

NFR Installs Women’s Hygiene Vending Machines at Guwahati and Kamakhya Stations on International Women’s Day

Guwahati, Mar 09: Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) marked International Women’s Day on 8th March 2026 with a significant initiative aimed at improving women’s health, dignity and comfort in public spaces by installing multi-product women’s hygiene vending machines at key railway stations. As part of this initiative, a total of six vending machines has been installed, out of which four at Guwahati Railway Station and two at Kamakhya Railway Station, to provide easy access to essential hygiene products for women passengers. The machines were inaugurated by Mrs. Shalini Shrivastava, President, NFRWWO, in the august presence of Shri Chetan Kumar Shrivastava, the General Manager of NFR. Guwahati and Kamakhya stations serve as important gateways for pilgrims, tourists and

thousands of women travellers every day, and the installation of these machines reflects Indian Railways commitment towards creating safe, inclusive and women-friendly travel environments. The initiative has been undertaken in collaboration with Sirona (leading women’s intimate hygiene brand) and Priya Communication, with the objective of strengthening menstrual health and hygiene facilities for women passengers across railway premises. These advanced machines introduce a modern, technology-enabled approach to menstrual hygiene vending in India, offering a convenient and accessible solution for women travellers. To further support women passengers, the machines provide essential hygiene products at specially discounted prices for railway travel-



lers, ensuring affordability during travel. NFR has also planned to expand this facility to several other stations across the Northeast in subsequent phases. This initiative underscores the belief that menstrual

hygiene is a fundamental right and highlights the importance of ensuring that women’s health, dignity and access to hygiene remain a priority within public infrastructure. By integrating hygiene solutions

into railway transit spaces, the initiative also contributes to breaking long-standing taboos surrounding menstruation and encourages open and healthy conversations about women’s health. Through this collaborative effort, NFR alongwith its partners, aims to set a strong example in promoting accessible menstrual hygiene solutions while empowering women and strengthening inclusive public services.

International Women’s Day observed in Kakching

Imphal, Mar 09: In line with the global observance of International Women’s Day under the theme “Rights, Justice, Action for All Women and Girls,” a commemorative programme was held at Lamjao Mayai Leikai Community Hall under Kakching district. The event was jointly organised by the Kakching District Bar Association (KDBA) and Lamjao Part 1 Development Association. Khundrakpam Hemabati, Sub-Divisional Police Officer (SDPO) of Kakching (MPS), attended the programme as the Chief Guest. The function was presided over by Thounaojam Mema, Vice President of Lamjao Apunba Meira Paibee Lup. Guests of Honour included Vice Presidents of the same organization Yumnam Bidyapati and Urikhinbam Shantibala, along with Secretaries Sorolhaibam Inaobi Devi, Mayengbam Memcha Leima and Urikhinbam Sanajaobi.

AR observes International Women’s Day

Imphal, Mar 09: International Women’s Day was commemorated across Manipur with a series of impactful initiatives organised by Assam Rifles, highlighting women’s empowerment, entrepreneurship and community welfare. At Pallel Garrison, a Women’s Day Conclave 2026 was held under the theme “Empowering Women through Entrepreneurship – Ignite, Innovate, Lead”. The conclave brought together accomplished women entrepreneurs, local participants and families of Assam Rifles, with nearly 200 women attending, informed IGAR(S) in a press release. The event featured four distinguished speakers whose journeys exemplified resilience and success. Padma Shri awardee Moirangthem Muktamani Devi, founder

of Mukta Shoes, shared her inspiring story of building a small initiative into an enterprise reaching international markets while training over 2000 artisans. Aishwarya Vikram Nadhe, author of Manipur Diaries, spoke about her transition from IT engineer to writer, emphasising creativity and cultural appreciation. Jina Khumujam, a grassroots herbal entrepreneur, narrated how she established her brand “Mangal” from humble beginnings and continues to train widows and local women. Catherine Soyamphi AS, CEO of Soyam Food Products, recounted her entrepreneurial journey during the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on sustainable food processing and supporting farmers. Alongside the conclave, awareness programmes on



women empowerment and entrepreneurship were conducted at Modi and Moreh, while friendly games for local women at Moreh added vibrancy to the celebrations. In Tengnoupal and Chandel districts, solar lights were distributed to women residents of Yangoubung and Sontong villages, benefitting house-

holds and enhancing safety and education in remote border areas, it conveyed. Assam Rifles also commemorated International Women’s Day with a series of meaningful initiatives at Longa Koireng and COB Thoubal, highlighting the importance of women’s empowerment and strengthening civil-military relations.

The event honoured the strength and resilience of women while fostering dialogue on social harmony and collective efforts towards peace and development. The interaction reflected mutual trust and cooperation, reinforcing the bond between the community and the force, it said.

Rs 350 crore earmarked for violence-hit women: CM Khemchand

Imphal, Mar 09: Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh announced that a budgetary provision of Rs. 350 crore is being earmarked in the upcoming budget for assistance to those women who have been affected by the recent unrest. He also stated that such a provision will benefit 3.5 lakh women of the State. The above announcement was made by the Chief Minister while attending International Women’s Day 2026 held at City Convention Centre, Imphal under the theme “Rights, Justice, Action for All Women and Girls”.



Speaking at the occasion, the Chief Minister prayed to the Almighty that, from today onwards, the people displaced by the unprecedented crisis in Manipur would finally be able to go back to their homes. Lauding the courage of Manipuri women, Yumnam Khemchand Singh stated that in different phases of the history of Manipur, the Manipuri women have played crucial roles in Manipur’s economy and political issues of Manipur. A widow can nurture and mend their child to become a successful person even by selling vegetables and engaging in handloom works. He asserted that

we are their sons and daughters. MLA Naoriya Pakhanglakpa AC, Sagolshem Kebi Devi, stated that being a woman she has always been participating in the celebration every year. Every woman should be well aware of the government schemes as well as the rights of women enshrined in the Constitution to protect themselves from discrimination and injustice in the society. In this regard, she urged that more women should actively participate in such programs. While delivering his presidential speech, Dr. Puneet Kumar

Goel expressed that this day is being celebrated to recognise the priceless contribution of women across our society. In Manipur, women have been the enduring pillars of the society. An audio-visual presentation on the Mission Shakti was presented during the programme. The mission focuses on ensuring women’s safety, security, and economic empowerment. During the celebration, the Chief Minister felicitated Nameirakpam Kunjarani Devi, weight lifter and Padmashree Awardee and Mangka Mayanglabam, renowned Manipuri folk singer.

Experts warn of rising air pollution in Guwahati

Guwahati, Mar 09: Environmental experts and academics have expressed concern over the increasing level of air pollution in Guwahati and stressed the need for stronger policy measures and public awareness to tackle the growing environmental challenge.

The issue was discussed during a meeting organised by the Assam Science Society on the theme of urban environmental protection. Experts noted that the air pollution situation in the city has become increasingly complex due to rapid urbanisation, rising vehicle numbers and unregulated construction activities.

According to experts, nearly 80 per cent of air pollution in the city is linked to emissions from vehicles and road dust. Over the past five years, the number of vehicles in Guwahati has reportedly increased by around 40 per cent, significantly contributing to deteriorating air quality. Speakers at the event emphasised the urgent need to reduce emissions from construction activities, regulate dust pollution, and adopt environmentally friendly development policies. They also called for better urban planning and stricter monitoring of pollution sources.

Environmental researchers pointed out that besides vehicles, brick kilns, construction dust and industrial activities also play a role in worsening the air quality. If immediate action is not taken, the pollution levels could have serious implications for public health and the environment.

The experts urged authorities and citizens to work together to address the issue. Promoting public transport, adopting cleaner technologies, and strengthening environmental regulations were highlighted as key measures to mitigate pollution in the city.

The discussion also emphasised the importance of raising awareness among citizens so that people can play a proactive role in protecting the environment and ensuring sustainable urban development.

Man from Assam dies after falling off train in Odisha

Balasore, Mar 09: A 43-year-old man from Assam died when he fell from a running train in Odisha’s Balasore district.

The deceased was identified as Niran Biswas of Chintagaon village in Assam’s Udalguri district, police said on Monday. The incident happened near Sabira rail station on Sunday

when he was returning home from Tamil Nadu, along with some relatives. His body was sent home by an ambulance after conducting the post-mortem examination. Biswas is suspected to have fallen from the train accidentally, police said. An unnatural death case has been registered in this connection.

Juvenile Held After Assault on Northeast Duo Near Saket Court in Delhi

Aizawl, Mar 09: A juvenile has been apprehended and police have launched continuous raids to arrest the remaining accused in connection with the alleged assault on two individuals from Northeast India near the Saket District Court complex in Delhi, officials said.

The incident reportedly occurred on Sunday evening (March 8) in the Malviya Nagar area when a young woman from Manipur and a transgender person from Assam were allegedly attacked by a group of men in a park near the Saket District Court Complex. The episode has once again raised concerns about the safety of people from the Northeast living in the national capital.

According to preliminary reports, the victims were taking a walk in the park when a group of youths allegedly began making racially derogatory remarks at them. When the woman protested against the comments, the situation reportedly escalated into a confrontation.

The victims alleged that the group then physically assaulted them, punching them and beating them with belts while also hurling abusive slurs. One of the attackers allegedly used derogatory racial terms during the altercation.

Following the incident, a case has



been registered under relevant sections of law, Delhi Police said in an official statement. “Police teams are in constant touch with the victims and are providing all necessary assistance. Multiple teams have been deployed to identify and apprehend the accused at the earliest,” the statement said. Police confirmed that one juvenile involved in the attack has been apprehended and that continuous raids are underway to trace the remaining suspects. “Delhi Police does not tolerate such incidents. Strict legal action will be

taken against those responsible,” the statement added. The incident also drew a strong reaction from Conrad K. Sangma, the Chief Minister of Meghalaya, who expressed concern over repeated attacks on people from the Northeast in mainland India. “Angered by the repeated attacks on North East people in mainland India. The physical attack on two individuals from Manipur and Assam near Saket Court in Delhi is sickening. Racial bullying should not become the new normal, and strict action must be taken,” he said.

