, Togadia made a series of remarks focused on the issue of suspected undocumented migrants in the state. He appealed to Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma to conduct DNA tests on what he claimed were “50 lakh illegal Bangladeshis”

living in Assam and to deport them to Dhaka before the Assembly polls. Drawing on Assam's history, Togadia invoked the legacy of Ahom general Lachit Borphukan's resistance against Mughal forces, urging the Chief Minister to take similarly firm action to “drive out” illegal immigrants. Togadia also linked the matter to the ongoing electoral process, asserting that

if the alleged undocumented migrants were deported, there would be no need for the Special Revision (SR) of electoral rolls currently underway in the state.

His remarks come at a time of heightened political debate in Assam over immigration, voter verification and demographic issues, which are expected to remain key themes in the run-up to the elections.

Assam CM: “Gaurav Gogoi, Pakistani Agent”

Guwahati Jan 29: Tensions ahead of the 2026 Assam Assembly elections reached a boiling point today as Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma launched a blistering attack on Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi. Speaking in Teok, Sarma alleged that Gogoi is a “Pakistani agent” and challenged the MP to take legal action if the claims were false, promising to release “supporting details” in February. The Chief Minister also hinted at an early election



schedule, possibly before Bohag Bihu, emphasizing that BJP ticket priority would go to long-term grassroots workers over recent joiners. Simultaneously, at BJP headquarters, spokesperson Kamal Kumar Medhi echoed these sentiments, accusing senior Congress lead-

ers of harboring “pro-Pakistan leanings” and aligning with migrant communities to marginalize indigenous interests. Medhi further alleged that the Congress has become a “Miya-centric party,” claiming over 600 of their 720 ticket applications come from a single community. Sarma's remarks, which included swipes at regional leaders Akhil Gogoi and Lurinjyoti Gogoi, signal a hyper-polarized campaign trail as the state moves toward the polls.

SFs apprehend two KCP (City Meitei) cadres

Imphal, Jan 29: Manipur Police arrested an active cadre of KCP (City Meitei), namely Longjam Nelson Singh @ Thoiba (22) of Thangmeiband Hijam Dewan Leikai, Imphal West district, from his locality under Lamphel Police Station in Imphal West district yesterday. On the same day, security forces arrested an active cadre of KCP (City Meitei), identified as Nongthombam Isingchaoba Singh (19) @ Kondum of Wangkhei Wangkheimayum Leirak, Imphal East district, from Kongba Laishram Leikai Heinoubon, under Porompat Police Station in Imphal East district. On the other hand, Manipur Police arrested two vehicle lifters from Kanglapat area, under Imphal Police Station in Imphal West district. They have been identified as K. Rob-



ert (24) of Awang Khunou Mayai Leikai, and Md. Tomba (24) of Yairipok Phouden. A two-wheeler vehicle, a red TVS Centra bearing

Regd. No. AS-01-AA-4095 which the duo had stolen earlier in the day from Kakhulong area was recovered from them at the spot.

Wall painting competition promotes road safety in Churachandpur

Imphal, Jan 29: As part of the ongoing National Road Safety Month, the Churachandpur District Administration organised a wall painting competition on the theme “Road Safety”, engaging students from five schools in a creative campaign to promote safe driving practices. The competition, coordinated by the Zonal Education Officer and the CEO of the Autonomous District Council, Churachandpur, was held at Young Learners School, Children Training High School, Don Bosco Higher Secondary School, Chinkham Modern High School, and Sielmat Christian Higher Secondary School. Additional Deputy Commissioner Lalrobol Fimate, accompanied by Esther Chingneikim, ZEO, inspected the event and commended the students for their creativity. Using vibrant colours and imaginative designs, the young participants conveyed powerful messages on obeying traffic regulations, wearing seat belts, avoiding alcohol consumption while driving, and steering clear of distractions. Fimate praised the students' efforts, noting that their creativity could inspire broader community awareness. He encouraged them to carry the message of road safety into their homes and neighbourhoods, making it a collective responsibility. In alignment with the national initiative, the district has also rolled out a series of complementary activities across Churachandpur. Road safety drives are being conducted at multiple loca-



tions under the supervision of the Superintendent of Police and the Traffic Control Wing. These drives combine frisking operations with on-the-spot awareness sessions, focusing particularly on the importance of wearing helmets and adhering to the provisions of the Motor Vehicles Act. Educational institutions organise essay and quiz competitions, encouraging students to engage with the theme of road safety and deepen their understanding of traffic norms. Meanwhile, the district has opened a short film contest to the general public, inviting submissions of ten-minute films centered on road safety. Winning entries will be selected by the District Administration, further amplifying the message through creative storytelling. The District Transport Officer has been tasked with overseeing the entire campaign, ensuring smooth coordination among departments and effective execution of each activity.

Awareness programme on EMF radiation, cyber security conducted

Imphal, Jan 29: A one-day awareness programme on “EMF Radiation: Facts & Myths and Cyber Security and Citizen-Centric Services” was held today at the Conference Hall of the Mini Secretariat Complex, Bishnupur. During the programme, officers from the Department of Telecommunication (DoT), Manipur State Unit, Northeast Licensed Service Area, along with Sanchar Mitra, delivered detailed PowerPoint presentations on various important topics.

These included problems of cyber-crime through telecom services, the Digital Intelligence Platform (DIP), AI and facial recognition-powered solutions for telecom SIM subscriber verification (ASTR), AI-based and other tools for detecting fraudulent cases, prevention of international spoof calls, prevention and reporting of cyber fraud, Sanchar Saathi Portal, Know Your Mobile (KYM), Chakshu, and the



importance of Central Equipment Identity Register (CEIR), among others. It was highlighted that in case of any cyber-crime or cyber fraud, complaints can be registered by calling the national helpline number 1930 or through the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal. Deputy Commissioner Bishnupur, Pooja Elangbam, who also attended the programme, stressed the importance of remaining vigilant at all times, especially as offices increasingly use multiple online devices in their day-to-day work.

She urged the officers present to spread awareness at the community level to help prevent cyber-related incidents and expressed her appreciation to the Department of Telecommunication team for taking such an important initiative. The programme aimed to enhance awareness, strengthen cyber preparedness, and promote safe and informed use of digital and telecom services was organised by Sub-Divisional Officers (SDOs) and District Level Officers of Bishnupur district.

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Medicine for All: India’s Moral Imperative

In a nation where millions still slip into poverty due to medical expenses, affordable medicines are not a luxury—they are a fundamental right. India’s health-care crisis demands urgent reform. The current reality is stark. Life-saving drugs remain beyond reach for vast segments of our population. A diabetic patient skips insulin doses to stretch their supply. Cancer patients abandon treatment mid-course because they cannot afford the next cycle. These are not isolated tragedies but systemic failures. India, the pharmacy of the world, exports generic medicines globally yet struggles to ensure its own citizens can access them. The irony is bitter. While we manufacture affordable drugs for international markets, domestic prices often remain prohibitively high due to patent protections, inadequate price controls, and distribution inefficiencies. The solution requires political will. Strengthening the generic medicine framework, implementing stricter price caps, expanding Jan Aushadhi Kendras, and ensuring insurance coverage for essential drugs are achievable goals. Other nations have demonstrated that universal medicine access is possible without crippling pharmaceutical innovation. Health is the foundation of human dignity and national prosperity. Until every Indian can afford the medicines they need, we have failed our constitutional promise of justice and equality. The time for action is now. (DB)

Healing the Nation: The Case for Affordable Medicines

In a country where millions live below the poverty line, access to affordable medicines isn’t a luxury—it’s a fundamental right. Yet countless Indian families face an impossible choice: purchase life-saving drugs or feed their children. The current pharmaceutical pricing system creates a stark divide. While India manufactures generic medications for the world, many citizens cannot afford treatments for diabetes, cancer, or heart disease. A single course of chemotherapy can devastate a middle-class family’s savings, pushing them into poverty. Government intervention through price caps on essential medicines has shown promise, but coverage remains inadequate. We need comprehensive reforms: expanding the National List of Essential Medicines, strengthening price regulation, and increasing public healthcare funding. The Jan Aushadhi scheme demonstrates that quality generic medicines can be provided at affordable rates. Healthcare is not a commodity but a social responsibility. When citizens die from treatable conditions due to cost barriers, we fail as a nation. Universal access to affordable medicines would boost productivity, reduce poverty, and honor the constitutional promise of dignity for all. The prescription is clear: medicines must reach every Indian, regardless of their economic status. A healthy nation is a prosperous nation. (DB)

The UAP incident shows systemic erosion of academic integrity

Academic freedom—the right to teach, study, pursue knowledge or research without unreasonable interference—is often perceived through a narrow lens in our country. The dismissal or silencing of a teacher practising this right, often has much deeper and potentially dangerous implications. When academic freedom is attacked in one place, it sends a message far beyond the individual concerned. If one teacher can be punished, cornered, or publicly humiliated, it becomes a warning to thousands of others. The damage, then, is not individual; it is systemic. In Bangladesh, political, economic, social, and cultural forces frequently converge to create an increasingly hostile environment for teachers, researchers, and students alike. Traditionally, the gravest threat to academic freedom comes from the state. When governments restrict dissent, criminalise speech, or politicise education, academic life becomes fragile. Bangladesh experienced this acutely during Sheikh Hasina’s rule, when teachers were jailed, harassed under the Digital Security Act, 2018, subjected to surveillance and intimidation simply for expressing opinions or criticising injustice. Speaking out—whether inside or outside the classroom—became a high-risk act. However, state repression is only one part of the picture. Neoliberal capitalism has also played a decisive role. Since education has been commodified and reduced to a form of skill training, disciplines that are not immediately “marketable”—promising immediate lucrative job opportunities—have come under pressure. Subjects that encourage critical thinking, social analysis, or dissent are increasingly seen as unproductive or even dangerous. Over time, this creates a social perception that certain disciplines—and by extension, their teachers—are dispensable. The freedom to teach, research, and even attract students gradually erodes. This is compounded by the rise of social and cultural authoritarianism. When decisions about what should be taught, who should teach, and who should study are influenced not by academic standards but by religious sentiment, political allegiance, or pressure from organised groups, academic integrity collapses. Universities cease to be spaces that promote inquisitiveness and become battlegrounds for moral policing and ideological



control. The consequences of this erosion are not confined to higher education. When academic freedom is damaged at the tertiary level, its effects trickle downwards—to secondary, primary, and even pre-primary education. Fear, conformity, and self-censorship become normalised across the entire education system. However, academic freedom is not destroyed only by dismissals of teachers. There are many quieter, bureaucratic ways to strangle it. In South Asia, we inherited colonial legal and administrative structures, including the University Grants Commission (UGC) model, which continues to enable excessive control over universities. These structures, combined with neoliberal “quality assurance” frameworks shaped by international financial and development institutions, often force knowledge into narrow, standardised moulds. Under the guise of maintaining quality, they limit intellectual diversity and autonomy. At the institutional level, pressures are both overt and subtle. Teachers may be told what they can or cannot teach. More commonly, they are punished for being vocal against injustice in society or governance failures—activities that may not be part of their formal academic duties but are inseparable from the role of

an academic. Over the past 15–16 years, we have seen teachers being imprisoned, sued, and harassed for expressing opinions. Some have been repeatedly remanded, their dignity and security systematically stripped away. In extreme cases, academic freedom has been met with outright violence. The enforced disappearance of researcher Mubashar Hasan because of his research topic represents one of the most brutal assaults on academic inquiry imaginable. Others have lost their jobs, faced politically motivated cases, or endured physical attacks. There have been instances where progressive teachers and writers were hacked to death in the past. Students, too, have been targeted—arrested, detained, and prosecuted simply for expressing views. There are also less visible forms of coercion. Administrative systems are often designed to wear teachers down by delaying promotions, denying leave, manipulating housing, and creating an atmosphere in which survival depends on obedience. This breeds self-censorship, where conformity becomes a strategy for safety. While these patterns were stark during the Awami League era, the situation has not improved since. What has changed is the nature of the perpetrators. Academic

freedom is no longer violated only by the state or university administrations. Increasingly, students, alumni, and sections of the general public are engaging in intimidation, harassment, and physical aggression against teachers. Elected student representatives have stormed offices, threatened administrators, and publicly humiliated faculty members. Sometimes, teachers have been obstructed from teaching certain subjects. Online spaces have become arenas of relentless cyberbullying, misinformation, and character assassination. Academics are routinely delegitimised through coordinated hate campaigns that twist words and fabricate allegations. This climate has led to a disturbing conclusion: academic freedom in Bangladesh is virtually non-existent. However, at this point, it is also crucial to clarify what academic freedom does not mean. It does not protect hate speech, incitement to violence, or actions that endanger the lives and freedoms of others. Such acts fall outside the bounds of academic freedom and must be addressed through due process. The absence of due process is, in fact, one of the most damaging aspects of the current crisis. Over the past 17 months, we have repeatedly seen instant punishment being meted out

based on mere accusations and mob pressure, without investigation or accountability. When due process collapses, no one—teacher, student, or administrator—has real rights. Besides, trust between teachers and students, which is central to any functioning classroom, disintegrates. This breakdown has been actively encouraged. Violence, intimidation, and humiliation have gone unchecked, sometimes even tacitly endorsed by the highest authorities. As a result, fear has become the organising principle of academic life. The termination of Layeqa Bashir and ASM Mohsin at the University of Asia Pacific (UAP) must be seen in this context. This was not an isolated incident but the culmination of 17 months of unchecked violations of academic freedom and due process. The spectacle of mobs forcing administrative decisions without investigation sets a terrifying precedent. By allowing this to happen, the UAP has inflicted lasting damage on its own credibility. Many teachers may now choose to leave this profession, recognising that their rights are unprotected and that university administrations are either unwilling or incapable of acting as administrators at all.