In Brief

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Indian Army organises health camps in 3 NE states

Aizawl: In a tribute to women on the occasion of International Women’s Day, the Red Shield Division of the Indian Army organised a series of health and wellness initiatives across Mizoram, Tripura and Manipur, aimed at promoting preventive healthcare and improving medical awareness among women and their families. According to an official statement, the outreach activities focused on addressing critical health concerns while encouraging community participation in life-saving initiatives. In Aizawl, an HPV Vaccination Drive was conducted to support the prevention of cervical cancer. A total of seven girls received the vaccination, marking an important step towards safeguarding the health of the younger generation.

Governor felicitates four NCC Cadets of Manipur

Imphal: Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla, today felicitated four NCC Cadets of Manipur who participated in this year’s Republic Day Parade and NCC PM Rally held in New Delhi. The Governor gave cash rewards to the four Cadets namely CWO Kongsam Moramba Meitei; CWO Ningthoujam Pinky Devi; CSUO Swaty Laishram and SUO Leitanthem Chanchan Devi.

VP promised support for AIIMS in Mizoram: BJP



Aizawl, Mar 09: Vice President CP Radhakrishnan has committed his full support toward the establishment of an All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in Mizoram, a leader of the opposition BJP said on Sunday. The assurance came during his meeting with a state BJP delegation at Lok Bhavan here recently, according to BJP media convener Johnny Lalthanpuia. The delegation, led by BJP Mizoram state president Dr K Beichhua, briefed the Vice President on the state's pressing developmental needs. A primary focus of the discussion was the long-standing demand for a premier medical institution in the region, Lalthanpuia said in a statement. Dr Beichhua highlighted that the establishment of an AIIMS or an equivalent healthcare facility has been a cornerstone of the BJP Mizoram manifestos in both the 2018 and 2023 Assembly elections.

In response, Vice President Radhakrish-

nan advised the state BJP leadership to send an official delegation to the Union Health Minister with a formal written proposal, promising to advocate for the project at the central level.

During the meeting with state BJP leaders, Radhakrishnan remarked on India's rapid economic ascent. "India is home to diverse cultures and religions. It is essential to preserve and respect one another's cultural identities and faiths. One must remain faithful in promoting their own religion and cultural heritage," Radhakrishnan was quoted in the statement as saying. Reflecting on his visit to the state, the Vice President lauded Mizoram's natural beauty and its high literacy rates. He specifically pointed to the Bairabi-Sairang railway project as a transformative "blessing" that will accelerate regional growth. Radhakrishnan attended the convocation of Mizoram University (MZU) on March 7

Manipur government earmarks Rs. 350 cr for conflict-hit women

Imphal, Mar 09: Manipur chief minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh on Sunday announced that the Manipur government will earmark a budgetary provision of Rs. 350 crore to support around 3.5 lakh women affected by the recent unrest in the state. He made the announcement while addressing the state-level celebration of International Women's Day 2026 at City Convention Centre, Imphal, organised by the social welfare department under the theme "Rights, Justice, Action for All Women and Girls."

The chief minister said women are pivotal to the development process and their meaningful participation across all sectors is essential for inclusive growth and sustainable development. He prayed that displaced families would soon be able to return home and acknowledged that women have endured immense challenges since the outbreak of violence, with many families facing severe financial strain. The financial provision, he said, would strengthen livelihoods and support women's role in rebuilding communities.

Recounting the courage of Manipuri women, Singh highlighted their historic contributions to the economy and society, from sustaining families during crises to strengthening the state's resilience. He remarked that widows have nurtured children into successful individuals even by selling vegetables or engaging in handloom works, reiterating that Manipuri women have always been pillars of strength. Sagolshem Kebi Devi MLA, attending the celebration, urged women to be aware of government schemes and constitutional rights to protect themselves from discrimination and injustice. State chief secretary Dr. Puneet Kumar Goel described women as enduring pillars of society, while ministers,



MLAs, administrative secretaries and officials also attended the programme. An audio-visual presentation on Mission Shakti, focusing on women's safety, security and empowerment, was screened.

The chief minister felicitated Nameirakpam Kunjarani Devi, Padmashree awardee and weightlifter, and Mangka Mayanglambam, renowned Manipuri folk singer, for their achievements. Meanwhile, the Manipur State Commission for Women (MSCW) celebrated the occasion at Hotel Imphal under the theme "Give to Gain." Addressing the gathering, Dr SS Olish MLA described being born a woman as a blessing and urged women to contribute sincerely

towards building harmonious families and communities. She appealed to women to nurture goodwill, unity and mutual understanding, expressing hope that such values would lead the state towards lasting peace and harmony.

The programme also featured a documentary highlighting the roles and achievements of Manipuri women across various fields, with messages from prominent personalities. Celebrations across the state marked International Women's Day, recognising the spirit, strength and resilience of women in Manipur. Heavy Industries and Steel, visited Noney to inspect the bridge, accompanied by the local district administration.

Assam to make record single-day transfer to 40L Orunodoi families



Guwahati, Mar 09: Aiming to extend financial relief to lakhs of families, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, on Sunday, announced that financial assistance of Rs 9,000 will be provided to around 40 lakh beneficiary families under the Orunodoi scheme on March 10.

The announcement was made during a live interaction on social media before the Chief Minister began the seventh day of the "Jana Ashirwad Yatra" in Margherita. Speaking during the interaction, Sarma said the financial assistance will be distributed to beneficiaries across the state through special meetings organised at the local level. "On March 10 at 10:30 am, 40 lakh Orunodoi families will receive Rs 9,000. On this occasion, meetings will be organised in panchayats across Assam, including the MSE areas of Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao, as well as in the VC-DC areas of the Bodoland Territorial Region and ward areas," the Chief Minister said. Sarma added that beneficiaries will receive the financial assistance during these

meetings and urged all eligible families to be present at the designated venues. "I invite all beneficiaries to attend the meetings. In Assam, there are about 40 lakh Orunodoi beneficiary families, and the total amount to be disbursed will be around Rs 3,600 crore," Sarma said, noting that the initiative marks one of the largest financial assistance programmes in the state.

The Chief Minister further said such initiatives are possible due to the support and encouragement of the people of Assam.

Earlier, while announcing the DBT disbursement post a cabinet meeting on February 26, Sarma had said that this will be the highest single-day transfer of funds to beneficiaries in the history of Assam. "Meetings will be held across every panchayat, municipal ward and autonomous council area to mark the distribution. The central programme will take place at Jyoti Bishnu Kala Kendra in Khanapara," Sarma said.

Khandu praises the W. Kameng community's efforts to commercialize forest products

Itanagar, Mar 09: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Sunday congratulated the communities of Mandala, Phudung, Khellong and Nyukmadung, in West Kameng district of the state, for successfully marketing key non-timber forest products from their Community Conserved Areas (CCAs).

He described the initiative as a strong example of how community stewardship can generate livelihoods while protecting nature. Khandu said the achievement highlights the role of sustainable harvesting and collective action in strengthening the rural economy while conserving forest resources. "Congratulations to the communities of Mandala, Phudung, Khellong and Nyukmadung for successfully marketing important non-timber forest products from their community conserved areas," the chief minister said in a post on X. The chief minister observed that through collective effort and sustainable harvesting practices, local collectors were able to market Kha-

gi (Zanthoxylum species, commonly known as Sichuan pepper or Timur) and Lishi (Illicium griffithii, commonly known as Star Anise), generating significant income for local families while ensuring conservation of these valuable forest resources. Khandu said the initiative demonstrates how local communities can build sustainable livelihoods by responsibly managing natural resources. "Through collective effort and sustainable harvesting practices, local collectors have marketed Khagi and Lishi, generating significant income for local families while ensuring conservation of these valuable forest resources," he said. The chief minister also highlighted the role of institutional support and responsible market linkages in the initiative.

He said the effort was supported by World Wide Fund for Nature India and connected with responsible buyers such as Dabur India, Nahar Organics and North Eastern Regional Agricultural Marketing Corporation. "This achievement,



supported by WWF-India and linked to responsible buyers such as Dabur India, Nahar Organics and NERAMAC, is a wonderful example of how community stewardship can create livelihoods while protecting nature," Khandu said. He extended his appreciation to the Community Conserved Area management committees and the families involved in the initiative. "Heartfelt congratulations to all the CCA Management Committees and the more than 250 families involved. Such community-led initiatives strengthen the green

economy of Arunachal Pradesh while preserving our rich ecological heritage," he added. The marketing of non-timber forest products such as Sichuan pepper and star anise is increasingly being promoted in Arunachal Pradesh as a sustainable livelihood option for rural communities, officials said. By linking forest-based produce with responsible buyers and organised markets, such initiatives help generate income for villagers while encouraging conservation of biodiversity-rich community forests across the state, they added.

NSRDA flags non-functional NIMSR hospital

Dimapur, Mar 09: Nagaland Senior Retired Doctors' Association (NSRDA), during its first executive meeting held at Hotel Japfu on March 7, expressed serious concern over the continued non-functioning of the hospital at the Nagaland Institute of Medical Sciences and Research (NIMSR), Phriebagei, Kohima.

According to a press release, the new team also held extensive discussions on various pressing issues related to healthcare service delivery in the state, with particular focus on the non-functional hospital attached to the medical college. The house observed that even after a decade since the project was initiated, the medical college was yet to have a fully functional hospital. Members expressed dismay over the slow pace of development, stating that a fully operational medical college hospital would significantly benefit both students pursuing professional medical education and patients requiring tertiary healthcare services. Further, the house expressed disappointment over what it termed the collapsing primary healthcare delivery system at the periphery. It observed that issues such as transfer and posting irregularities, chronic absenteeism of doctors at their places of posting, and the prevailing unethical roster system allowing doctors to work at their own convenience were among the key factors affecting healthcare delivery in rural areas.

NSRDA called upon working doctors to uphold ethical professionalism in the discharge of their duties and serve humanity to the best of their abilities. It also urged the department concerned to streamline its workforce to ensure equitable healthcare delivery without compromise.

The meeting concluded with a resolution urging the government to demonstrate strong political will, accelerate the ongoing works at NIMSR, and complete the project at the earliest in the larger interest of the citizens of Nagaland. As senior retired doctors, the association said it could not remain silent spectators to what it described as the "sorry state of affairs" of the state's only medical college. Minister's Health Insurance Scheme (CMHIS). While government employees have been regularly contributing to the scheme, the association noted that only a relatively affluent section of the population had the means to access treatment in far-flung corporate hospitals. The association questioned the rationale behind empanelling corporate hospitals outside the state when the majority of Nagaland's population could not afford to avail such high-end facilities. It stressed that completion of the envisioned state-of-the-art medical college hospital at NIMSR was crucial, as it would enable patients to access CMHIS benefits within the state.

Assam: Congress-Rajior Dal alliance talks hit deadlock over Dhing seat

Guwahati, Mar 09: The proposed pre-poll alliance between the Congress and Rajior Dal in Assam appears to have hit a deadlock after prolonged seat-sharing negotiations failed to produce a consensus, with the regional party attributing the breakdown to the Congress' refusal to concede the Dhing Assembly constituency in Nagaon district.

In a statement issued on Sunday, Rajior Dal president Akhil Gogoi said repeated rounds of discussions between the two parties had failed despite the regional party progressively reducing its seat demands in an effort to reach an agreement. According to Akhil Gogoi, Rajior Dal had initially proposed contesting 27 seats but later brought the number down to 20 and subsequently to 15 in order to facilitate a compromise with the Congress. The Congress eventually agreed to allocate 13 seats, though only four of them were from the list of constituencies proposed by Rajior Dal. Even after indicating its willingness to accept most of the Congress' conditions, the



party insisted on retaining the Dhing constituency, which eventually became the principal sticking point in the negotiations. Rajior Dal also expressed dissatisfaction over a joint press conference held on March 6 by the Congress along with three other opposition parties from which it was excluded, stating that the develop-

ment had hurt the party's self-respect. In the statement, the party further alleged that it had repeatedly made concessions to help build a united opposition front against the BJP but claimed that the Congress had attempted to pressure it into accepting its terms.

Despite the apparent deadlock,

leaders in the Congress indicated that efforts to revive the alliance were still under way. Dispur Congress candidate Mira Borthakur said Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) president Gaurav Gogoi had travelled to New Delhi on Sunday to consult the party's central leadership on the issue. She said the APCC leadership remained keen on forging an alliance with Rajior Dal and expressed hope that discussions with the All India Congress Committee leadership would help resolve the differences. She added that a final decision would be taken after consultations with the party's central leadership. Meanwhile, Rajior Dal's candidate for the Jalukbari constituency in Kamrup (Metropolitan) district, Ramen Borthakur, said he would reconsider contesting from the seat if the alliance with the Congress does not materialise. In that case, he indicated that he may instead contest from the Dispur constituency, reiterating the party's commitment to defeating the BJP in the state.

Indian Army organises health camps in 3 NE states on Women’s Day

Guwahati, Mar 09: In a tribute to women on the occasion of International Women’s Day, the Red Shield Division of the Indian Army organised a series of health and wellness initiatives across Mizoram, Tripura and Manipur, aimed at promoting preventive healthcare and improving medical awareness among women and their families.

According to an official statement, the outreach activities focused on addressing critical health concerns while encouraging community participation in life-saving initiatives.

In Aizawl, an HPV Vaccination Drive was conducted to support the prevention of cervical cancer. A total of seven girls re-

ceived the vaccination, marking an important step towards safeguarding the health of the younger generation.

In Agartala, a blood donation camp was organised, where 35 individuals, including women, voluntarily donated blood, contributing to strengthening local healthcare reserves and demonstrating the spirit of selfless service.

At Leimakhong, Manipur, a medical and dental health check-up camp cum awareness lecture was conducted.

The camp witnessed participation of 125 women and their family members, who benefited from professional medical screening and awareness on maintaining long-term dental and physical health.

Assam Rifles conducts medical camp in Tengnoupal

Imphal, Mar 09: Essential healthcare services reached the remote villages of Molphie and Chongiang in Tengnoupal district through medical camps organised by Assam Rifles under Operation Sadbhavana. The initiative was aimed at providing medical support to communities residing in far-flung border areas where access to healthcare facilities is often limited.

The camps witnessed enthusiastic participation from the local population, with 835 villagers benefitting, 385 from Molphie and 450 from Chongiang, informed a press release of IGAR(S).

Assam CM highlights shift from recommendation-based jobs to merit-based recruitment*

Guwahati, Mar 09: Himanta Biswa Sarma has emphasised the state government’s changing approach to public sector employment, highlighting a transition from recommendation-based recruitment to a system focused on merit, qualifications and examination performance.

In a post on the social media platform X, the Chief Minister spoke about what he described as a significant transformation in the way job opportunities are being offered to the youth of Assam.

According to Sarma, employment opportunities in the state were once heavily influenced by personal recommendations and connections. However, he said the current system places greater emphasis on academic qualifications, competitive examinations and individual effort.

“Once, jobs followed recommendations; merit stood aside. Today, opportunity follows qualification, exams and effort. From influence to integrity, the shift is clear. Under @BJP4Assam, students no longer look for connections, they rely on hard work. Their faith that merit will be rewarded is the real change,” the Chief Minister wrote.

His remarks highlight what the government describes as a move towards ensuring transparency and fairness in recruitment processes, where students and job seekers depend on their abilities rather than informal networks.

While the post did not outline specific policy changes or recruitment reforms, the Chief Minister’s message suggests that the administration intends to continue strengthening a merit-based system in government



employment.

Observers note that such statements could have wider socio-economic implications in Assam, particularly for young people preparing for competitive examinations and aspiring to secure public sector jobs. A stronger focus on qualifications and examinations may shape how students plan their careers and approach recruitment opportunities.

By communicating directly through social media, the Chief Minister also appears to be engaging with students and job seekers in real time, offering reassurance about the transparency and fairness of government hiring practices. The emphasis on merit and integrity in recruitment reflects the administration’s broader narrative of moving away from influence-driven appointments and encouraging a culture where hard work and capability determine employment opportunities.

35th Annual Yaoshang Sports Meet concludes

Imphal, Mar 09: The 35th Annual Yaoshang Sports Meet 2026, organized by the Local Upliftment Committee (LUC) Club, concluded at Maibi Lampak located at Thiyam Leishangkhang in Yunnan Huidrom. The sports meet was held as part of the Yaoshang festival celebrations that lasted for three days. As part of the closing programme of the Yaoshang Sports Meet, a “Thouri Chingnaba Changdam Competition” (traditional tug-of-war competition) was also organized under the Wangoi Kendra. A total of 15 teams from different localities under Wangoi Kendra participated in the Thouri Chingnabi Changdamnaba competition. The closing function and the competition were attended by several distinguished personalities including former Minister Oinam Lukhloi Singh, Retired Teacher Huidrom Sindur Singh, Ward No. 11 Caretaker of Thongkhong Luxmi Bazar Municipal Council Yunnan Jamuna Devi, along with many local residents. The Thouri Chingnabi Changdamnaba competition was formally inaugurated by former Minister Oinam Lukhloi Singh. Consolation prizes were also distributed to the participat-



son of Thongkhong Luxmi Bazar Municipal Council Yunnan Jamuna Devi, along with many local residents. The Thouri Chingnabi Changdamnaba competition was formally inaugurated by former Minister Oinam Lukhloi Singh. Consolation prizes were also distributed to the participat-

ing teams from different areas under Wangoi Kendra. In the final of the competition, Samarou Makha Leikai Meira Paibi team defeated Samushang Santipur Meira Paibi team and emerged as the champion. The Samushang Santipur Meira Paibi team secured the runner-up position.

The winning team Samarou Makha Leikai Meira Paibi was awarded a cash prize of Rs. 10,000, while the runner-up team Samushang Santipur Meira Paibi received Rs. 6,000.

The prizes were distributed by former Minister Oinam Lukhloi Singh to the two teams.

Cong-Raijor dal alliance bid suffers setback ahead of assembly polls

Guwahati, Mar 09: Efforts to stitch a Congress-Raijor Dal alliance in Assam ahead of the 2026 Assembly elections have suffered a major setback, with the regional party accusing the Indian National Congress of “unilateral decision-making, arrogance and deliberately sabotaging” alliance talks.

The Akhil Gogoi-led Raijor Dal alleged that the Congress formally excluded the party from the proposed Opposition alliance during a meeting of four parties held in Guwahati recently, marking what it described as the final collapse of negotiations.

The controversy centres on the con-

duct of Assam PCC chief Gaurav Gogoi, whom Raijor Dal leaders accused of displaying an “arrogant attitude” and a lack of genuine interest in building a broad anti-BJP coalition.

In a statement, the regional party said it was formally kept out of the alliance meeting and media conference of four Opposition parties held in Guwahati on March 6. The event effectively finalised an alliance arrangement without the participation of Raijor Dal, which the party described as “deeply disrespectful”.

According to the party, both the verbal remarks and body language of

Assam Pradesh Congress Committee president Gaurav Gogoi during the media conference suggested a lack of commitment to an inclusive opposition alliance. Referring to the earlier Assam United Civil Society Convention held on July 6, 2025, the regional party that Gogoi had then also refrained from clearly endorsing a broad opposition alliance. The disagreement between the Congress and Raijor Dal was centred on seat sharing for the 2026 Assembly elections. The regional party argued that this effectively reduced its bargaining position from 27 seats to just four seats.

BSF to organise Mega Pension Adalat at Patgaon to redress grievances of retirees from NE states

Guwahati, Mar 09: For the welfare of its veteran community, the Border Security Force (BSF) Guwahati Frontier is organizing the 67th Pension Adalat on March 11.

The session will be conducted at the Frontier Headquarters BSF Guwahati in Patgaon, Assam, specifically designed to provide a direct and transparent forum for the redressal of pension-related grievances.