This problem extends far beyond one university. From Chattogram to Rajshahi, from Jahangirnagar to Dhaka University, and across numerous private universities, the pattern is the same. Student groups linked to political organisations have simply replaced earlier political actors, who once gagged academic freedom on campuses. University administrations, the UGC, and the Ministry of Education all bear responsibility. In the case of UAP, the UGC was informed early and urged to intervene, but they failed to act. This inaction has contributed directly to the deterioration of academic freedom at a moment when, after the July uprising, many hoped for meaningful change. Instead of qualitative improvement, we are witnessing qualitative decline. For institutions of higher learning, this is an ominous warning. If administrations cannot govern, they should step aside. Otherwise, universities will soon be run not by academic principles but by intimidation and mob influence. Academic freedom cannot survive in such conditions. And without academic freedom, universities lose their very reason for existence.

As the Taliban step up their war on women and girls, it is clear that appeasement has failed

Afghanistan’s Taliban government has now issued its most extreme edict yet. It is already the only regime in the world where girls are excluded from secondary education. Now it has gone further, debarring all Afghan women from any contact with schools or education and doubling down on what has been rightly condemned as “gender apartheid”. This latest wave of repression, which is likely to be classified by United Nations legal authorities as a crime against humanity, marks the victory of the extreme Kandahar clerical faction over Kabul-based government ministers. It is also the latest step in the plan of supreme leader Hibatullah Akhundzada to erase girls and women from public life. This new ruling exposes, too, the miscalculations and errors being made by foreign governments that, even as the regime has stepped up the suppression of women, have recently sought to rebuild diplomatic relations with the Taliban regime. Four-and-a-half years into the Taliban’s ascent to power, more children than ever are being denied education. A total of

2.2 million girls have been excluded from secondary education, and up to 2.3 million primary school-age children are no longer attending lessons. In successive edicts since 2021, women have now been banned from universities and most employment, including with the government and NGOs. They have been required to cover their faces, to be accompanied by male relatives for any long-distance travel, and have been warned they face arrest if seen in public spaces such as parks, gyms and beauty salons. This appeasement of the Taliban, led by Russia, China and India and followed by some European governments, has led Afghans’ religious rulers to believe they can act with impunity. December saw the arrest of a female journalist, Nazira Rashidi, in the northern city of Kunduz. Another young woman, Khadija Ahmadzada, was imprisoned in Herat for being in “violation” of rules by running a women’s sports gym and spent 13 days in jail until Richard Bennett, the United Nations special rapporteur on human rights in Afghanistan, successfully pressed for her release. Ben-



nett is warning that conditions for girls and women are deteriorating and that the Taliban’s newly issued criminal procedure code foreshadows even more violations of girls’ and women’s rights. The latest repression marks the triumph of Akhundzada, the supreme ruler, and has seen key government departments and functions, including the control of weapons, redirected from Kabul to Kandahar. While the Kabul faction acknowledges that the economy requires women’s participation and access to technology, Akhundzada has become increasingly de-

termined to impose a strict Islamic emirate, isolated from the modern world, where religious figures loyal to him control every aspect of society. His ideology is so rigid that he approved of his son’s choice to become a suicide bomber. He lost out – but only momentarily – when, within days of his 29 September order for a complete internet shutdown that would have severed Afghanistan’s links with the world and prevented girls from enjoying online education, he was defied by the Kabul-based telecommunications ministry, which switched the service

back on. But by December, as a UN monitoring team noted, Akhundzada’s consolidation of power had also involved “a continued buildup of security forces under the direct control of Kandahar”. Central to the latest repression are internal disagreements within the Taliban, not least about the future of education and women’s employment. Indeed, evidence compiled by the BBC includes a tape of Akhundzada from January 2025 warning that “as a result of these divisions, the emirate will collapse and end”. The rifts are significant. After warning publicly

of the regime “committing injustice against 20 million people” – the entire female population of the country – and saying the denial of education was “straying from the path of God”, Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai, the then-deputy foreign minister, had to flee the country. Russia became the first country to recognise the Taliban government and restore full diplomatic relations without securing any concessions on girls’ and women’s rights. China accepted the credentials of an ambassador from the Taliban regime in January 2024. India upgraded its ties with the regime, including by formally reopening its embassy in Kabul, and proclaimed that “the future of India-Afghanistan relations seems very bright”. European countries have increased engagement with the Taliban as part of a push to deport failed Afghan asylum seekers, lending credibility to the regime despite its persecution of girls and women. Yet the 59th session of the UN human rights council, held in June–July 2025, debated this matter, and Bennett, the UN special rapporteur, has per-

sistently advocated making girls’ rights a condition for engagement with the Taliban and devising mechanisms to hold the regime accountable, including referring the denial of education to the international criminal court (ICC). They want to make gender apartheid an international crime, and already the UN’s sixth committee (legal) has advanced a draft global treaty targeting the denial of girls’ and women’s rights as crimes against humanity. In July, the pre-trial chamber of the ICC issued arrest warrants for Akhundzada and Abdul Hakim Haqqani, the two most senior Taliban officials charged with gender-based persecution. But because of the Taliban’s refusal even to discuss girls’ rights, and their insistence on excluding women’s organisations from any talks, international negotiations held in Doha, hosted by the UN and Qatar, have secured no concessions on girls’ schooling or women’s rights. Whereas India, Iran and Russia backed forces that put the Taliban under real pressure in the 1990s, there is no organised armed anti-regime force within Afghanistan this

time. There is underground schooling in areas such as the Panjshir valley, where radio broadcasts cover everything from breastfeeding to basic school science lessons for women and girls. Girls also study in what are called “home schools”, or leave for Pakistan or Iran to continue their education abroad, even in the face of those countries’ repatriation of 2.6 million Afghan refugees in 2025. Some young women have recently come to Scotland on scholarships to study to become doctors. There is a good reason why a failure to educate girls will eventually bring down the regime: Afghanistan’s population has swelled to more than 43 million and is only growing, with a predicted 17.4 million people food-insecure by March and 4.9 million mothers and children suffering from malnutrition. But building an economy that will take millions from poverty to prosperity will be impossible so long as the Taliban deny half their population the chance to be educated and to join the workforce. That is their failure. If we are in any way sanguine about this medieval repression, that will be ours.

Economic Survey 2026, stock market: Why Sensex and Nifty are currently declining

New Delhi: Domestic equity benchmarks Sensex and Nifty were trading lower on Thursday, as investors awaited the Economic Survey 2026 for cues on what Budget 2026 may look like on February 1. The US Federal Reserve’s decision to keep interest rates unchanged in its policy review, along with the rupee tumbling to a record low of Rs 92, weighed on market sentiment. Investors chose to ignore positive reports on India-US trade deal negotiations. At 10.20 am, the BSE Sensex was trading at 81,767.69, down 576.99 points, or 0.70 per cent. The Nifty stood at 25,203.50, down 139.25 points, or 0.55 per cent. A total of 2,322 BSE-listed stocks declined, while 1,329 advanced. As many as 116 stocks hit their 52-week lows.Economic Survey 2026

Attention today is firmly on the Economic Survey 2025–26 at 11 am, which will guide expectations for the Union Budget on February 1, especially around capex, fiscal discipline, and policy support for infrastructure, defence, and manufacturing, said Ponmudi R, CEO at Enrich Money.“Cooling India VIX, stable domestic macros,



and banking sector strength offer downside support, keeping trade largely range-bound with selective stock-specific action,” he said.US Fed rate

The Federal Reserve has kept its target range for the federal funds rate at 3.5–3.75 per cent, reflecting a balanced view of inflation and employment risks. This pause follows three rate cuts in late 2025 “Markets are not factoring in any rate cut until Powell’s term ends in

PM Modi’s message to manufacturers ‘Make best use of the India-EU FTA

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi, calling the India-EU FTA ‘ambitious’, urged manufacturers and exporters to make full use of the fact that new markets are opening up for them. During his address ahead of the Budget Session of Parliament, PM Modi said India has onboarded the ‘reform express’. His remarks come after India and the 27-nation bloc signed the free trade agreement, touted as the ‘mother of all deals’. Modi urged manufacturers to seize opportunities presented by the deal. “FTA with EU is for an ambitious India. I urge manufacturers to benefit from new markets opening for them...Offer quality products to all 27 EU member nations,” he said, urging them to offer the best of the best quality products in the market. “This government has been identified with Reform, Perform, and Transform. And now we have boarded the Reform Express. I also express my gratitude to all my colleagues in Parliament, who are contributing their positive energy to accelerate this Reform Express. Because of their support, the Reform Express continues to gain momentum. The country is now moving beyond long-term pending problems and is firmly stepping onto the path of long-term solutions,” said PM Modi.Speaking at the start of the Budget Session of Parliament. May both Houses witness meaningful discussions on empowering citizens and accelerating India’s development journey. https://t.co/tGqFvc4gupThe prime minister said that despite the swift adaptation of technology, “human-centric systems” will not be undermined. “Understanding the importance of sensitiveness, in partnership with technology, we will go ahead,” he added. Speaking about Budget 2026, Modi said that a quarter of the 21st century has gone by. “This is the beginning of the next quarter. To attain the goal of Viksit Bharat 2047, the important phase of these 25 years has begun. The first Budget of this second quarter of the century is about to be presented.”

BEL shares down 3% after Q3 results; should you buy, sell or hold this defence stock

New Delhi: Shares of Bharat Electronics Ltd (BEL) slipped more than 3 per cent in Thursday’s trade, facing profit booking despite the Navratna defence PSU reporting a strong set of numbers for the third quarter ended December 2025. As per the exchange filing, the order book position of the company as on January 1, 2026, stood at Rs 73,015 crore.JM Financial said that with major orders likely to be concluded in the fourth quarter, the management is confident of surpassing its order inflow guidance of Rs 27,000 crore for FY26. Major expected inflows include the Next Generation Corvette (NGC) orders and the Quick Reaction Surface-to-Air Missile (QRSAM) project, it said.At 11:36, the BEL counter was quoting at Rs 445 apiece on the BSE, down 1.85 per cent, after falling 3.2 per cent to touch a day’s low of Rs 438.50 in early trade against its previous close of Rs 453.40. In a regulatory filing submitted to exchanges, the state-owned defence major reported a robust 20 per cent growth in its consolidated profit after tax (PAT) attributable to owners of the company, which stood at Rs 1,579.10 crore for the third quarter ended December 31, 2025, compared to Rs 1,311 crore posted in the same quarter last year.Consolidated revenue from operations surged to Rs 7,153.85 crore during the quarter, up from Rs 5,792.09 crore in the corresponding period of the previous fiscal.The brokerages remain largely optimistic about the defence behemoth, citing strong order pipelines and margin expansion.JM Financial maintained an ‘Add’ rating on BEL counter with a revised target price of Rs 480. The brokerage highlighted that the favourable execution mix and increasing indigenisation resulted in EBITDA margin expanding 100 bps YoY to 29.7 per cent, which came in ahead of estimates. Choice Institutional Equities reiterated its ‘Buy’ rating with a tar-



get price of Rs 550, valuing the stock at 40x FY28E EPS. Choice noted in its report that the company is firmly in a sweet spot, driven by strong execution, accelerating order momentum and improving strategic depth.