The Adalat is scheduled to run from 09:30 am to 5 pm, welcoming BSF pensioners and their family members from across the seven states of the Northeastern region. By bringing together administra-

tive experts and pension authorities under one roof, the BSF aims to resolve long-standing issues, documentation hurdles, and payment discrepancies that retirees and their kin may be facing.

Given the vast geographical spread of the North East, the BSF Guwahati Frontier encourages all eligible retirees to utilize this opportunity to ensure their records are updated and their entitlements are secured.

This initiative emphasises the organization’s enduring respect for those who have served the nation and its dedication to their post-service well-being.

Governor felicitates four NCC Cadets of Manipur

Imphal, Mar 09: Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla, today felicitated four NCC Cadets of Manipur who participated in this year’s Republic Day Parade and NCC PM Rally held in New Delhi. The Governor gave cash rewards to the four Cadets namely CUO Konsam Moramba Meitei; CUO Ningthoujam Pinky Devi; CSUO Swaty Laishram and SUO Leitanthem Chanchan Devi. The Governor congratulated the cadets and encouraged them to continue their spirit of dedication towards the nation. Group Commander NCC HQ, Imphal, along with other officers highlighted the training activities taken up under different units throughout the state. He also informed the Governor that training sessions for the cadets from Chura-



chandpur had been conducted in Dimapur.

INDIAN ARMY CONDUCTS AWARENESS LECTURE ON AGNIPATH SCHEME AT KAKOPATHAR

Tinsukia, Mar 9: Continuing its outreach efforts to inspire the youth of the region, the Red Shield Gunners, under the aegis of Spear Corps, conducted another awareness lecture on the Agnipath Scheme at Padmanath Gohain Baruah Government Model College, Kakopathar. The session aimed to guide and motivate students towards a career in the Indian Army by providing authentic information about enrolment as Agniveers. During the interaction, Army representatives explained the key aspects of the Agnipath Scheme including eligibility criteria, educational qualifications, recruitment process, medical standards, training structure and the four-year service tenure. Students were also briefed about the financial benefits under the Seva Nidhi package and the wide range of career opportunities available after completion of service. The lecture was conducted in an engaging and interactive manner, allowing students to freely ask questions and gain a



deeper understanding of life in the Indian Army. The enthusiasm and curiosity displayed by the young participants reflected their growing aspiration to serve the nation and wear the olive green with pride.

Such initiatives by the Indian Army not only provide clarity about recruitment opportunities but also nurture a spirit of patriotism, discipline and national service amongst the youth,

strengthening bond between the Army and the people. The Indian Army conducted an awareness lecture on the Agnipath Scheme at Kakopathar, aiming to inform local youth about the opportunities

and benefits of the new recruitment model. The session was organized as part of the Army’s outreach initiative to engage with communities and provide clarity on the scheme, which has generated significant interest across the country.

During the lecture, Army officials explained the objectives of Agnipath, highlighting its role in modernizing the force while offering young aspirants a structured pathway to serve the nation. The scheme allows recruits, known as Agniveers, to join the Army for a four-year period, after which a percentage will be retained for longer service. Officials emphasized that the program not only provides military training and discipline but also equips participants with skills valuable for future careers in both public and private sectors.

The lecture also addressed common queries regarding eligibility, selection procedures, career prospects, and post-service benefits.



■ The Mega Sundays on Cycle – International Women’s Day Special was held at Khuman Lampak Sports Complex, Imphal, organized by the Sports Authority of India, North-East Regional Centre as part of the Fit India Movement. Over a thousand participants, including dignitaries and notable athletes, gathered to promote fitness on International Women’s Day.

Imphal, Mar 09: The Mega Sundays on Cycle – International Women’s Day Special was celebrated at Khuman Lampak Sports Complex, Imphal, organised by the Sports Authority of India, North-East Regional Centre (SAI NERC) under the nationwide Fit India Movement. Over a thousand participants including athletes, students, dignitaries and members of the public gathered for the event, promoting the message of fitness and active living on the occasion of International Women’s Day. The programme was attended by Hon’ble Home Minister of Manipur and Minister of Youth Affairs, Government of Manipur, Shri Konthoujam Govindas, along with officials from the state sports administration including the Sports Secretary, Government of Manipur, Director, Youth Affairs and Sports, Manipur and Hon’ble Vice-Chancellor, Manipur University Shri N. Lokendra Singh. The event also witnessed the presence of several eminent sportspersons from Manipur, including Pad-

mashree and Arjuna Awardee Smt. Nameirakpam Kunjarani Devi, Arjuna Awardee Smt. Laishram Sarita Devi, Arjuna Awardee Smt. Ngambam Sonia chanu, Arjuna Awardee Smt. Wangkhem Sandhyarani, Arjuna Awardee and rising Wushu athlete Smt. Naorem Roshibina Devi and National Body Building Champion (Multiple Titles) Smt. Sarita. Among the special invitees who attended the programme were Shri Leishangthem Ibomcha, Dronacharya Awardee and Retd. Deputy Director of SAI, Shri R. Udiang, DIG M&N Sector CRPF, Shri H. Premjit Meitei, DIG Range Imphal CRPF, Smt. W. Nandini Devi, 2IC, 86 Bn CRPF, renowned actor Smt. Medha, Smt. Yengkhom

Victoria Devi, MPS and Prof. Naorem Lokendra Singh, Vice Chancellor, Manipur University. Organised in commemoration of International Women’s Day, the initiative aimed to highlight the role of sports and fitness in empowering communities and encouraging greater participation of women and youth in physical activities. The Mega Sundays on Cycle event also marked the beginning of the Fit India Carnival in Imphal, scheduled to be held on March 9 and 10, 2026 at Hapta Kangjeibung, Palace Compound, where a range of fitness sessions, activity zones, traditional sports showcases and cultural performances will take place for the public.

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The Growing Need for Digital Literacy

Digital technology has become deeply integrated into daily life. From education and communication to banking and healthcare, many essential services now depend on digital platforms. In this environment, digital literacy has become an essential skill. Digital literacy involves more than simply using electronic devices. It includes the ability to evaluate online information, protect personal data, and use digital tools responsibly. Individuals who lack these skills may struggle to participate fully in modern society. One major challenge is the spread of misinformation. Social media platforms allow information to circulate rapidly, but not all of it is reliable. People who lack critical digital skills may find it difficult to distinguish between credible sources and misleading content. Education systems must therefore prioritise digital literacy training. Students should learn how to evaluate sources, verify facts, and use technology responsibly. These skills help individuals become informed and responsible digital citizens. Governments and organisations should also provide digital training programs for adults, especially in communities where access to technology has been limited. Expanding digital literacy helps bridge the digital divide and promotes greater economic participation. Technology will continue to shape the future of work and communication. Ensuring that citizens possess the skills needed to navigate digital environments is therefore essential. A digitally literate population strengthens democracy, improves economic opportunities, and encourages responsible use of technology in an increasingly connected world.

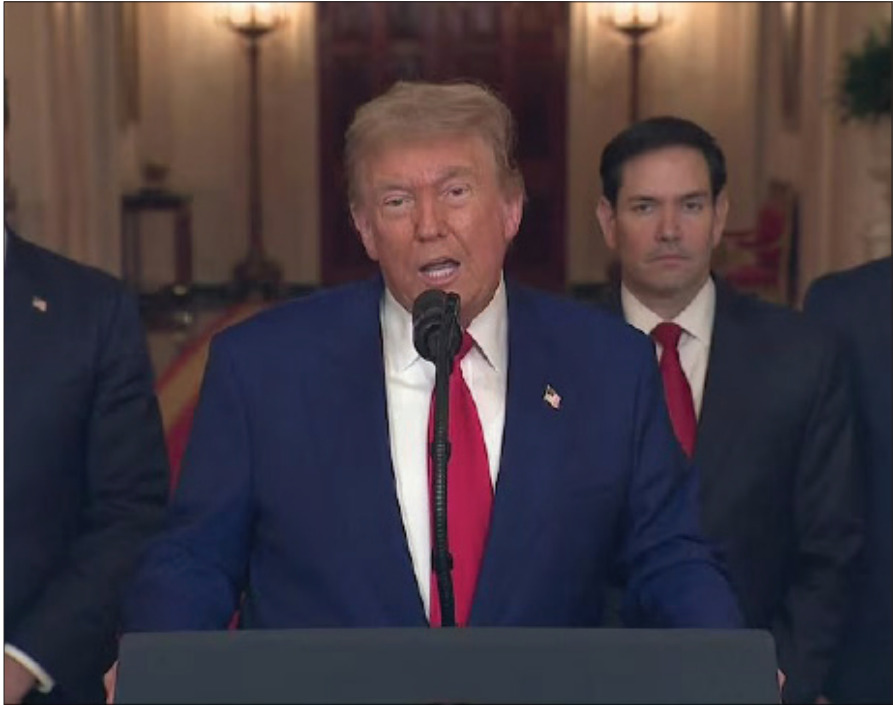
Australia’s blind refusal to question Trump’s bombing of Iran risks ensnaring us in a dangerous folly

As the illegal American-Israeli air war on Iran spreads its treacherous dangers virus-like across the globe, Australia, despite its limp rhetoric of non-involvement, risks increasing ensnarement in a hyper-macho Trump folly with no apparent endgame.

Call it US-Australia Alliance management. Call it an obsequious maintenance at all costs of the reckless Aukus submarine security pact. Or call it what it more closely resembles – appeasement of a belligerent US administration hell-bent on reiterating its global domination at any cost. Regardless, Australia’s passive refusal to challenge the US and Israel on everything from the illegality of the murderous bombing of Iran to the war’s opaque objectives, draws us closer to the danger daily.

The reality is that alliance management at all costs with the Trump administration indulges little but an increasingly redundant, sentimental notion of a US-Australia relationship built on a century of diplomatic and military trust – and genuine historic ally-ship. That relationship no longer exists because, quite simply, the current administration is incapable of fulfilling its part, having defined itself with an obscene self-love and with bullying global threats on national security and trade. As this reckless war draws ever-broader retaliation across the Middle East and increasingly lures in a reluctant continental Europe and Britain, the moral and strategic reasons for Australia to genuinely avoid involvement (beyond repatriating citizens) are clear.

Strategically the aims of the US-Israeli air attacks on Iran are no clearer than when the first strikes were made nine days ago. Is it to neutralise a supposed grave nuclear threat (already “obliterated” by the US during the 2025 12-day war according to Trump himself) – or to bring about change to a terrible regime that sponsors global terror and wickedly oppresses the Iranian populace now under hideous bombard-



ment?

There is broad global consensus that genuine regime change in Iran cannot be achieved by the air attacks alone, which are killing en-masse the citizens (including many school girls) the US insists it wants to save, potentially fomenting instead new generations of radical anti-western sentiment and violence.

From an insistence on “unconditional surrender” and varying positions on whether US troops would, could or might be deployed, such presidential oscillation and characteristic unpredictability should make traditional allies like Australia inordinately wary of lending practical military support to the American-Israeli objective, whatever its nebulous truth.

Australia has a proud history of involvement in the mid-20th century establishment of rules-based order and international law. It is galling for many (not least in the

Labor movement) to hear senior Australian government figures, including foreign minister Penny Wong, say that Australia supports the war against Iran though leaving it “for the United States and Israel to speak of the legal basis for the attacks”.

So far Australia has insisted it will not play any “offensive” military role in the war (notwithstanding that three Australian personnel were aboard a US submarine that torpedoed an Iranian warship, killing many people). But if, as anticipated, Australian hardware and personnel are deployed to help defend Gulf nations from Iranian attacks, the definitional malleability of “offensive” and “defensive” may be sorely tested.

Regardless, any deployment at all places Australian personnel in harm’s way. Australian deaths would ineluctably up the military stakes for Australia. Might initial Australian bloodshed, in those circum-

stances, inevitably lead to a bellicose call from the US administration for Canberra to up its involvement? Meanwhile, the moral case for avoiding greater Australian entwinement in this war is far more transparent.

An unseemly bloodlust (actually the apt adjective here is disgusting) and an unsurprising but no less abhorrent alpha masculinity from the president and the Secretary of War, Pete Hegseth, defines this war’s conduct. “Death and destruction from the sky all day long,” Hegseth, a Christian nationalist with a fetish for the Crusades and a penchant for machismo, boasts. Read about him here in this frightening piece by David Smith in Washington and ask Australian leaders why we’d rely on such jokers for anything, not least jointly operated submarines, let alone follow them into an increasingly global conflict.

Trump and Hegseth sound like two juiced-up frat-boys when they talk of the wartime killing in Iran and blithely of the risk to their own personnel (then again, paramilitaries in the US have killed American citizens on the streets, and the administration has threatened to invade the territory of Nato allies, so nothing should really surprise us any more). Including, perhaps, the puerile propaganda video released by the White House, splicing and dicing tough-guy Hollywood characters with actual footage of lethal US airstrikes.

But this is the US our leaders follow, the one they assiduously ego-massage and live in terror of rebuke from, not least because some visiting fellows would claim the greatest imminent threat to Australia’s national interest comes from China. America, and only the good ‘ol US of A we’ve always relied upon, would be there to save us. Well, if you think Australia can rely on this US administration, come what may, I’ve got a bridge to sell you. It’s time Australia drew a line in the sand and said four words: Not in our name.

Global crises demand feminist lens on global governance

Over the past three years, a series of devastating conflicts—the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and by Isreal in Gaza, the ongoing Sudan civil war and the conflict in Iran—have exposed the fragility of the global rules meant to prevent violence and protect civilians. Regional crises now spill rapidly across borders, destabilising economies, fueling displacement, and deepening humanitarian emergencies. At the same time, new forms of conflict are emerging through cyber warfare, digital surveillance, and information manipulation, challenging the capacity of many countries, especially developing nations to respond effectively. The result is a growing sense that the international rules-based order that has guided cooperation for decades is losing both legitimacy and efficacy. Multilateral bodies such as the United Nations (UN) increasingly struggle to enforce norms or mediate conflicts among powerful states. Meanwhile, geopolitical competition often sidelines human rights, humanitarian principles, and the voices of women and marginalised communities. A feminist perspective reveals something deeper about this crisis. The current system of global governance has long been built on militarised, state-centric notions of power that marginalise the experiences of those most affected by conflict and inequality. Women and girls bear disproportionate burdens during crises: displacement, gender-based violence, economic insecurity, and political exclusion. Yet they remain dramatically underrepresented in peace negotiations, diplomatic initiatives, and security institutions. This gap between rhetorical commitments to gender



equality and the reality of exclusion reflects structural imbalances embedded within global governance.

Civil society organisations and international NGOs have historically helped to bridge this gap. They advocate human rights, monitor abuses, and hold governments accountable. Many of the world’s most important advances in women’s rights from humanitarian norms to international agreements such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women were achieved through sustained activism rather than state action alone. Today, however, civil society operates in an increasingly constrained environment. Shrinking civic space, rising nationalism, and restrictions on foreign funding make cross-border collaboration difficult. Governments sometimes portray NGOs as external actors undermining sovereignty, while fragmented international cooperation weakens advocacy networks. In this context, protecting and empowering

women-led organisations is critical for both domestic and global resilience.

For Bangladesh, these global shifts carry direct implications. The country faces climate vulnerability, migration pressures, supply chain disruptions, and the ongoing Rohingya refugee crisis. Any breakdown in international cooperation quickly translates into real pressures on governance, resources, and social stability. At the same time, Bangladesh has an opportunity to shape emerging debates about global governance. With a long history of engagement in development cooperation, peacekeeping, and South-South collaboration, the country has credibility in the Global South. Yet domestic gender gaps limit its potential. Political representation remains a key barrier. In the most recent national elections, less than four percent of candidates were women, and only seven were elected to general seats. The upcoming opportunities for women through the 50 reserved parliamentary seats provide a crucial avenue for

meaningful participation. These seats should not be treated as symbolic; they must serve as platforms for women to influence law-making, oversee policy, and shape decisions affecting families, communities, and national development. Maximising this provision, alongside engagement with women-led civil society organisations, could transform Bangladesh’s political culture and reinforce its international credibility as a regional leader in gender equality. There are several areas where policymakers could act decisively. First, Bangladesh should strengthen the integration of gender perspectives within foreign policy and diplomacy. Expanding women’s participation in negotiation, peacebuilding, and international decision-making improves outcomes and aligns domestic practice with global commitments. Second, civil society must be recognised as a strategic partner. Women’s organisations often possess the most nuanced understanding of social dynamics and emerging risks

and including them in policy discussions enhances both legitimacy and effectiveness.

Third, Bangladesh should champion reforms in global governance that reflect the growing influence of the Global South. International institutions must adapt to a world where power is distributed more widely and legitimacy depends on fair representation. Advocating for inclusive decision-making including gender-balanced leadership strengthens both credibility and outcomes. Fourth, the government should invest in protecting digital spaces. Disinformation and online harassment disproportionately target women activists and journalists. Policies that safeguard freedom of expression, promote digital literacy, and prevent online abuse are essential to ensure meaningful democratic participation. International Women’s Day is often marked by symbolic celebrations. In 2026, it should serve as a reminder that the struggle for gender equality is inseparable from the fight for a just, resilient, and inclusive governance. Women’s participation is not a side issue but instead, central to how societies respond to crisis, build peace, and sustain democracy. The international order is clearly entering a period of transition. Whether that transition produces greater instability or a more just system of cooperation will depend in part on whose voices are heard. By leveraging reserved parliamentary seats, protecting civic space, and advancing women’s leadership at home and abroad, Bangladesh can demonstrate that feminist, rights-based governance is not only a moral imperative but a practical strategy for national resilience and global credibility.

Balancing the scales for women begins with being seen

Late at night, when the house is quiet, I often return to my work. Lecture slides wait unfinished on my laptop. A half-written conference abstract sits on the screen, abandoned earlier when I stepped away to cook dinner. Between answering emails, preparing for the next class, and completing writing tasks, I check in with my daughter, who is now a young adult navigating her own demanding world. It is in these quiet pauses that reflection finds its way in. One such pause came recently when I opened an invitation in my inbox marking the International Women’s Day celebration. This year’s theme calls on us to “balance the scales.” It is a powerful image with fairness restored, equilibrium achieved. Yet, the longer I sit with this metaphor, the more I find myself questioning it. What if the scales we are trying to balance were never designed for us in the first place? The language of balance often suggests a simple equation: work on one side, family on the other. Adjust carefully, and equality will follow. But the lived reality of many working women has not been so straightforward. Growing up, I watched my mother, a high school teacher, balancing her professional commitments with the everyday labour of sustaining a household and raising a family. She carried her classroom responsibilities into the evening, grading papers with dinner simmering on the stove, or at the dining table after dinner was done. What I rarely saw was time for herself.

There was no moment to step back and check whether the scale was balanced. Across generations, women have learnt to carry these invisible weights without question and often without recognition, a reality long documented in research on women’s unpaid labour and the second shift. For women living in diaspora, that labour often multiplies. Diaspora life is not simply about movement across borders but a continuous negotiation of identity across cultures, values, and expectations. As a Bangalee-Australian woman, my life unfolds within this space of translation between the cultural inheritance of home and the intellectual traditions of Western academia. Balancing these worlds has been both a privilege and a challenge. It has meant acting as a bridge between worlds, explaining one cultural logic to another while celebrating both. In this space of negotiation, identity itself becomes a balancing act, shaped not only by work and family but also by cultural translation, emotional care, and representation.

Emotional labour, cultural negotiation, caregiving, representation—these forms of work rarely appear in policy documents, performance metrics, or institutional dashboards. Yet, they shape the everyday realities of countless women navigating professional and personal worlds. They are the unseen forces behind the appearance of balance. Motherhood added yet another layer to this balancing act. Being both a mother and an

academic means living within a delicate choreography of time, care, ambition, guilt, and hope.