Choice Institutional Equities added that they see near-term optionality from NGC orders worth Rs 3,000-5,000

crore in Q4 and the large-ticket QRSAM order, where the probability exceeds 90% for Q4 FY26.Nuvama retained its ‘Buy’ call, valuing the stock at 45x FY28E EPS with a revised target price of Rs 525, up from Rs 520. Similarly, Jefferies maintained a ‘Buy’ rating on the stock and raised its price target to Rs 565 from Rs 510 per share.

Meta sees 2026 capex surging up to \$135 billion on AI infrastructure

New Delhi: Meta Platforms Inc. said it expects capital expenditure to climb to between \$115 billion and \$135 billion in 2026, a sharp increase from the \$72.2 billion spent in 2025, as the company accelerates investment in data centres and specialised hardware to support advanced artificial intelligence (AI).Chief Executive Officer Mark Zuckerberg told analysts on a conference call that 2026 would be a “big year” for Meta’s AI ambitions, framing “personal super-intelligence”, machines that could eventually surpass human cognitive abilities, as central to the company’s long-term strategy. The Facebook and Instagram owner reported revenue of \$59.89 billion for the fourth quarter and \$200.97 billion for full-year 2025, representing year-over-year growth of 24% and 22%, respectively.Even as Meta pours resources into AI, it is trimming parts of its legacy bets. The company confirmed it is cutting about 10% of staff in its Reality Labs division, which oversees metaverse initiatives, as it shifts focus toward AI-powered wearables. Chief Financial Officer Susan Li said Meta expects first-quarter 2026 revenue in the range of \$53.5 billion to \$56.5 billion

“We expect first quarter 2026 total revenue to be in the range of \$53.5–56.5 billion. Our guidance assumes foreign currency is an approximately



4% tailwind to year-over-year total revenue growth, based on current exchange rates,”

Li said. Meta forecast total expenses for full-year 2026 of between \$162 billion and \$169 billion.Headcount stood at 78,865 as of December 31, 2025, up 6% from a year earlier,

while long-term debt totalled \$58.74 billion.

Total costs and expenses rose 40% year over year in the fourth quarter to \$35.15 billion, and climbed 24% for full-year 2025 to \$117.69 billion, reflecting the growing cost of scaling AI infrastructure.

sees volume growth for cigarette business at 7 per cent. “Agri business, other-FMCG business and PPP business revenues are expected to grow at 5 per cent, 8 per cent and 6 per cent YoY respectively. At the company level, we expect gross margin and Ebitda margin to improve 62 bps and 86 bps YoY to 55.1 per cent and 35 per cent, respectively. Ebitda and adjusted PAT are likely to grow by 9.5 per cent and 7.9 per cent YoY, re-

ITC Q3 results preview; what stock investors should track today

New Delhi: ITC Ltd is likely to report a 6 per cent year-on-year (YoY) decline in adjusted net profit for the December quarter, due to higher other income in the base quarter. Revenue for the FMCG major is expected to grow up to 8 per cent YoY, while cigarette segment volumes are seen rising 5-7 per cent. All eyes will be on ITC’s commentary on cigarette volumes, following the government’s sharp increase in cigarette excise duty, effective February 1, 2026. Analysts noted that volumes, which moderated from FY23 highs to low single digits in FY25, were showing improving momentum into FY26. Systematix Shares and Stocks said commentary on recent cigarette taxation changes, competitive intensity in cigarettes, FMCG demand and paper segment growth will be key monitorables. For Q3, Nuvama sees net profit falling 6.4 per cent YoY to Rs 5,075.20 crore, citing higher other income in the base quarter. It sees revenue for the FMCG major rising 5.9

per cent YoY to Rs 18,063 crore. “Cigarette volumes shall increase 5.5 per cent YoY on a base of 6 per cent growth in Q3FY25. We anticipate cigarette net revenue/EBIT to grow 7.1 per cent/4 per cent YoY. We forecast overall revenue shall grow 6 per cent YoY (down 3.7 per cent YoY in Q2FY26 and up 8.3 per cent YoY in Q3FY25),” Nuvama said. Kotak Institutional Equities sees 5.5 per cent drop in net profit at Rs 5,125 crore.

It sees revenue rising 8.3 per cent YoY to Rs 18,463 crore.It expe ts cigarette volume growth to be steady and resilient at 6 per cent. Cigarette EBIT growth is estimated at 5 per cent YoY, with EBIT margin declining 100 bps YoY, due to consumption of high-cost leaf tobacco and other inputs. “Leaf tobacco prices have moderated in the recent quarters but benefits will be accrued fully from Q4 onwards,” it said.YES Securities, meanwhile, expects ITC’s net profit at Rs 5,279.60 crore and sales at Rs 18,211.40 crore. It



spectively. Nomura said the cigarette EBIT margins may remain under pressure as ITC continued to consume high-priced leaf tobacco crop, leading to cigarette EBIT growth at 4 per cent YoY.

“We expect this to continue for next few quarters (excluding any further impact from the recently announced increase in taxation, which we believe will further put some additional pressure on its volumes and margins),” it said.

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Trump Admin Removes Border Patrol Commander Greg Bovino from Minnesota

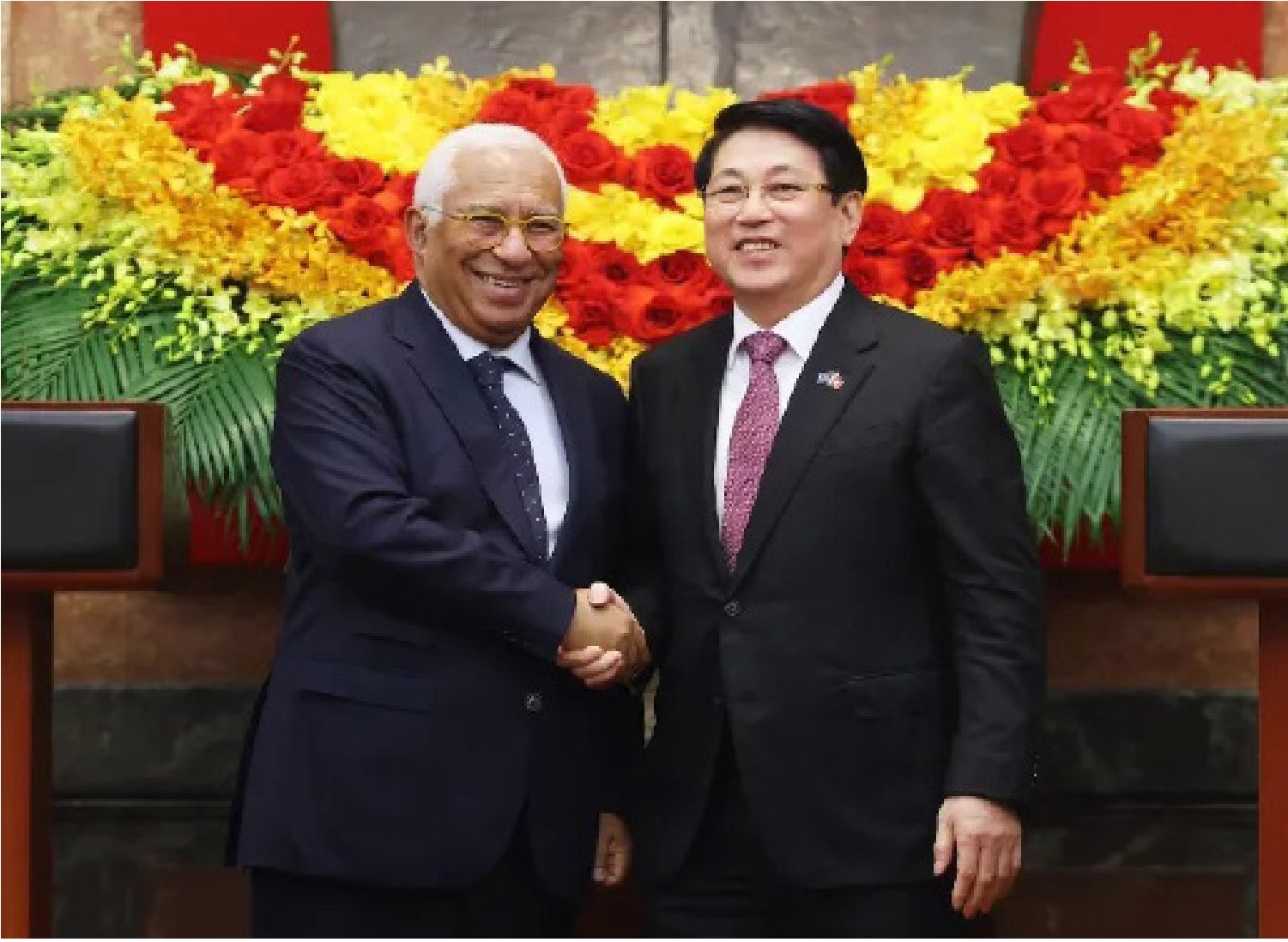
Dubai: The Trump administration is removing Border Patrol Commander Greg Bovino from Minnesota after border agents beat and fatally shot Alex Pretti, a 37-year-old ICU nurse, Saturday morning. Bovino had claimed Pretti intended to “massacre law enforcement,” but eyewitness video directly contradicted the claim. Pretti was attacked by agents as he attempted to help a woman who had been violently shoved by officers.Greg Bovino has led Trump’s paramilitary-style immigration crackdown in Minneapolis, Chicago and other cities. The Atlantic magazine reports Bovino will return to his previous job as chief patrol agent in El Centro, California, and that he may soon retire.On Monday night, protesters gathered outside a Minnesota hotel where Bovino was believed to be staying. Protester: “Getting fired is not justice. It’s not enough. Their man needs to be brought to trial for what he’s wrought on Minneapolis and the state of Minnesota.”The shooting of Alex Pretti has sparked bipartisan outrage across the country and has forced the White House to reassess its operations in Minnesota. On Monday, the White House announced border czar Tom Homan would head to Minnesota. Homan is a longtime immigration hard-liner who was an architect of Trump’s first-term family separation policy. In September, House Democrats began investigating Homan amid revelations he was recorded in 2024 accepting a Cava bag containing \$50,000 in cash from a pair of FBI agents who were posing as business executives. On Monday, President Trump held calls with Minnesota Governor Tim Walz and Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey. Trump said he and Walz “seemed to be on a similar wavelength.” Walz talked to Minnesota Public Radio after the call. Gov. Tim Walz: “First of all, I asked that we have a fair and independent investigation into the murder of both Renee Good and Alex and that we have to be able to do that. And he said, ‘We’ll look at that. We’ll take a look at that.’ And I said, ‘We just have to reduce these numbers.’ We started out with that. And he pledged that, ‘Look, I’m going to send Tom Homan in. We’ll do things differently.’”On Monday, Trump also held a two-hour meeting at the White House with Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem, who had called Alex Pretti a “domestic terrorist” shortly after he was fatally shot. One hun-



dred forty Democratic lawmakers are calling for Noem to be impeached.In legal news, the Court of Appeals for the 8th Circuit has sided with the Trump administration and blocked a lower court order that would have prevented officers from arresting, detaining, pepper-spraying or retaliating against protesters in Minneapolis without probable cause.In a separate legal case, Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison was in court Monday seeking to halt the immigration crackdown known as Operation Metro Surge. The judge did not issue a decision on Monday. We will speak to Keith Ellison after headlines. This all comes as protests continue in Minnesota over the Trump administration’s crackdown on immigrants. Students at the University of Minnesota walked out of classes on Monday. Protester: “I’m really angry. I’m angry, and I’m sad, like all of the time. I’m a university student. I can’t focus on my classes. I have a

lot of friends who are really scared to go outside right now, you know, regardless of their citizenship status. Like, people are really afraid, and they have a right to be, you know? Just on our campus, we have ICE agents staying just a few streets away here in Cedar-Riverside, in the neighborhood nearing ours. They’ve faced so much brutality and violence the past couple of weeks.”In other news from Minnesota, Republican gubernatorial candidate Chris Madel has dropped out of the race, citing President Trump’s immigration crackdown. Madel is a Minneapolis lawyer who recently represented Jonathan Ross, the immigration agent who fatally shot Renee Good. He released this video on Monday.Chris Madel: “Number one, I cannot support the national Republican statedtribution on the citizens of our state, nor can I count myself a member of a party that would do so.”

Vietnam and the EU upgrade ties as US tariffs reshape global trade



Dubai:Vietnam and the European Union on Thursday upgraded ties to a comprehensive strategic partnership, Vietnam’s highest diplomatic level, as both recalibrate trade amid disruptions to global finance driven by U.S. tariff pressure.The upgrade places the EU on the same diplomatic footing as the United States, China and Russia and was announced during a visit to Hanoi by European Council President António Costa.“At a moment when the international rules-based order is under threat from multiple sides, we need to stand side by side as reliable and predictable partners,” Costa said, adding that the partnership is about “developing spheres of shared prosperity.” Costa arrived in the Vietnamese capital Hanoi after India and the European Union reached a free trade agreement on Tuesday after nearly

two decades of negotiation. Vietnam’s President Luong Cuong called the move a “historic milestone.” The announcement comes less than a week after Vietnam reelected Communist Party General Secretary To Lam as the country’s top leader, endorsing his vision of economic growth driven by aggressive reforms. Vietnam has been a major beneficiary of globalization, emerging as a key export hub for electronics, garments and consumer goods as multinational firms shifted production away from China. That export-led growth has helped lift incomes and transform the economy, but Vietnam’s large and persistent trade surplus has drawn criticism, particularly from the U.S. and increasingly from Europe, where officials have raised concerns about market access.For the

EU, the deal strengthens access to one of Asia’s fastest-growing manufacturing hubs and supports efforts to diversify supply chains as trade tensions increase. Bilateral trade in the first 11 months of 2025 reached more than \$66.8 billion, up 6.6% from a year earlier. The EU is Vietnam’s fourth-largest trading partner, third-largest export market and fifth-largest import source. Vietnam is the EU’s biggest trading partner in Southeast Asia. Vietnam hopes to continue growth to become a rich nation by 2045 and is aggressively seeking new markets to reduce reliance on the U.S., which is its largest export destination that absorbs about 30% of the goods Vietnam sends abroad. The two sides signed a free trade agreement in 2020.

Israel Recovers Remains of Last Hostage in Gaza

Dubai: Israel’s military says it has recovered the remains of the last hostage held in Gaza, fulfilling a key condition in the first phase of a U.S.-brokered ceasefire. The remains of police officer Ran Gvili were held in Gaza for 840 days and will now be prepared for burial. The return of Gvili’s remains was a key condition for a limited reopening of the Rafah crossing between Gaza and Egypt. A U.S.-backed Palestinian committee has said the crossing will open this week, though Israeli officials have not confirmed a timeline. It comes as a U.S. official tells Al Jazeera that disarmament by Hamas will be accompanied by “some sort of amnesty” for the Palestinian group. Meanwhile, Gazans are still facing continued Israeli airstrikes.Shaher al-Yaziji: “The situation is dire. As you can see, one runs from dawn prayer to get water. Sometimes it’s salty, sometimes fresh, and so on. And the fighting hasn’t ended yet. All night there was fighting and blasts, and we don’t know when this will end. They have taken their last Israeli remains back. So, when will they open the crossings? Why don’t they let in caravans, find any solution, let in supplies? But we’re just left stranded in the street.” The Trump administration is removing Border Patrol Commander Greg Bovino from Minnesota after border agents beat and fatally shot Alex Pretti, a 37-year-old ICU nurse, Saturday morning. Bovino had claimed Pretti intended to “massacre law enforcement,” but eyewitness video directly contradicted the claim. Pretti was attacked by agents as he attempted to help a woman who had been violently shoved by officers.Greg Bovino has led

Trump’s paramilitary-style immigration crackdown in Minneapolis, Chicago and other cities. The Atlantic magazine reports Bovino will return to his previous job as chief patrol agent in El Centro, California, and that he may soon retire. On Monday night, protesters gathered outside a Minnesota hotel where Bovino was believed to be staying.Protester: “Getting fired is not justice. It’s not enough. Their man needs to be brought to trial for what he’s wrought on Minneapolis and the state of Minnesota.”The shooting of Alex Pretti has sparked bipartisan outrage across the country and has forced the White House to reassess its operations in Minnesota. On Monday, the White House announced border czar Tom Homan would head to Minnesota. Homan is a longtime immigration hard-liner who was an architect of Trump’s first-term family separation policy. In September, House Democrats began investigating Homan amid revelations he was recorded in 2024 accepting a Cava bag containing \$50,000 in cash from a pair of FBI agents who were posing as business executives.On Monday, President Trump held calls with Minnesota Governor Tim Walz and Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey. Trump said he and Walz “seemed to be on a similar wavelength.” Walz talked to Minnesota Public Radio after the call.Gov. Tim Walz: “First of all, I asked that we have a fair and independent investigation into the murder of both Renee Good and Alex and that we have to be able to do that. And he said, ‘We’ll look at that. We’ll take a look at that.’ And I said, ‘We just have to reduce these numbers.’ We started out with that.

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Bangladesh’s ousted denounces the upcoming election from in India

Dhaka:From her exile in India, Bangladesh’s ousted leader Sheikh Hasina has slammed the country’s upcoming election after her party was barred from the polls, remarks that could deepen tensions ahead of the pivotal vote next month.Hasina, who was sentenced to death for her crackdown on a student uprising in 2024 that killed hundreds of people and led to the toppling of her 15-year rule, warned in an email to The Associated Press last week that without inclusive and free and fair elections, Bangladesh will face prolonged instability.She also claimed that Bangladesh’s interim government led by Nobel Peace Prize laureate Muhammad Yunus deliberately disenfranchised millions of her supporters by excluding her party — the former ruling Awami League — from the election.“Each time political participation is denied to a significant portion of the population, it deepens resentment, delegitimizes institutions and creates the conditions for future instability,” she wrote.“A government born of exclusion cannot unite a divided nation,” Hasina added. A fraught election More than 127 million people in Bangladesh are eligible to vote in the Feb. 12 election, widely seen as the country’s most consequential in decades and the first since Hasina’s removal from power after the mass uprising.Yunus’ interim administration is overseeing the process, with voters also weighing a proposed constitutional referendum on sweeping political reforms. Campaigning started last week, with rallies in the capital, Dhaka, and elsewhere.Yunus returned to Bangladesh and took over three days after Hasina fled to India on Aug. 5, 2024, following weeks of violent unrest. He has promised a free and fair election, but critics question whether the process will meet democratic standards and whether it will be genuinely inclusive after the ban on Hasina’s Awami League. There are also concerns over security and uncertainty surrounding the referendum, which could bring about major changes to the constitution.Yunus’ office said in a statement

to the AP that security forces will ensure an orderly election and will not allow anyone to influence the outcome through coercion or violence. International observers and human rights groups have been invited to monitor the process, the statement added.The Election Commission says some 500 foreign observers, including from the European Union and the Commonwealth, are expected to watch the polls on Feb. 12.Worries over what’s ahead Since Hasina’s ouster, Bangladesh has faced a slew of political and security challenges.Human rights and minority groups have accused the interim authorities of failing to protect civil and political rights. Hasina’s party has alleged arbitrary arrests and deaths in custody of its members, claims that the government has denied.Critics have also voiced alarm over the growing influence of Islamist groups and attacks on minorities, particularly Hindus.There are also growing concerns over press freedoms under Yunus, with several journalists facing criminal charges and the offices of the country’s two leading dailies coming under attack by angry protesters. Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, led by Tarique Rahman, 60, has emerged as the leading contender in the vote.Rahman, the son of former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia — Hasina’s chief rival who died last month — returned home in December after more than 17 years in self-imposed exile. He has promised to work for the stability of this South Asian nation of 170 million people. Rahman’s main rival in the February vote is a coalition of 11 allied groups headed by an Islamist party, the Jamaat-e-Islami.Under Hasina, Jamaat-e-Islami was under severe pressure and barred from elections. Its top leaders faced executions or prison terms on war crimes charges related to Bangladesh’s independence war against Pakistan 1971.The Bangladesh Nationalist Party, or BNP, boycotted elections in 2014 and 2024. It took part in 2018 but later accused Hasina of rigging the polls

In 2013, we put our lives on hold, shouldered our backpacks and set out with our two toddlers on a journey that ended up changing our lives. Many journeys start with a desire to discover something new. Ours started with World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms and a desire to understand the life of farmers and food in our ancestral homeland of Italy. With branches in 132 countries, Wwoof connects volunteers to organic farms and growers. In return for volunteer help, hosts offer food, accommodation and opportunities to learn about organic farming and lifestyles. We wanted more than just cooking classes or other touristy things, and because Wwoofing offers the possibility of a low-cost lifestyle (we spent \$3,700, excluding airfare, over six months), it allowed us to extend our time and truly immerse ourselves in another culture. We experienced Italian farms and families from Tuscany to Molise, in the south, but the one that made the biggest impression on us was near Urbino, in the central region of Le Marche, run by a humble, passionate couple who took incredible care in their craft. The main business of this beautiful farm – more than nine hectares (23 acres) of rolling pasture in the foothills of the northern Apennines – is outdoor breeding and raising of cinta senese pigs to produce artisanal prosciutto crudo. But it is also a true sustenance farm, with chickens, ducks, geese and cows for milk, eggs and meat. Their gardens were bursting with produce destined for their table and to stock their cantina with preserves, jams and sauces to last the year. Except for coffee and a few other items, everything came from their land, was foraged from the woods or bartered for with neighbours. We helped with feeding the animals and doing odd jobs around the farm and in their butcher’s shop, learning as much about their practices and craft as we could. More than that, though, we were able to share their dinner table and hear about their passion for the simple life and their love for the land. After our six-month Wwoofing experience we were hooked, and jumped headfirst into expanding our knowledge of food and simplifying our lifestyle. I went on to do a master’s at the Slow Food-affiliated University of Gastronomic Sciences in Pollenzo in Piedmont. We have since raised heritage chickens, ducks, and red waddle pigs; we stocked our pantry with our own produce and cured meats from the land. And three years ago we sold everything we owned in the US and moved to the picturesque Tuscan hilltop town of Montaiione, which we’d fallen in love with while on our first Wwoof farm. Going Wwoofing was one of the best decisions we ever made. All those years ago, while planning our dream backpacking trip, we never could have imagined the impact it would have on our lives. We built lasting friendships and returned changed people, with new aspirations. What started as an educational trip with our kids turned into a journey that helped us answer questions we hadn’t even thought to ask. House-swapping is something I, like many, had considered, but never



Thrifty summer: five ways to see the world for next to nothing

been brave enough to try. Until last year that is, when I realised my chance of finding a holiday cottage we could afford in the school holidays (let alone in Wales, where we actually wanted to go) were almost nonexistent. On a whim, I posted on Instagram asking if anyone would like to swap homes with us (myself and four children, aged five to 18) with a couple of snaps of my kitchen – wet washing on a dryer, Lego everywhere – and a shot of the garden, and crossed my fingers. While mine may have been an unconventional way of going about it, companies offering house-swapping services are reporting a boom: Love Home Swap, for example, has seen an 82% increase in new UK members over the past 12 months. I didn’t have to wait long for a reply to my Insta request. “I’m interested in swapping houses!” it read. There followed a chatty description from a woman called Maki in north Wales about her family home and her local area. Pictures of her, her husband and two young sons on beaches, picnicking at castles and biking along towpaths showed a life that didn’t look a million miles from mine. A month later, I was turning the key in her front door. My children ran in, soon discovered Maki’s sons’ Lego and shrieked with excitement when they found the trampoline. As I ran my eye across Maki’s bookshelves, I could tell she was a kindred spirit, so never had a moment’s anxiety about the security of my home. There’s something fun, with an element of pot luck, about house-swapping. I loved the feeling that, for a week, I was stepping into Maki’s shoes: walking my kids down to the river where she played with her sons, eating in the pub she’d recommended. And when she messaged – as I sat in her back garden, watching my children playing with her children’s toys – about how much she loved our house, I felt genuinely glad that another family was enjoying the place we love. Maki’s house is within striking distance of Chester, which meant we had the beaches of north Wales to discover but were also not too far from Snowdonia. The children enjoyed the sandy beaches of Colwyn Bay; I liked the faded glamour of Llandudno. Of course, there’s a huge financial advantage to home