The intellectual world rewards productivity and focus, while parenting demands emotional presence and flexibility. Neither role exists independently of the other. Looking back on the years of raising my daughter while building an academic career, I often ask myself difficult questions: were we ever truly taught how to balance these scales? Were we equipped with the language to recognise the invisible labour they involve? Were we given tools to protect our physical and mental well-being while navigating multiple expectations? Too often, the answer is no. Our societies celebrate women’s resilience while quietly depending on it. We praise women for doing it all without asking what it costs them. Yet, education systems rarely prepare young people, especially young women, for the realities of navigating identity, work, culture, and well-being. This is where my role as an educator becomes deeply personal. Education is not only about transmitting knowledge but shaping how people understand themselves and their place in the world. Classrooms are filled with diverse lives and stories that often remain unseen. When these experiences remain invisible, education flattens human complexity. But when students are invited to reflect on who they are, what they bring, and how their identities shape their perspectives, something powerful happens. The classroom shifts from a space of information to a space of recognition. And that is where balancing the scales truly begins: not by asking individuals to carry more weight, but by acknowledging the weight that already exists. Recognition is powerful, but it is only the beginning. If education is where the scales begin to shift, it must also be where students learn how to question the structures that keep them uneven.

If education is to contribute meaningfully to gender equity, we must equip young people with more than professional competencies. We must equip them with the intellectual courage to question inequality, the empathy to listen across differences, and the confidence to claim their own voices. This requires education that is identity-affirming, culturally responsive, and inclusive. Education that recognises diversity not as a challenge to manage but as a source of insight and knowledge. When a student realises that the many strands of their identity—like culture, language, gender, history—are not barriers to success but sources of insight and lived knowledge, the scale shifts slightly. When a young woman learns to articulate her perspective with confidence, the scale shifts again. When institutions recognise that knowledge itself is enriched by lived experience, the shift becomes structural. These shifts may seem small in isolation, but together they reshape the conditions under which balance becomes possible.

There were five reasons why the Sensex rose by 1,000 points



Mumbai: After several days of sharp declines triggered by rising tension in West Asia, Indian equity markets finally found some relief today, March 5. Benchmark indices bounced back strongly during the session. The rebound came even as global concerns around the ongoing US, Israel-Iran conflict continued to remain in focus. Similarly, the Nifty opened at 24,615.95 and traded between an intraday high of 24,854.20 and a low of 24,529.40, a movement of nearly 325 points during the session before closing firmly in positive territory. Today's recovery was largely a technical rebound after the sharp fall seen in the previous sessions. Another factor that

helped sentiment was the easing of market volatility. The India VIX, often referred to as the market's fear gauge, cooled off from elevated levels. Sectoral indices trade mostly higher. On the sectoral front, most indices ended the session with gains. The Nifty Auto index gained around 2%, while the Nifty Metal index also rose more than 2% during the session. Other sectors such as realty, pharmaceuticals, media, healthcare, consumer durables, and oil and gas also ended higher with gains of over 1%. Key gainers in today's trade Shares of Tech Mahindra, HCL Technologies and Tata Consultancy Services saw declines during the day. Among fi-

nancial stocks, ICICI Bank and State Bank of India were also among the stocks that ended the session in negative territory. Buying interest was visible in several large-cap stocks. Among the Nifty stocks, Adani Ports emerged as the top gainer with gains of around 4%. Other major stocks such as Larsen & Toubro, Hindalco Industries, Reliance Industries and Coal India also witnessed strong buying interest and gained over 3% during the session. Key laggards in today's trade While many stocks moved higher, some sectors continued to face selling pressure. Technology and select banking stocks remained among the key laggards in today's session. By the end of the trading session, markets managed to hold firmly in the green. The Sensex closed at 80,015.90, gaining about 899 points or 1.14%, while the Nifty settled at 24,765, up 285 points or 1.17%. The Nifty Bank index also ended higher at 59,055, rising around 0.51%. "Amid supportive global cues, domestic equities ended higher, with mid- and small-cap stocks outperforming large caps. Investor sentiment improved after comments from the US deputy secretary suggested that an India-US trade deal may be nearing completion. Value buying also emerged in sectors such as metals, consumer durables, realty, and auto following recent corrections, while IT stocks resumed their decline partly due to the strengthening of the Indian rupee. Market momentum strengthened toward the close after reports that Iran had conditionally offered to abandon its nuclear program, raising hopes of de-escalation in the ongoing US/Israel-Iran tensions," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investment. The day began on a green note today. The Sensex opened at 79,530.48 and moved between an intraday high of 80,303.83 and a low of 79,201.69, an intraday movement of more than 1,100 points.

Emkay Global believes MRF, not CEAT 36%



Mumbai: Surging crude prices have triggered concerns for a host of manufacturing companies. The tyre industry is one such example. The share price of Apollo Tyres has seen a sharp 5% correction in 5 days. However, Emkay Global has maintained a 'Buy' rating on Apollo Tyres and set a target price of Rs 600. This implies over 36% upside potential for the stock from current levels. The brokerage house is betting on a robust demand outlook, strong pricing power, capacity expansion, and many other factors behind retaining the rating. The company is seeing strong demand with double-digit year-on-year growth across all segments and channels in Q4FY26. This momentum, driven by government infrastructure spending, economic development, and recent GST cuts, is expected to remain healthy through FY27. "Current outlook for FY27 also appears to be healthy. Apollo Tyres has announced a capacity addition of Rs 5,800 crore (for TBR and PCR); these will come onstream by the end of FY28 and FY29 (normal 2-3-year gestation period)," said the report. Other tyre companies have undertaken price hikes too. In fact, over the past

few quarters, the tyre industry refrained from price cuts despite softer raw material prices, reflecting improved pricing discipline and a sharper profitability focus. The company is undergoing a major restructuring in Europe, including the closure of its Netherlands plant and shifting production to Hungary and India. This move is projected to lift European margins by 200-300 basis points by FY28 by significantly reducing conversion costs. The share price of Apollo Tyres has fallen 5.7% in the past five trading sessions. The stock has declined 14.4% in the last one month and 10% in the past six months. However, Apollo Tyres' stock price has given a return of 11.6% over the previous one year. Significant capacity expansion. They are achieving this through disciplined pricing, having already implemented price hikes in January 2026, and a focus on a better product mix and lower discounting. "Raw material prices are expected to be flattish QoQ in Q4FY26, with 3% rise expected in Q1FY27. Tight demand-supply dynamics should support tyre makers' pricing power. Apollo Tyres has already taken certain price hikes in January," said Emkay Global.

Trump admin secures relief from US court's



New Delhi: The US Court of International Trade offered temporary relief to the Donald Trump administration on Friday (US time) by suspending a previous order that pressed US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) "to the extent that it directs immediate compliance" on tariff refunds, according to a new Reuters report. In its new filing, CBP suggested that it could begin issuing refunds by late April after reworking its existing technology to comply with the fresh developments at hand. The agency affirmed that it was making efforts to have the new "ACE functionality ready for use in 45 days." It also noted that the new changes in the system would save the agency's employees over 4 million hours of work. As the agency faces an "unprecedented volume of refunds," the filing confirmed that as of March 4, the Trump government owes approximately \$166 billion in tariff refunds, without interest. The figure was similar to what Wharton Penn had previously estimated. As of Wednesday, more than 330,000 importers have made a total of over 53 million entries "in which they have deposited or paid duties imposed pursuant to the International Emergency Economic Powers Act," Brandon Lord, executive director of the trade programs directorate at CBP's Office of Trade, said in the filing. CBP further insisted that it was "confident" about developing and implementing new functions in its Automated Commercial Environment, which is the system of record for imported merchandise. By doing so, CBP states that the system will "streamline and consolidate refunds and interest payments on an importer basis," instead of processing more than 54 million separate refunds. This comes after the CBP reiterated on Friday that it could not immediately start issuing tariff refunds, which amount to about \$166 billion, as per a recent filing by the Trump administration. In the official documents filed this week, CBP said that its existing "administrative procedures and

technology" were not suited to immediately comply with Judge Richard Eaton's previous order on the IEEPA tariffs. The US Supreme Court ruled those duties illegal last month. The US judge's previous March 5 order directed CBP to start paying importers using its existing systems to compensate all importers affected by the "illegal" tariffs, not just those who filed lawsuits against the Trump admin. However, the US Customs agency has since asserted in its new filing that it was preparing a system that would be able to process the hefty tariff refunds without requiring importers to sue. Kumar added that STPI plans to leverage its existing infrastructure to support the next wave of AI-led innovation would be similar to how the organisation supported the country's IT services growth over the past three decades. "The IT sector today generates over \$200-250 billion in revenue. The same story can be repeated for AI, and STPI can play a similar enabling role using the infrastructure already created for the IT industry," he said. Given STPI's robust presence in Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities, the transitioning to AI hubs is expected to provide impetus to the democratic distribution of AI resources, a key pillar highlighted by both national and global tech leaders during the recent AI Impact Summit held at the national capital. Power exchanges turn into revenue engines for states. The transition has been earlier advocated by senior MeitY officials, which is build on STPI's long-standing role in supporting the technology sector, both through startup incubation also through its statutory role in facilitating. Eaton has been designated as the only Court of International Trade judge slated to hear dozens of lawsuits from importers seeking refunds on Trump's reciprocal tariffs following the Supreme Court's 6-3 ruling in February in the case Learning Resources Inc v Trump.