swapping. Renting a spacious house like Maki’s for a week could easily have cost thousands. I have now signed up for several house-swap websites. There was something gratifying about knowing that our holiday house had cost us absolutely nothing. The children were delighted, too: it meant I could buy them ice-creams as well as milkshakes every time we went to the beach. Standing at the door, I take a deep breath before knocking. This building in the Scottish Highlands looks like an old house, but isn’t a home. Getting here has taken all day, but what a day. I’ve edged a loch so huge it felt like an ocean, seen grey seals, herds of red deer and common terns – but not another soul. My accommodation tonight is free – I’m staying in a bothy. There’s no charge at these remote mountain shelters best thought of as stone tents (you have to take camping gear – plus a tent in case it’s full). Found mostly in Scotland, they’re maintained by the Mountain Bothies Association (membership £25 a year). Unlike the free mountain huts in Norway, Finland or Estonia, bothies weren’t built for hikers; they had former uses. The one I’m at was once a school. You can’t book, so have to just show up and hope. This can lead to serendipitous meetings, or the whole place to yourself. I rap at the wooden door and open it, not knowing who’ll be inside – but that’s part of the magic. The adventure begins in a London pub. My partner and I look nervously for Dave Lowrie, described as “at the bar, tall” in a text. After spending weeks browsing listings on the sailing and crewing matchmaking service Crewseekers, we hope he is the one. A couple of pints down, and it’s clear we’re a good fit – Dave and his wife Kath are looking for deckhands to help sail their Norwegian ketch, Lista Light, to the Caribbean on November’s trade winds. We want to get across the Atlantic as part of a no-fly round-the-world adventure. Crew-seekers’ one-off £75 membership fee opened up hundreds of potential boats looking for different levels of experience on journeys of varying length. Conversation soon turns giddy with excitement as we take in the prospect of



swapping the city for life on the ocean wave. We visit Lista Light on the River Exe a few weeks later and fall in love with the ramshackle old girl with her seven magnificent sails. She is impractical – her ropes and steering are manual – but wonderfully romantic. After demonstrating our basic knowledge (we’d recently completed a RYA day skipper course in Dartmouth), we discuss logistics, agreeing to chip into a food and fuel kitty. The next time we see Lista Light is in Lisbon marina, when we jump on board for more than two months and 3,200 nautical miles of sailing. From Lisbon, we sail to Sagres, on the south-west tip of Portugal, and across to Morocco, where we spend three weeks in El Jadida, fixing up the boat, washing in the local hammam and loading up with spices from the market. We then head west to La Graciosa, a tiny car-free island off Lanzarote, passing a pod of pilot whales, and on to La Palma on Gran Canaria. By the time we leave the safety of port to catch the trade winds across the Atlantic, we’re well into the rhythm of life on board, taking it in turns to cook and clean, and adopting a two- to four-hour watch system. Sunrise and moonrise take on whole new meanings: no one likes sitting alone at the helm in pitch black. If adventure is what we hoped for, we get it in bucketloads. We’re becalmed 500 miles off the coast of west Africa for five days; flying fish dart on to the deck one night; a minke whale follows us for three days; and almost exactly halfway across the ocean, our mainmast snaps

in two, leaving us having to sail the rest of the way at half the speed. After 31 days at sea, we arrive on the Dutch Caribbean island of Sint Maarten. The joy of seeing humans and trees again is tempered by the horror of cruise ships and plastic-strewn ports. Several rums in, we relax back into life on land, marvelling and celebrating, already nostalgic for the simplicity of our seafaring days – proof that some of the greatest adventures out there can cost next to nothing. Finding the right rock is exacting. I need something telephone-directory shape, but nothing is apparent. I feel I’m being watched. When I turn round, five common seals are staring from the sea, framed by orange bladderwrack on the shore. Following lengthy mutual inspection I turn back, spot a likely stone and lift it into place. The North Ronaldsay sheep festival is unusual – revolving, as it does, around sheep and drystone walls. And North Ronaldsay is itself distinctive; the northernmost island in Orkney, it’s home to the North Ronaldsay sheep, a rare, semi-feral beast notable for its small size, short tail and novel diet. Much of the time the sheep eat seaweed, mostly kelp, on the island’s foreshore, and have adapted to it so well that eating grass can now poison them. So they are kept off the grass inland by a 12-mile sandstone wall – or dyke. Built around the island in the 19th century, it’s one of the world’s largest drystone walls. Storm damage necessitates continuous repairs, but with a population that’s dwindled to around 50, many of them elderly, the

locals need help – hence the festival. First held in 2016, volunteers come from all over the world – this year there are 49 of us – to mend the dyke, sightsee, play football and have fun. It’s a great way to do something useful and get to know this beautiful part of the world and its culture – and it’s free. Arthur Hunt, an electrician from London, guides the dyke menders – and we soon learn the lingo. At the bottom of the dyke there are “grounders” – very large stones which often require two or more people to lift; big stones go up the outsides of the dyke, with small ones, or “heartings”, in the middle and “through-stones” to tie the front and back of the dyke together. The dyke’s seaward side has to be especially smooth and perpendicular to stop sheep running up it. Arthur dismantles and rebuilds my first attempt with the dexterity of a waiter stacking plates, but assures me I will quickly improve. He’s right: next time round I don’t need rescuing. After the day’s work I bathe in Noustur Bay, a wide smile of pale sand, with chilly water that segues from aquamarine shallows into indigo deeps. I am alone – except for five grey seals, popping up and down as I swim. Later I return to North Ronaldsay Bird Observatory, the guesthouse and hostel where many of the volunteers are staying. This is where I first spy a flock of North Ronaldsay sheep, a moving patchwork quilt in browns, greys, blacks and whites. Between stints of dyke repair I explore more. The hedgerows are full of wildflowers – tansy, dog rose and tufted vetch – and

fields are broken by lochs. Overhead I see arctic terns and bonxies (the local name for great skuas). Some volunteers are local. Eileen Turfus was born on nearby Sanday island. “My forebears built the dyke,” she says, “I might be handling the same stones as them.” Eileen plays in the residents v visitors festival football match. Two men mark her, but she scores easily. Other highlights include guided tours of the island’s lighthouse and wool mill. And, of course, there are several evenings of music, and a dance. Among the fiddle players is Heather Woodbridge, festival coordinator. In between regaling us with Flett Fae Flotta and the Stronsay waltz, she’s keen to emphasise that the festival is much more than heaving stones around, it’s all about community. “You see people really sad to leave and how they’ve been touched by their experience,” she says. “And you see all the good it’s done for the island.” There are a range of options for helping to save nature, from day visitors to those with weeks to spare. This online platform lists farms, lodges, hostels and even sailing boats offering volunteers accommodation and food. Helpers work four hours a day on average. Basic membership free. This contact platform for hosts and helpers offers work on anything from permaculture projects in Morocco and French B&Bs to schools in Tanzania. From €29.99 a year. From connecting travellers with an artist in Chiang Mai to an Earthship in Turkey, the choice of volunteering and working holidays in 170 countries is huge. This

group runs week-long working holidays restoring canals. Adult camps book up fast, but there are still places on a Buckinghamshire weekend family camp suitable for 6-14-year-olds. This charity cleans up inland waterways in the UK. Volunteers get a free paddleboarding, kayaking or canoeing session, and help clear litter from rivers, lakes and canals. Opportunities include a dragonfly survey in a London park and sowing a wildflower meadow in Glasgow. A social network with 11 million members around the world, Couchsurfing connects travellers with local hosts offering a place to stay (a spare room, sofa or air mattress). It’s simple to sign up to, a great way of meeting people and getting an insight into a new place and, best of all, cost-free. There are measures to ensure security, too. Other options include BeWelcome, a free non-profit connecting travellers and locals offering places to stay. Campervanners and caravan owners looking for free overnight spots can sign up for apps such as Park4night, which lists places to stop beyond campsites, from supermarket or pub car parks to farmers’ fields. The basic app is free; there’s a €9.99 (£8.50) a year fee for the premium service. In the UK, wild camping is legal only in Scotland and on Dartmoor, though sites such as Campspace include cheap places to stay (from £7 a night), including private gardens. In Belgium, Welcome to my Garden is a not-for-profit network offering free camping in private gardens for hikers and cyclists. This charity will lend visitors a free kayak for two hours, provided they bring back a bucket of plastic waste from Copenhagen’s waters. Volunteers have collected 24,319kg of rubbish since 2017. Cars, campervans or motorhomes can be had for free using this relocation service across Australia, New Zealand, Europe and North America, and insurance. In 2020, Luxembourg became the first country to make all public transport, including buses, trains and trams, free to residents and visitors in a bid to lower emissions. A journey planner is available on its easy-to-use app. Cheap but not entirely free, this carpool app connects drivers with travellers heading the same way.

ENTERTAINMENT

Arijit Singh Was Called “Reckless” by AR Rahman

Mumbai: In a social media post on January 27, Arijit Singh said that he will no longer be performing play-back singing. Social media and his admirers have gone into a frenzy since the announcement, guessing as to why he chose this choice.

Arijit Singh may have been in the process of quitting for a long time because old interviews with him (which are few in number) and those of people in the music industry have gone viral.In a recent interview with BBC Asian Network, AR Rahman expressed his opinions about Arijit Singh. In addition to calling the singer “reckless,” he said, “He’s a great musician.” ”He’s a great musician. He’s a producer; he knows the art of producing... and he is reckless also—like working from his village, which is very cool,” AR Rahman shared. When asked what their best teamwork was, Rahman responded, “Oh God, Tum Hi Ho, I think.”



Imtiaz Ali’s 2015 film Tamasha features Tum Hi Ho, who is portrayed by Deepika Padukone and Ranbir Kapoor. On this song, Arijit Singh and Alka Yagnik worked together for the first time. Rahman, who has seen those musicians develop over the years, responded, “I love that,” when

asked how it feels to see them. Any musician’s success, in my opinion, is a success for music as a whole. Fighting the reputation of the preceding generation—”Oh, musicians are bad people; they are debauched; they are drinking and smoking”—is especially important. We have younger role

models like Shreya [Ghoshal] and Arijit, who are all clean and generous to others, but we are losing it. It’s a positive thing. I’m pleased with them.” ”Hi there. To everyone, a happy new year. I want to express my gratitude to each and every one of you for being such wonderful listeners throughout the years.

I am pleased to declare that moving forward, I will not be accepting any new jobs as a playback vocalist. I’m giving up. “It was an amazing experience,” Arijit Singh posted on his Instagram account.Arijit Singh has been the unquestioned master of melody and heartbreak for younger generations for over ten years.Over the years, composers have continued to choose Arijit, from Shah Rukh Khan to Salman Khan, from Ranbir Kapoor to Ranveer Singh.Tum Hi Ho, Laal Ishq, Raabta, Kabira, Kabhi Jo Baadal Barse, and Aaj Phir are just a few of his popular songs.

Inside photos of Deepika Padukone and Ranveer Singh having a great time at a wedding in New York

Mumbai: Last year, Deepika Padukone and Ranveer Singh were seen in New York for a wedding. The celebration’s candid selfies quickly went viral as they began circulating online.

Now, fresh behind-the-scenes photos of Ranveer Singh dancing merrily have appeared online.Another unposed photo of Deepika Padukone and Ranveer Singh is circulating, and it will undoubtedly cause the Internet to melt. Deepika was seen grinning warmly while taking a selfie with a pal in one of the fan-shared pictures from last year, while Ranveer was seen striking a happy attitude in another. Even though the celebrities haven’t shared any photos from their vacation, fan-shot moments have kept timelines active during the celebra-



tion. The couple’s recent appearance at an NBA game in New York, when they were also spotted taking photos with fans, is followed by their wedding appearance.In terms

of his career, Ranveer is riding high thanks to Dhurandhar’s enormous success, which is still dominating the box office one month after its premiere. Deepika has an amazing

future ahead of her as well. In Siddharth Anand’s King, she will next be seen with Shah Rukh Khan. In Atlee’s AA22xA6, the actress will co-star with Allu Arjun.

Shah Rukh Khan Travels to Dubai to Accept the Global Style Icon Award



Mumbai: There is no need to introduce Shah Rukh Khan. Bollywood actor Badshah has often captivated fans with his powerful on-screen persona and flawless acting abilities.