India's GDP might drop to 6% in FY27 due to the West Asia crisis: SBI Studies

New Delhi: An SBI Research report said that the ongoing conflict in West Asia could have multiple economic implications for India, particularly through higher oil prices, disruptions in energy supply routes, and potential impacts on remittances and trade. The report highlighted that while the immediate inflationary impact of the widening conflict in the Middle East may remain limited, prolonged tensions and supply chain disruptions could significantly affect global economic stability. One of India's major concerns is the potential impact on crude oil supplies if tensions disrupt traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, a critical global energy corridor. The report noted, "India imports nearly 90% of its crude oil requirements. About two million barrels per day of this, out of 5.5 million, transits through the Strait of Hormuz." Any closure or disruption in this route could lead to



supply constraints and higher import costs for the country. Nearly 20 per cent of the world's crude oil passes through this narrow waterway, making it one of the most important oil transit chokepoints globally. Global

oil markets have already reacted to the rising tensions. Brent crude prices have surged from about \$58.92 per barrel in December 2025 and \$70.75 per barrel in late February 2026 to around \$85.40 per barrel

in early March, surpassing \$89 per barrel amid intensifying geopolitical risks. Higher oil prices could have broader macroeconomic consequences for India. According to SBI Research estimates, a \$10-per-barrel increase in crude oil prices could widen India's current account deficit (CAD) by around 36 basis points. The rise in oil prices may also lead to cost-push inflation, adding around 35-40 basis points to consumer price inflation. The report also flagged risks to India's inward remittances, particularly from the Gulf region. India received personal remittances worth around \$138 billion in FY25, up from \$119 billion in FY24. Notably, about 38 per cent of these remittances originate from Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, making them sensitive to oil price movements and regional economic conditions.

Four major listings on the primary market, SME issuance, and three mainboard IPOs

Mumbai: Will the IPO market stay busy even as stock markets remain volatile? The next week could provide the answer. Despite sharp swings on Dalal Street, the primary market is preparing for another active phase with new public issues and multiple listings lined up. The week beginning March 9 is expected to bring three mainboard IPOs, one SME IPO and several stock market debuts. Among the key offerings next week is the IPO of Rajputana Stainless, which plans to raise around Rs 254.98 crore from the public markets. The issue will open for subscription on March 9 and close on March 11. The company has fixed a price band of Rs 116 to Rs 122 per share. The second mainboard offering will come from Innovision, which provides manpower and toll plaza management services. The company's Rs 322.84 crore IPO will open on March 10 and close on March 12. The shares will be offered in a price band of Rs 521 to Rs 548 each. The issue structure includes both a fresh issue and an offer-for-sale by promoters Randeep Hundal and Uday Pal Singh. Funds raised through the fresh issue will mainly be used to repay debt, support working capital requirements and meet general corporate needs. Infrastructure Investment Trust IPO Investors will also see a large infrastructure investment trust entering the market. The IPO of Raajmarg Infra Investment Trust will open for subscription between March 11 and March 13. Sponsored by the National Highways Authority of India, the InvIT plans to raise about Rs 6,000 crore. The price band has been fixed at Rs 99 to Rs 100 per unit. The public offering will consist of a mix of fresh shares and an offer-for-sale by the promoter. A portion of the funds raised will be used to set up a new



manufacturing facility in Gujarat's Panchmahal district. The company also intends to utilise the proceeds to reduce existing debt, expand its product range and meet general corporate expenses. The IPO of Apsis Aerocom will open for public subscription on March 11 and close on March

13. The issue size is about Rs 35.77 crore and it consists entirely of a fresh issue of around 0.33 crore shares. The company has fixed the price band at Rs 104 to Rs 110 per share. The share allotment is expected to be finalised on March 16, and the stock is likely to make its debut on the NSE SME platform on March 18.

INTERNATIONAL

The Pentagon is ‘looking into’ the deadly strike on a girls’ school in Iran, as the UN office seeks answers



Washington Pete Hegseth, the US defense secretary, provided little specifics and was evasive when asked about the deadly hit on a girls’ school in Iran, stating only that the US was “investigating” the matter. Iranian officials said the bombing on Saturday killed at least 165 students. When questioned about the bombing of Minab’s Shajareh Tayyebbeh

girls’ school, Hegseth replied, “All I can say is that we’re investigating that.” “We, of course, never target civilian targets, but we’re taking a look and investigating that.” The school was targeted on the first day of US and Israeli assaults on Iran. In addition to the numerous people slain, Iranian official television said that 96 others

were injured, including several children from the Shajareh Tayyebbeh school. On Tuesday, the United Nations human rights office urged “the forces behind a deadly attack on a girls’ school in Iran” to undertake an inquiry and give information about the event, but did not specify who it felt was responsible. Hegseth also stated on Wednesday that a US

submarine was responsible for the devastating hit on an Iranian vessel, which killed more than 80 people while cruising near the Sri Lankan coast. The Pentagon commander said that the US will have total and uncontested control of Iranian airspace within days. “We are just getting started,” Hegseth added. “We are accelerating, not decelerating.”

Airstrikes target Iran-Iraq border as US-Israeli strategy to mobilize Kurds gains traction

Iran: Intense bombings have struck dozens of military outposts, frontier posts, and police stations along Iran’s northern border with Iraq, indicating that the US and Israel are preparing for a new front in their war. A US person familiar with the conversations between Washington and Kurdish authorities stated that the US was prepared to give air assistance if Kurdish peshmerga forces crossed the border from northern Iraq. According to an Israeli military official, the air force has been “heavily operating in western Iran to degrade Iranian capabilities there and to open up a way to Tehran and create freedom of operations there”.

Kurdish authorities informed the Associated Press that Kurdish Iranian dissident organizations in northern Iraq were preparing for a possible cross-border military action in Iran, and the US had requested Iraqi Kurds to back them. Khalil Nadiri, an official with the Kurdistan Freedom Party, or PAK, headquartered in northern Iraq’s semi-autonomous Kurdish region, said on Wednesday that some of their fighters had gone to regions near the Iranian border in Sulaymaniyah province and were on alert. He stated that US authorities had approached Kurdish resistance group commanders about a planned operation, but provided no further specifics. Meanwhile, local officials report that Baloch terrorist groups opposing the Tehran administration have crossed the border into Iran from distant mountain camps in Pa-



kistan. Experts feared that supporting armed organizations from Iran’s ethnic communities would “open up a hornet’s nest,” exacerbating divides within the varied country and raising the likelihood of a catastrophic civil war if the current system falls. Donald Trump spoke with two leaders of Iranian Kurdish forces in northern Iraq earlier this week and has shown an interest in aiding individuals prepared to take up guns to overthrow the regime, according to US media reports. According to former intelligence and defense officials in Israel, the United States, and other regions, clandestine activities in northwestern Iran, where Kurdish populations are most numerous, were “ramped up” during Iran’s short war with Israel last summer. In January, rumors surfaced of battles between Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and parties of Kurdish peshmerga rebels who

had infiltrated Iran via Turkey and Iraq. Five opposing Iranian Kurdish groups, led by the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (KDPI), created a new alliance two weeks ago with the goal of overturning the Tehran regime. “Getting your groups aligned and united is the first play in the playbook,” stated a former US defense officer with expertise in covert operations. A KDPI spokeswoman would neither confirm or deny that its head, Mustafa Hijri, was one of the two Iranian Kurdish leaders Trump summoned, but claimed it was the responsibility of “free, democratic societies around the world to help [Iranian Kurds] win freedom”. “We think that the regime is in a deeply weak situation ... and will soon see its end days,” a spokeswoman told CNN. Hijri called on Iranian military personnel on Wednesday to abandon their posts and “return to their families”.

South Sudan faces returning to full-fledged civil war as violence rises

Africa: South Sudan is reeling from an increasing battle between the government-aligned army and opposition forces and affiliated organizations, which analysts fear threatens to plunge the country into civil war. In recent weeks, violent clashes in the world’s youngest country have escalated between the military loyal to President Salva Kiir and militants thought to be aligned with suspended vice-president Riek Machar. On Sunday, at least 169 people were killed when armed teenagers from Mayom County in the north assaulted a community in neighboring Abiemnom County near the Sudan border. Women, children, and members of the government security forces were among the casualties, according to James Monyluak Majok, the communications minister for Ruweng’s administrative district, which includes Abiemnom. The UN mission in South Sudan stated that it was sheltering around 1,000 people at its facility in the region and giving medical attention to those injured. According to the report, the attack injured around 23 persons. Stephano Wieu de Mialek, Ruweng’s chief administrator, said the assault was carried out by members of the White Army, a militia allied with Machar during the civil war, as well as forces affiliated with Machar’s political party and rebel group, the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement-in-Opposition (SPLM-IO). The organization denied responsibility for the attack and claimed no military presence in the region. Doctors Without Borders (MSF) stated on Monday that 26 of its employees were missing following recent violence in sections of Jonglei state, which has seen significant fighting between government and rebel troops since December. On 3 February, the humanitarian group reported that its hospital in Lankien had been attacked by government troops in an airstrike and then torched and looted, as had its health center in Pieri. It stated of the missing employees, “We have lost contact with them amid ongoing insecurity.” MSF claimed it has been obliged to halt medical work in Lankien and Pieri owing to security concerns. Machar and Kiir were both members of the Sudanese People’s Liberation Army guerrilla movement that fought for independence from Sudan, which



was achieved in 2011, with Kiir as president and Machar as first vice president. South Sudan spiraled into a brutal civil conflict in 2013, when Kiir sacked Machar and accused him of plotting a coup. Machar created the SPLM-IO, and both factions were involved in conflict that killed over 400,000 people and displaced about half of the country’s population. The conflict mostly took place along ethnic lines between Kiir’s overwhelming Dinka community and Machar’s Nuer, the country’s second-largest ethnic group. In 2018, Kiir and Machar reached a peace agreement that ended the civil war, established a two-party unity government, and reinstated Machar as vice president. However, implementation of the deal has scarcely begun as the two parties continue to disagree over power-sharing. Machar was accused with murder, treason, and other major offenses last September in connection with the White Army’s fatal attack on a government army post in Nasir county, in the country’s northeast. Kiir then suspended him from his position. Machar is being held under house arrest as his trial proceeds. His supporters claim the allegations against him are politically motivated, and analysts warn that Machar’s trial might jeopardize the peace deal. Machar’s prosecution and remov-

al from office have heightened tensions and coincided with a dramatic increase in violence, particularly in Jonglei state, where opposition forces seized government outposts in December and the government has been conducting a counteroffensive since January. Fighting between government and opposition troops there has displaced an estimated 280,000 people in the last two months. Daniel Akech, a senior analyst for South Sudan at the International Crisis Group, stated that the government’s “targeting” of Machar had united the opposition. Akech stated that the recent combat involved not only rebel factions loyal to him, but also organizations that had previously split from him because they now regarded him as a “symbolic unifying figure”. “Even if he’s detained or is incommunicado or cannot issue orders, he has become very effective,” Akech told me. Last Friday, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights urged immediate action to preserve the ceasefire accord and avoid a return to all-out civil war. “We are at a dangerous point, when rising violence is combined with deepening uncertainty over South Sudan’s political trajectory, as the peace agreement comes under severe strain,” Volker Türk told the UN Human Rights Council.