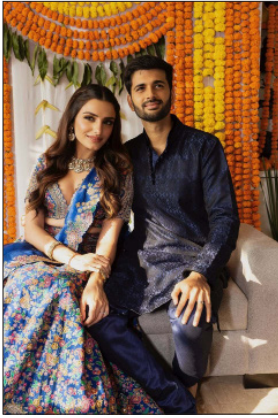
The celebrity was seen traveling to Dubai on January 29 at the airport in Mumbai.Shah Rukh chose a casual yet stylish appearance as he entered the airport. He was dressed in denim cargo pants and a blue hoodie placed over a white shirt.In keeping with his trademark minimalist style, Shah Rukh accessorized his trip ensemble with a shoulder bag, sunglasses, and a beanie. One of SRK’s fan clubs provided the footage, which you can watch here. At the Dubai Mall Global Fashion Awards, the actor will be given the Global Style Icon Award. Details of the event were disclosed . The two-day event, which is set for

January 29–30, will honor international leaders who have left their stamp on fashion, culture, and global influence.Some of the most prominent figures in the fashion industry will be present at the event, including senior executives from the Armani Group, famous couture designer Reem Acra, and luxury fashion pioneer Brunello Cucinelli. Giorgio Armani, Chairman and CEO of the Armani Group, will also be honored during the occasion, with Giuseppe Marsocci serving as his representative. The Dubai Mall Global Fashion Awards, which will take place at Armani Dubai, are expected to be among the biggest and most prominent fashion award shows in the area. King is Shah Rukh Khan’s upcoming film. The movie will be released on December 24, 2026, according to a recent announcement by

the producers. The title reveal video for the upcoming movie was published by director Siddharth Anand on Shah Rukh Khan’s birthday last year, offering fans a sneak peek at the superstar’s role. Following the success of Pathaan, Shah Rukh Khan and Siddharth Anand are working together for the second time. King is expected to blend style, spectacle, and dramatic action in what has been described as a high-energy action movie. Expanding on his signature action-driven storytelling, the project is positioned as Siddharth Anand’s most ambitious commercial endeavor to date.Red Chillies Entertainment and Marflix Pictures are the producers of the movie. The cast consists of Abhishek Bachchan, Suhana Khan, and Deepika Padukone in addition to Shah Rukh Khan.

Prakriti Kakar and Vinay Anand at their wedding

Mumbai: On January 23, Prakriti Kakar wed businessman Vinay Anand at Fort Barwara, which is close to Jaipur, Rajasthan. The new phase is exciting, according to her. Not much has changed, in my opinion. There are additional obligations, of course, but I think this time will be really lovely and enjoyable. The singer said that the wedding was like living a dream.After another celebration in Delhi last Sunday, the couple threw a reception for friends, family, and business associates in Mumbai yesterday. “We had our wedding reception in Mumbai last night, and I got to be the bride in red,” she says. I had deliberately set aside crimson for the reception. Now that I’m a Mrs. and a newlywed wife, the emotion is gradually taking hold. ”I chose to be a pink bride instead of a typical red bride because pink is my favorite color,” Prakriti says of her wedding day. I wanted to be authentic. My bridal outfit has been adored by even my followers. Seeing that I was able to live it the way I wanted to feels good.”Not just me, my family, my sisters, Vinay’s family, everyone enjoyed the wedding,” she continues. It never once



felt like we were entertaining guests. It was more like a warm celebration.Prakriti explains that she made a deliberate choice to have a small wedding. ”Time spent with our family is what Vinay and I cherish the most. A wedding is more than just two people getting together; it’s also about family spending time together. I wanted to enjoy myself with both of our families and live in the present. There was no pressure or hurry. It was really stunning. The joota chupai, in particular, became a highlight for both the newlyweds and Prakriti’s sisters, singers Sukriti and Akriti Kakar. They were both very tenacious. Without the joota chupai, I don’t think a wedding is complete. Vinay was able to grant my sisters all of their requests. They engaged in vigorous bargaining.Prakriti says that their honeymoon will have to wait because she and Vinay have a busy few months ahead of them professionally, even though the hangover from the wedding festivities is still ongoing. “We do want to visit the UAE for a brief mini-moon in February. However, the extended honeymoon will take place later in May.

Mona Singh criticizes the film industry’s “expiry date” for women

Mumbai:Actor Mona Singh adds, “I have never cared about my on-screen age,” finding it odd that male celebrities continue to portray love roles into their sixties but women have an expiration date.With critically lauded roles in the Netflix series Kaala Paani, The Ba**ds of Bollywood, and the Prime Video series Made in Heaven 2, Singh is having a fantastic time in her career. She also had significant roles in films including Happy Patel, Munjya, and most recently, Border 2. In the second season of Sudip Sharma’s popular Netflix series Kohrra, the actor portrays the difficult part of a police officer investigating a woman’s murder while coping with personal grief. She remarked that she has always taken chances and that now is the moment to celebrate.”I haven’t given a damn about my age on film. Since I am self-assured and aware of who I am, I truly haven’t. I continue to take chances since I have nothing to prove. I’m frequently asked, “Why are you so old on screen?” It doesn’t matter, in my opinion. In an interview with PTL, Singh said, “It’s the character I’m playing, and it really excites me.” ”That is how people actually think. You know, ladies only have an expiration date in our industry. And it’s really depressing. Women cannot play the romantic leads, but men in their 60s can. However, I have never given that much thought because I didn’t want to be that person,” she continued.When Singh played a bespectacled Jassi in



her TV debut Jassi Jaisi Koi Nahi in 2003, at the age of just 22 or 23, she made a significant breakthrough. In the 2009 hit film 3 Idiots, starring Aamir Khan, R Madhavan, and Sharman Joshi, she made her film debut as Kareena Kapoor’s older sister. As a fan of creator Sudip Sharma’s work and the previous season of the program, which centers on two officers in Punjab’s hinterlands, Singh said it was an incredible honor to be a part of Kohrra 2, which debuts on Netflix on February 11.Alongside Barun Sobti’s Garundi, who returns from the previous season, she plays Dhanwant Kaur, a police officer in charge of a murder investigation in season two. ”You meet the proper individuals when the moment is right.

And being a part of Kohrra 2 makes me feel incredibly fortunate and blessed. I adore Kohrra 1. It simply struck a chord right away. At my core, I’m really Punjabi. “Why am I not there in season one?” was my question. The group is wonderful, incredibly productive, kind, and affectionate. They enjoy life and take their craft very seriously. “I enjoyed myself,” she remarked. The second season of Kohrra 2, which was created and produced by Gunjit Chopra, Diggi Sisodia, and Sudip Sharma, has a new case that is once again based in the wintry landscape of Punjab. Assistant Sub-Inspector Amarpal Garundi is currently assigned to the Dalerpura Police Station, where he reports to Dhanwant Kaur, his new superior officer. According to the official description for season two, despite their seeming differences, both have the same desire to devote themselves to a case, even as the barriers they’ve erected to avoid their pasts fall apart in front of them.Saurabh Malhotra, Sudip Sharma, Manuj Mitttra, and Tina Tharwani support the second season, which is produced by Film Squad Production in collaboration with Act Three. Sharma also takes on the job of director alongside Faisal Rahman while still serving as showrunner. In addition to Singh and Sobti, other cast members of the series include Rannvijay Singha, Anurag Arora, Pradhuman Singh, Pooja Bhamrah, and Prayrak Mehta.

The internet is confused by Rubina Dilaik’s “I am pregnant” video

Mumbai: Two years after welcoming twin children with husband Abhinav Shukla, actor Rubina Dilaik caused a stir on social media on Wednesday by posting a video that suggested she might be pregnant. Even while the tweet attracted a lot of attention almost away, many social media users were perplexed and debated if the statement was genuine or a marketing ploy. Rubina posted a video of herself declaring, “I am pregnant,” on Instagram Stories on Wednesday.Rubina can be seen wearing a patterned saree in the video. The actor turns to face the camera and smiles as

she declares her pregnancy at the beginning of the video, which then abruptly ends. She did not tag her husband, Abhinav Shukla, or provide any other information in the post.Social media users are perplexed by the brief video, and many are perplexed by the surprising revelation. In June 2018, Rubina and Abhinav were married in Shimla. In September 2023, the pair posted on Instagram to reveal her pregnancy. “Excited and extremely happy to share that our daughters, Jeeva and Edhaa, are one month old today,” the pair wrote in identical Instagram postings on December 27, 2023, along



with some pictures of the celebrations at home. On the auspicious day of Gurpurab, the cosmos rewarded us! Please send us your best wishes for our angels. On the first day of Navratri in October 2024, Rubina and Abhinav unveiled their twin daughters, Edhaa and Jeeva.

The internet reeks Rimjhim features 16-year-old Yashika Sharma in a intimate scene

Mumbai: The most recent episode of the television series Rimjhim: Choti Umar Bada Safar has generated controversy due to its underage female protagonist performing intimate sequences with her male co-star. Yashika Sharma, 16, and Himanshu Awasthy, 24, star in the show, which centers on the romantic interaction between an adolescent and an adult.On Wednesday, January 28, Dangal TV broadcast the most recent edition of the program. In one scene, Sameer (Himanshu) removes his shirt in front of Rimjhim (Yashika), draws her in, and puts it on her after



realizing her blouse is undone. The two give each other a heartfelt embrace as the scene comes to a conclusion. The two performers are in bed together in another scene from earlier in the performance.Online

criticism has been triggered by these scenes as well as an emphasis on Rimjhim’s naked back.On Wednesday night, screenshots and snippets from the episodes were posted on Reddit. “In which world is it okay for a 15-year-old to shoot such intimate scenes?” was the caption for one that was posted. “Why is it even legal?” asked another. Many questioned why adult performers were not cast in TV productions that needed such scenes. “Are there no legal women in the nation who can perform in these serials? One irate response said, “Why are they casting young girls for these romantic lead roles? It’s

bloody EWWWW man wtf.” Others noted that actors between the ages of 15 and 18 are frequently sexualized in Indian TV series. “Eww! Put an end to sexualizing children! One person wrote, “I will never forget how traumatized I was when I saw Reem Shaikh romantically involved with Sehban Azim when she was around sixteen and he was over thirty.” Yashika’s parents or guardians were encouraged in numerous comments to intervene and stop this. The response to the episode has not yet been addressed by the actors, the production company, or the channel.

Delhi Police Wins the 2026 Republic Day Parade's "Best Marching Contingent" Award



New Delhi, Jan 29: According to a formal statement released by the Ministry of Defence's Department of Ceremonials, the Delhi Police Marching Contingent was declared the Best Marching Contingent in the Judges' Choice Category at the Republic Day Parade 2026. The Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) and other auxiliary forces that took part in the Republic Day Parade on January 26,

2026, provided marching contingents and tableaux for the evaluation, according to the Ministry. Overall performance, including drill accuracy, discipline, consistency, and ceremonial presentation, was taken into consideration when making the decision. The letter claims that the Delhi Police Marching Contingent won first place in the Judges' Choice Category, demonstrating its excellent coordination and profes-

sionalism throughout the national parade. The CRPF Marching Contingent won the Popular Choice Category and received the highest level of popular recognition for their performance. A trophy presentation ceremony will be held on January 30, 2026, at 12:30 pm in RR Camp, Delhi Cantt, to formally recognize the champions. Senior representatives from the Ministries of Home Affairs and De-

fense will be present when the Raksha Rajya Mantri presents the prizes. On behalf of the Delhi Police and the CRPF, the Ministry of Home Affairs has been asked to provide the names of the officers who will accept the trophies. Additionally, it has been requested to provide a list of around five officers from each unit who might be urgently invited to the ceremony. One of India's most important ceremonial occasions, the Republic Day Parade highlights the nation's military prowess, capacity for internal security, and cultural variety. The commendation given to the marching contingents highlights the personnel's dedication, self-control, and thorough training. According to officials, these awards encourage personnel to uphold excellence in ceremonial duties while carrying out their primary duty of guaranteeing public safety and national security.

In a building fire near Kolkata, 21 people died and 28 are still missing



Kolkata, Jan 29: The police announced on Thursday that the number of persons killed in the fire in Kolkata on January 26 has increased to 21, with 13 more bodies discovered from destroyed buildings and 28 people still unaccounted for, raising concerns that the death toll is likely to grow. Prior to the planned visit by Leader of the Opposition Suven-

Adhikari and other BJP officials, the authorities issued prohibitory orders in the region, limiting public mobility. Two godowns and a momo company's manufacturing facility in Anandapur, in the South 24 Parganas district, near the city, were turned to ashes by the destructive fire. "Given the nature of the incident and

the extent of damage, the possibility of the toll going up cannot be ruled out," a high-ranking police officer stated. Prohibitory measures under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita were put in place in the region starting at midnight on Wednesday due to the circumstances and in anticipation of a planned visit by BJP leaders. "A prohibito-

ry order has been imposed to maintain law and order and to facilitate rescue and identification work," added the police officer. Adhikari has petitioned the Calcutta High Court for permission to visit the location and to march there from a nearby temple. According to a court source, Justice Shubra Ghosh is expected to hear the case on Thursday. Warehouses and a manufacturing facility were reduced to ashes by the Sunday night fire, which also left behind burned structures and worker corpses. According to officials, DNA mapping of the 21 recovered remains or body parts is expected to start on Thursday in order to identify them. Since many of the victims are badly burned and cannot be identified using traditional methods, DNA analysis is crucial in this situation, the officer stated.

Repairing Minister Azharuddin's Telangana home for Rs 76 lakh sparks a dispute

New Delhi, Jan 29: After approving Rs 76 lakh for repairs and renovations at Minister's Quarters No. 29 at Banjara Hills—an official government residence recently given to former cricket player and recently appointed Minority Welfare Minister Mohammad Azharuddin—the Telangana Congress government has come under fire from the public.

The money has been authorized under the capital outlay for government residential buildings, under official directives from the Roads and Buildings Department.

According to the government order, the work entails extensive repairs to make the long-vacant rooms livable, including painting, wall repairs, UPVC window installation, floor tiling, waterproofing the roof slab, and installing a modular kitchen. When questioned about the spending, government sources defended the decision by stating that the property had been abandoned for almost 15 years and had deteriorated before being



given to the minister. However, the directive, which is currently in the public domain, has sparked a political discussion and public criticism, particularly since the state administration has frequently mentioned financial difficulties in fulfilling social obligations, paying outstanding bills, and financing important development projects. According to reports, the government has approved more than Rs 1 crore for sanitary and restoration projects at ministers' official residences during the

last two weeks, including Rs 30 lakh for improvements at the Health Minister's official bungalow. Chief Minister Revanth Reddy has recently drawn attention to the government's dire financial situation, although opposition parties noted that the size of these allocations indicates a mismatch in spending priorities. Opponents point to persistent requests for the release of postponed employee dues and welfare payments, which state officials have previously recognized as signs of financial strain.

Sanju Samson's dismissal is criticized by Sunil Gavaskar

New Delhi: In the fourth Twenty20 International match against New Zealand on Wednesday, Indian wicketkeeper-batter Sanju Samson was removed for 24 after failing to make an impression once more. Mitchell Santner dismissed Samson after he scored 24 off 15 deliveries, despite his early success. Samson's place in the T20 World Cup squad has come under scrutiny because he has only scored 40 runs in his last four games and Ishan Kishan is playing well at No. 3. The dismissal infuriated legendary India captain Sunil Gavaskar, who noted that the batter lost his wicket to Santner due to a serious lack of footwork. "At first glance, it seemed like there was absolutely no footwork. In his commentary, Gavaskar stated, "I'm not sure if there was a turn; the first impression was he was just standing there, making room and playing through the off side." As I mentioned, the feet hardly moved at all. The bowler will hit if you go outside leg-stump, exposing all three stumps once more. For the



second time, Sanju Samson experienced that," Gavaskar continued. In the fourth Twenty20 International, New Zealand defeated India by 50 runs. When asked to bat first, New Zealand scored 215 for seven after the visitors got off to a fast start, with Devon Conway (44 off 23) and Tim Seifert (62 off 36 balls) scoring 100 runs in just 8.2 overs. Arshdeep Singh and Kuldeep Yadav each took two wickets in the back 10, but Daryl Mitchell's 39 off 18 balls gave the Indian bowlers a late boost. Despite Rinku Singh's 30-ball 39 and Shivam Dube's vicious 23-ball 65, India were dismissed for 165 in 18.4 overs in response. Mitchell Santner, the captain, became New Zealand's top bowler after taking 3/26 in four overs.

The Court Stays the New UGC Equity Rules

New Delhi, Jan 29: The Supreme Court has suspended the University Grants Commission's (UGC) new rules due to considerable opposition, particularly from general category students. Chief Justice of India Surya Kant's panel ordered a reexamination of the regulations, citing "complete vagueness" that makes them vulnerable to abuse. CJI Kant bemoaned throughout the hearing that despite 75 years of freedom, caste-based discrimination still exists in society. "After 75 years, all we have accomplished in this country is to become a classless society; are we turning into a regressive society? The worst thing that is happening in ragging is that children from the south or northeast carry their culture, and someone who is not familiar with this starts making comments about them. Then, for heaven's sake, you mentioned different hostels. The Chief Justice said, "There are also inter-caste marriages, and we have been in hostels where everyone stayed together." The court sent a warning to the center and the UGC emphasizing that an expert must analyze the regulations' wording. The decision further pointed out that Article 15(4) gives scheduled castes and scheduled tribes the authority to enact legislation. Nonetheless, the two-judge panel's Justice Jyomalya Bagchi concurred that progressive laws shouldn't regress. "I hope we don't go to segregated schools

like the US, where blacks and whites went to different schools," he stated, and the CJI added, "This kind of situation can be exploited." The UGC regulations 2026, which required all institutions and colleges in the nation to set up an Equal Opportunity Center (EOC) and campus-level committees to investigate discrimination complaints and advance equity and inclusion, were being challenged in a number of petitions that the court was considering. Allegations that the new rules lacked a clear way for general category students to file complaints and that they would unintentionally worsen inequality sparked demonstrations. Advocate Vishnu Shankar Jain, who represented the petitioners, said that the term "caste discrimination" solely refers to discrimination against SCs, STs, and OBCs, leaving out the general group. We are contesting the regulations' Section 3(c). Discrimination against SC, ST, and OBC on the basis of caste is known as caste-based discrimination. Members of the general category are totally excluded from this. He contended, "When discrimination is already defined, this definition under section 3(c) is completely hit by Article 14, and it cannot be assumed that discrimination is only against one segment." Colleges and universities are required to adhere to the 2012 standards as the UGC 2026 norms have been suspended.

PM Makes Investment Proposals in India's Quickly Expanding Civil Aviation Industry



New Delhi, Jan 29: On

Wednesday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi called for investments in the nation's rapidly expanding civil aviation industry, which has seen a "historical transformation" over the past ten years. Modi stated that the nation will have more than 400 airports by 2047 and emphasized the potential for expansion in the civil aviation sector in his virtual speech at the aviation conference Wings India 2026. Modi urged

for more self-reliance in the aviation industry, saying that although India is growing into a significant global aviation center, it cannot continue to rely on others for aviation-related needs. India is developing into a significant aviation hub connecting the Global South with the rest of the world thanks to reforms. According to Modi, this is a big opportunity for manufacturers and investors in the aviation industry.

The Rajasthan Royals will be the first billion-dollar IPL franchise



New Delhi: Silverware continues to define legacy in the IPL, but money is increasingly influencing the discourse. The Jaipur-based Rajasthan Royals (RR), who are on the verge of becoming the first IPL team to be valued above \$1 billion (about Rs 9,215 crore), are now at the center of that change. Despite the lack of continuous on-field success in recent seasons, RR's business value has only increased. The franchise is attracting a lot of attention from international investors; several offers have already surpassed the billion-dollar threshold, demonstrating how quickly the IPL's financial environment is developing. Four bidders have submitted proposals ranging from about \$1.1 billion to \$1.3 billion, and sources familiar with the process say that RR is on course to surpass the \$1 billion valuation requirement. It's an impressive number for a franchise that hasn't always been among the league's most conspicuous brands, but it illustrates the IPL's increasing appeal outside of on-field performance. For comparison, the RPSG Group purchased the Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) for around Rs 7,090 crore, making them the most costly IPL team to date. In collaboration with RedBird Capital Partners and Tiger Global, Emerging Media Ventures presently owns the Royals. American investor Kal Somani, who already owns a portion of the brand, is one

of the bidders. Major companies like Times Internet, Blackstone Inc., and Carlyle Group Inc., who are all keen to capitalize on the IPL's thriving commercial ecosystem, join him. RR's story has been more erratic when it comes to cricket. Since winning the first IPL in 2008, they have only made it to one final, in 2022, where they lost to the Gujarat Titans. Following a slow decline, there was a major reset following the 2025 season. However, investor interest hasn't decreased despite these on-field difficulties. The Raine Group, a company with a proven track record in high-profile sports transactions, is handling the sale. The size and gravity of the Royals' process are demonstrated by the fact that Raine previously managed the sales of Chelsea FC in 2022 and Manchester United in 2024. Furthermore, RR might only be the first act. The focus is now on Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) due to the Royals' heavyweight bids. With one of the greatest brands in the league and a sizable fan following, the reigning IPL winners are also considering a possible ownership move. According to people close to RCB, bids may get close to or perhaps beyond \$2 billion. The current owner, Diageo, has reportedly started testing the market after being encouraged by the Royals' results. It is anticipated that RCB's price will easily exceed RR's due to its enormous popularity. Blackstone and Carlyle are apparently considering bids for both Rajasthan Royals and Royal Challengers Bengaluru, adding to the drama and demonstrating how aggressively international investment firms are positioning themselves around the league. If RR's sale establishes a new standard, RCB's might raise it much further. In any case, the trend is obvious: IPL franchises are just becoming more valuable, and the billion-dollar chapter is only getting started. Form may change.

Suryakumar Yadav's Direct View on an Unexpected Strategy



New Delhi: In the fourth Twenty20 match against New Zealand on Wednesday, India played a batter short on purpose to test themselves, according to skipper Suryakumar Yadav. India experimented by fielding six specialist hitters, including Hardik Pandya, who did not bowl that day, after securing the five-match series. India often batters till number eight, but Harshit Rana was their seventh. India lost the match by 50 runs as a result of the attempt. "We intentionally used six batters today. We wanted to push ourselves and have five flawless bowlers. For instance, how would it appear if we were chasing 200 or 180 and wanted to know if we were two or three down? However, in the end, it's all right," the captain of India stated. "We also intended to play every member of the World Cup team. We would have played different ones otherwise. He continued, "We've

been batting really well when we've batted first," in reference to choosing to field. In order to assess how we bat when we're chasing 180 or 200 and two or three wickets are down, I wanted the boys to assume that burden. Thus, it's a worthwhile challenge. Hopefully, we might pursue it once more if we have another chance. But ultimately, it's a good learning experience. According to Matt Henry, a pacer from New Zealand, his team's performance demonstrated that it was based on strong character. "After a few losses like that, it's tempting to start looking for answers, but I believe that this group's perseverance speaks volumes about their character. We sort of rely on that. I believe that evaluating conditions is crucial. It goes without saying that we have recently played on three excellent small-ground surfaces, and this one was no exception. extremely damp conditions as well.

Pape Thiaw, the Senegalese coach, is banned for five games

New Delhi: Following a tumultuous Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) final against Morocco last month, Senegal coach Pape Thiaw was banned for five Confederation of African Football (CAF) games, it was confirmed on Wednesday. The tactician was accused of "unsporting conduct" and "bringing the game into disrepute" during the January 18 decider in Rabat, which Senegal won 1-0 after extra time, according to a CAF statement. Ismaila Sarr and Iliman Ndiaye, two Senegalese attackers in the English Premier League, were suspended for two games for "unsporting behaviour towards the referee." For a number of infractions committed during the final, the Senegal Football Federation (FSF) was fined a total of \$615,000. This includes the "unsporting conduct of their players and technical staff in violation of the CAF disciplinary code principles of fair play, loyalty and integrity". Moroccan forward Ismael Saibari received a three-match



suspension and a \$100,000 fine for "unsporting behavior," while captain and defender Achraf Hakimi received a two-match suspension. The "inappropriate behaviour of the stadium ball boys" resulted in a \$200,000 fine for the Royal Moroccan Football Federation (FRMF). The "improper conduct" of players and technical personnel who entered the VAR review area and interfered with the Congolese referee's work resulted in an additional \$100,000 fine.

Haaland breaks goal drought, Manchester City secure Champions League last-16 qualification

Cherki scores as City benefit, securing crucial top-eight spot

Manchester: Erling Haaland ended his 10-game wait for a goal from open play as Manchester City beat Galatasaray 2-0 on Wednesday to book their place in the Champions League last 16. Rayan Cherki was also on target for Pep Guardiola's men, who took advantage of results elsewhere going their way to sneak into the top eight and avoid a perilous play-off next month. With a bit of drama, we did it," said City captain Bernardo Silva.

With the schedule, with the amount of injuries we have at the minute, to have those two full weeks to prepare the team, to recover some players, to focus on other competitions for now is going to be really good." City know the dangers of the play-off round only too well after being dumped out at that stage by Real Madrid 12 months ago. A week on from an embarrassing defeat to Bodo/Glimt that put their place in the top eight at risk, City made amends against a Galatasaray side that will go into the play-offs. Haaland had been left on the bench by Guardiola for the first time in the Premier League this season for Saturday's 2-0 win over Wolves. The Norwegian's only goal since December 27 prior to Wednesday had come from the penalty spot against Brighton. But Haaland showed no signs of a lack of confidence when he nonchalantly lifted the ball over Galatasaray goalkeeper Ugurcan Cakir from Jeremy Doku's fine through ball. Doku was also the creator for the second goal when he picked out Cherki inside the box to slam low into the corner. But the Belgian's departure soon after with what appeared to be a hamstring injury was the one sour note of the night for Guardiola. It's a big miss," said Guardiola.



Jeremy is such an important player for many reasons." With City still in the running for silverware in four competitions, they were desperate to avoid adding two more games to a congested calendar in February. Marc Guehi was not yet eligible to play in the Champions League, forcing Guardiola to name an experimental defence without centre-backs Ruben Dias and Josko Gvardiol. But the Turkish champions failed to seriously test City's weak spot despite boasting the presence of Victor Osimhen up front. The Nigerian forced Gianluigi Donnarumma into one stop just after the hour mark but his shot was too close to the giant Italian. Guardiola continued to frantically prowl the

touchline in the second period but all the drama was taking place away from the Etihad Stadium to secure City's place in the last 16. Real Madrid's 4-2 defeat at Benfica and a 1-1 draw between Paris Saint-Germain and Newcastle saw all three miss the chance to finish ahead of City.

Madrid could await in March as the 15-time European champions are one of City's four possible opponents in the last 16 alongside Inter Milan, Benfica and Bodo/Glimt. 1-1 draw between Paris Saint-Germain and Newcastle saw all three miss The chance to finish ahead of City, to name an out Centre-backs Ruben Dias and Josko Gvardiol. Nigerian forced Gianluigi Donnarumma.

Australia pick three debutants, Travis Head captains T20I opener vs Pakistan

New Delhi: Australia are set to play three debutants in the first Pakistan vs Australia T20I of the three-match series, on Thursday at the Gaddafi Stadium, Lahore. Mahli Beardman, Jack Edwards and Matthew Renshaw are set to earn their maiden T20I caps in the series opener. Meanwhile, Travis Head will lead the Aussies, with designated captain Mitchell Marsh given a rest after arriving in Pakistan less than 48 hours ago, according to cricket.com.au. The Pakistan vs Australia is set to serve as a crucial prep ahead of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026, set to be held in India and Sri Lanka from February 7. Australia's playing 11 against Pakistan in the T20I series opener: Travis Head (c), Matthew Short, Cameron Green, Matthew Renshaw, Cooper Connolly, Mitchell Owen, Josh Philippe, Jack Edwards, Xavier Bartlett, Adam Zampa, Mahli Beardman.

Notably, none of the three players set to mark their respective T20I debuts are in Australia's squad for the upcoming T20 World Cup 2026. Renshaw is set to bat at number four after a standout season with the Brisbane Heat in th recently-concluded Big Bash League 2025-26 season. He has already featured in 14 Tests and three ODIs for Australia. Sydney Sixers allrounder Edwards impressed throughout the BBL 15, emerging as one of the tournament's leading wicket-takers. His 19 wickets were the second-highest of the tournament, surpassed only by Melbourne Stars' Haris Rauf, who was not selected for the series. Meanwhile, 20-year-old fast bowler Beardman earns his first senior international call-up following strong performances in Australia's Under-19



World Cup Triumph two years ago. He continued his rise with the Perth Scorchers, claiming 13 wickets in 11 matches. After the first Pakistan vs Australia T20I, the second match of the series is set to take place on January 31, with the third match set for February 1. All matches are going to be played at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore. : Australia on Monday announced a 17-member squad for their three-match T20I series against Pakistan, scheduled to be played in Lahore later this month, as part of their preparations for the ICC Men's T20 World Cup in India and Sri Lanka. Injured trio Pat Cummins, Josh Hazlewood and Tim David have been given extra time to build up their fitness ahead of the T20 World Cup, as they have not added to the squad, while Mitch Marsh is set to lead the side, as per the cricket.au website.

Australia will play three T20Is against Pakistan from January 29 to February 1 in Lahore. The team will begin its T20 World Cup campaign on February 11 against Ireland in Colombo. Perth Scorchers speedster Mahli Beardman and Sydney Sixers young gun Jack Edwards are drafted into the squad. Beardman and Edwards have been named in The squad following their impressive.

Svitolina skips handshake, photo before Sabalenka Australian Open semifinal

Melbourne: Chaos crept in even before a ball was struck at Rod Laver Arena. As the build-up to the women's singles semi-final at the Australian Open unfolded, the tension between Elina Svitolina and Aryna Sabalenka was evident well ahead of first serve. Moments before the match, Sabalenka, the world No. 1, stepped out for the customary pre-match photo with the ball kid. Svitolina, however, chose not to join her. When the two players later approached the net, there was no handshake either. The absences were striking but not unexpected, given the backdrop surrounding matches between Ukrainian players and their Russian or Belarusian counterparts since 2022. Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, with Belarus playing a role in the conflict, match-ups like these have carried meaning well beyond tennis. Handshakes have largely disappeared from such encounters, and Svitolina has been one of the most vocal players on tour, openly speaking



about the emotional toll and the statement she believes these gestures are meant to convey. The Australian Open semi-final followed that familiar script. There was no handshake at the net and no joint moment for the cameras. The tension was unmistakable, with the sense that the contest had already started long before either player hit a ball.

The tension didn't stop with the pre-match moments. It spilled into the match itself. At one point, Sabalenka was pulled up by the umpire for a hindrance after making a noise during a rally. The official said the sound came in the middle of the point, not as part of her usual grunt. Sabalenka was

clearly unhappy, questioned the decision and asked for a video review, briefly stopping play and adding to the edgy mood on court. Svitolina, meanwhile, had reached the semi-final the hard way. The 12th seed battled through the draw with her trademark grit, relying on sharp movement, solid defence and a refusal to give in, as she continued her chase for a first Grand Slam title. Waiting for her, though, was a tough familiar opponent. Sabalenka has had the upper hand in their rivalry, winning five of their six meetings, including the last four in a row. That lopsided record only highlighted how big the challenge was for Svitolina under convey.

Haaland fires City through Would you like

Manchester: Erling Haaland ended his 10-game wait for a goal from open play as Manchester City beat Galatasaray 2-0 on Wednesday to book their place in the Champions League last 16. Rayan Cherki was also on target for Pep Guardiola's men, who took advantage of results elsewhere going their way to sneak into the top eight and avoid a perilous play-off next month. With a bit of drama, we did it," said City captain Bernardo Silva. With the schedule, with the amount of injuries we have at the minute, to have those two full weeks to prepare the team, to recover some players, to focus on other competitions for now is going to be really good." stage by Real Madrid 12 months ago. Chaos crept in even before a ball was struck at Rod Laver Arena. As the build-up to the women's singles semi-final at the Australian Open unfolded, the tension between Elina Svitolina and Aryna Sabalenka was evident well ahead of first serve.

UCL: Lamine Yamal hails resilient Barcelona after securing top-five league phase finish

New Delhi: FC Barcelona's starboy Lamine Yamal was elated with the team's win against Copenhagen in the Champions League on Wednesday, January 28. Barcelona overturned a 0-1 deficit in the second half to win the match 4-1, securing a place in the top five of the league phase. The result ensured Barcelona's direct entry into the main draw of the next round, allowing them to avoid the playoffs. Speaking after the match, Yamal praised the character shown by the team and said the new Champions League format suited players, as it reduced the number of matches in an already crowded season. "We all came here tonight thinking about getting into the top eight. We're very happy with the win," the 18-year-old told Movistar Plus. "When you concede a goal in the Champions League, it's very difficult to come back, but the team was very resilient and managed to turn it around. With the number of matches we play in a season, having two few-



Er matches leaves you feeling much better." Despite the convincing scoreline, Barcelona were Made to work hard after a frustrating first half in which Copenhagen stunned the hosts with an early lead. The visitors silenced the home crowd when Dadason broke free of Barcelona's high defensive line, latching on to a defence splitting pass from Mohamed Elyounoussi before drilling a low finish past goalkeeper Garcia. The goal visibly unsettled Barcelona, who struggled to find rhythm before the break. Raphinha and Robert Lewandowski both wasted chances to equalise, while Eric Garcia came closest in the 33rd

minute, his powerful effort striking the crossbar. Barcelona emerged with far greater purpose after the interval and levelled the contest within three minutes of the restart. Lamine Yamal led a swift counter-attack, gliding past multiple Copenhagen defenders before squaring the ball for Lewandowski, who tapped into an unguarded net. The equaliser shifted the momentum decisively. Barcelona increased the tempo and pinned Copenhagen deep inside their own half, eventually taking the lead on the hour mark. Yamal struck from inside the area, his shot taking a deflection That looped over goalkeeper

Diant Ramaj Kotarski and dropped into the far corner. Raphinha extended the advantage from the penalty spot in the 69th minute after Lewandowski was brought down while attempting a shot, and substitute Marcus Rashford later put the result beyond doubt with a composed finish. While Barcelona's second-half response was ruthless, defensive concerns linger. The Catalans completed the league phase without a clean sheet and finished with the weakest defensive record among the top 13 teams. Barcelona secured a top-five finish in the Champions League league phase after a dramatic 4-1 Comeback win over belief. Despite the convincing scoreline, Barcelona were made to work hard after a frustrating first half in which Copenhagen stunned the hosts with an early lead. Barcelona emerged with far greater purpose after the interval and levelled the contest within three minutes of the restart. The equaliser Shifted the momentum.

IPL paradox: few sellers, many buyers dominate the market



Chennai: In the world of commodities, precious metals like gold and silver are enjoying a record-breaking rally because of a combination of factors. But nobody knows how long it will last. There have been sellers who have profit booked but buyers have been happy to jump on the bandwagon. Likewise, Indian Premier League (IPL) teams — owners to be more precise — are in the news. Some owners want to cash in but potential buyers are already forming an orderly queue to own a piece of one of India's biggest cultural exports of the 21st century.

Per Bloomberg, Rajasthan Royals are currently valued at over a billion dollars and a sale could be in the works. If Royals, one of the founding eight and the cheapest franchise when they were bought for just over \$65mn in 2008, are sold for over a billion, it directly explains why some of the first investors are looking to exit. They think that while the product has shown that it's recession proof — heck it was a recession baby — and is capable of making money even during global headwinds (Covid being one of them) — the Valuation maybe inflated.

Rohtak Royals roar to victory, Hisar Heroes hold nerve in thrilling KCL double-header showdown



New Delhi: Day 4 of the Kabaddi Champions League delivered a compelling single-night narrative as Rohtak Royals finally opened their account with a dominant win, while Hisar Heroes produced a statement comeback to edge past Panipat Panthers in a high-scoring thriller. In Match 7, Rohtak Royals registered their first victory of the season with a convincing 38-24 win over Faridabad Fighters. The opening exchanges were

Closely fought, with Faridabad edging ahead early through Rohit Guliya and taking a narrow 13-11 lead at halftime, according to a release. The match, however, turned decisively in the second half as Rohtak lifted their intensity in both raid and defence. Milan Dahiya led the charge with a superb raiding display, completing his Super 10, while Ankit Rana's timely raids pushed Faridabad into multiple all-outs. Despite Yogesh's High 5 for

the Fighters, Rohtak maintained control to close out a comprehensive victory and gain crucial momentum in the league. The action continued with Match 8, where Hisar Heroes defeated Panipat Panthers 47-43 in one of the most entertaining contests of the tournament. Panipat started strongly, with Meetu Sharma and Narender Kandola inflicting early damage and forcing an all-out, but Hisar stayed in touch through Ashu Malik and Manprit. Kandola reached his Super 10 before halftime as the teams went into the break level at 25-25.

The second half saw constant lead changes, with both sides trading raids and tackles. In the decisive moments, Ashu Malik delivered a match-defining super raid that pushed Panipat into an all-out, while Hisar's defence, led by Nitesh Kumar, stood firm under pressure. Hisar closed out the match 47-43, underlining their composure and depth. With Rohtak Royals getting their campaign up and running and Hisar Heroes continuing to showcase resilience and star power, Day 4 added another memorable chapter to an already gripping Kabaddi Champions League season. The Kabaddi Champions League (KCL) continues to gather momentum with a high-intensity Day 5 double-header on Wednesday at the Sports University of Haryana, Rai, as four teams take the mat with valuable league points at stake, as per a release from KCL. The evening action begins at 7:00 PM with Sonipat Stars facing Bhiwani Bulls in Match 9. Sonipat Stars will aim to bank on Their disciplined structure and tactical approach.