“A big burden for farmers” Gulf shipping turmoil risks food price shock

Iran: The worldwide fertiliser supply chain might be significantly disrupted if Iran’s effective shutdown of the Strait of Hormuz continues, raising worries about crop productivity and food security. Passage in the channel, located off Iran’s southern coast, has mostly ceased since the United States and Israel commenced their assaults over the weekend.

The strait transports between a quarter and a third of world fertilizer commerce, as well as one-fifth of seaborne crude oil and gas. The strait’s de facto closure has an impact on the transfer of ammonia and nitrogen, two crucial constituents in many synthetic fertilizer products. Approximately half of worldwide food production is dependent on synthetic nitrogen, and crop yields would plummet without fertilizer. The consequent shortages would raise the prices of household essentials like bread, pasta, and potatoes, as well as increase the cost of animal feed. The Gulf is home to some of the world’s largest fertilizer industrial facilities, and a lengthy transportation blockade might hamper output and increase expenses. After Russia, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia, Iran is the world’s fourth-largest exporter of urea, the most extensively used nitrogen fertilizer. The availability of raw materials and the growing cost of energy utilized in manufacturing have an impact on fertilizer output. Fossil gas accounts for 60% to 80% of nitrogen fertilizer manufacturing costs. Shutting down natural gas facilities in the Gulf is projected to further re-



duce global nitrogen supplies. Following a drone assault, Qatar shutdown its largest factory. Fertilizer costs have already risen, bringing back memories of the gas and fertilizer price increases experienced in early 2022 following Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Egyptian urea prices, a benchmark, have increased by more than 25%. They have reached \$625 (£467) per metric tonne, up from \$484-\$490 last week, according to CRU Group, a company that studies commodities prices. According to CRU’s Chris Lawson, the Middle East accounts for around 45% of worldwide commerce in sulphur, a major raw material for fertilizer manufacturing, as well as different metals and industrial chemicals. He clarified: “While there are many parallels to 2022, the supply and demand implications of the conflict in the Middle East have the potential to be much more severe and wide ranging, particularly if the strait of Hormuz is restricted for longer than two weeks.” A container ship was hit by a missile

in the strait on Wednesday, resulting in a fire in its engine room, according to UK maritime trade operations. It is the most recent vessel to be assaulted, after events in which at least two crew members perished. Concerns regarding fertiliser supplies come at a difficult time for farmers in the United Kingdom, Europe, and North America, who are starting to grow spring crops. While most producers will have adequate fertilizer for the year ahead, they will normally be seeking to buy for the following year. The UK is expected to fulfill around 40% of its nitrogen fertilizer requirements, with the remainder coming from imports. Any reduction in fertilizer supply would result in farmers applying less fertiliser to their crops, which often translates into poorer yields and higher food costs. According to the Office for National Statistics, food and non-alcoholic drink costs increased by 16.5% in the year to November 2022, following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. According to Worldpanel by

Numerator, a market research firm, grocery price inflation unexpectedly increased last month, rising 4.3% in the four weeks to February 22. “We are seeing immediate price volatility, but at this stage, it is too early to say how the UK may be impacted in the medium term,” said Tom Bradshaw, president of the National Farmers Union. Farms were already struggling to make ends meet before the Middle East turmoil drove up the cost of crucial inputs like fertilizer and gasoline. “Farmers were already in a difficult situation before this, struggling with narrow margins,” said Svein Tore Holsether, CEO of Yara, the world’s second-largest fertilizer manufacturer. He urged governments to take additional actions to assist food growers; “Input prices are increasing but at the same time there hasn’t been much impact to crop prices, so we are putting a very big burden on the shoulders of the farmers now, unless there is a step up in supporting farmers in this challenging time.”

Experts warn that attacking Iran’s nuclear program might country

US-Israeli: The US-Israeli attack on Iran is designed to settle a 24-year impasse over Tehran’s nuclear program, but it risks backfiring and forcing the government to develop a hidden weapon, proliferation experts say. The Iranian administration has always maintained that the program is for civilian reasons and has no aim of producing nuclear weapons. However, since two undisclosed locations for uranium enrichment and heavy water plutonium manufacturing were found in 2002, the program has been viewed with skepticism. A nuclear deal signed in 2015 set strict limitations and comprehensive inspections on Iran, but when Donald Trump pulled out of the agreement in 2018, causing it to collapse, Iran increased its work on enrichment and other areas of the programme. In August 2005, Iranian women formed a human chain at the Isfahan uranium processing plant to promote Iran’s nuclear development. Why is Iran’s nuclear programme so essential to its identity? Worryingly for the international community, Iran has built a stockpile of just over 440kg of 60% pure highly enriched uranium (HEU) by the end of last summer. The US-Israeli assaults on Iran in June were motivated by concerns about this stockpile, which had built since the torpedoing of the 2015 nuclear deal. The US part, Operation Midnight Hammer, cen-

tered on dropping bunker-busting bombs on Iran’s nuclear facilities. Trump claimed that the bombing had “obliterated” the nuclear project, but it quickly became evident that this was false. The bombs had caused enormous damage, but deep subterranean installations, buried behind mountains in two locations in particular, Isfahan and Natanz, could not be destroyed. In its most recent report, the IAEA admitted that it could not determine whether Iran had ceased all enrichment-related operations or the level of its uranium stockpile at the relevant nuclear facilities. Despite this ambiguity, IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi stated on Monday that “we don’t see a structured programme to manufacture nuclear weapons”. However, nuclear proliferation specialists are concerned that this may change following an attack intended at overthrowing the government that has controlled Iran for 47 years, as well as the assassination of its supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, who had issued a religious decree, or fatwa, prohibiting the construction of a weapon. Lewis added: “The technology itself is decades old, and a vengeful Iran that survives this strike is likely to reach the same conclusion that North Korea reached, that it’s a dangerous world out there with the United States, and it’s better to go nuclear.” Kelsey Davenport,



Women’s Day: Hair Oiling, An Act Of Self-Care For Indian Women Across Eras

Love shows up in many forms: in the way we speak, in the way we show up for others, and even in the way we care for the parts of ourselves that often go unnoticed. On Women’s Day, it’s a reminder that self-care is not indulgence but strength. For a woman, her hair is her pride, joy and crowning glory. From a young age, it has been instilled in her that taking time for herself, via her hair, is not just a hygiene issue but also a moment to relax and care for herself or show love to the younger women in the home. Hair oiling is a time for women of the family to come together, to talk, laugh and enjoy a few moments with the feminine energy that not only replenishes your own cup but also others. A woman’s hair, quietly accompanying you through long days, harsh weather, styling experiments, and life’s chaos. It is one of those parts of yourself that deserves more love than it ever asks for. When you choose to nourish it with intention, it responds with softness, strength, and shine that reflects the care it receives. We speak to Dr Vaishali Gode, EVP – R&D, Product Develop-

ment (Nourishment) and Packaging, Marico Limited, and Hair Expert, Parachute Advanced, to understand how hair oiling, a ritual that has thrived in India for centuries, is now being widely accepted in the country and around the world, and its benefits. Healthy hair doesn’t come from shortcuts or overnight miracles. It’s the result of consistent care, mindful habits, and understanding what your hair truly needs. Just as women’s resilience is built over time, hair, too is made of protein that thrives on consistency. This protein structure gives hair its strength, elasticity, and shine, but it is also vulnerable to external stress. Daily exposure to heat styling, pollution, sun, and even routine washing can gradually weaken this structure, leading to dryness, frizz, and breakage. Showing your hair love means giving it what it truly needs, not just what looks good in the moment. This is where oiling remains one of the most effective ways to care for your hair. When applied regularly, oil forms a protective layer that helps reduce moisture loss and shields it from environmental stressors. More

importantly, when the right oil is chosen, it can do more than condition the surface. Coconut-based hair oils are especially effective because of their natural composition. Rich in lauric acid, coconut-based hair oil is known to penetrate deeper into the hair shaft. This helps reduce protein loss and support stronger, more resilient strands over time. Rather than merely coating the hair, it works within it. The benefits extend to the scalp as well. A gentle oil massage improves microcirculation and encourages relaxation, something many of us

could use more of. Coconut-based hair oil’s natural antimicrobial properties also help maintain overall scalp health. What makes oiling powerful is not just its functionality but also its simple ritual. Taking a few minutes to warm the oil between your palms, massaging it slowly into the scalp, and allowing it to absorb creates a quiet moment in otherwise busy days. It is both nourishment and a reset. This ritual is love in its simplest form: unrushed, intentional, and quietly powerful. At its core, hair care is about connection through the simplest ritual.

It’s about listening to what your hair needs, treating your strands with kindness, and showing up for your routine regularly. Ultimately, hair care is about awareness and understanding what your hair needs and showing up for it consistently. Small, regular steps such as a simple head massage and mindful nourishment can make a meaningful difference over time. When you give your hair love – real, thoughtful, consistent love – it gives it right back through resilience, radiance, and a natural shine that speaks louder than words.



Melbourne or Sydney (or both!): a holiday in Australia’s biggest cities

Would you rather start the day with a flat white or short black? Drink a schooner of Toohey’s New or a pint of VB? Listen to the Sniffers? Marvel at the landmarks of the Sydney Opera House or Flinders Street station? Stay on the south coast or east coast? Australia’s two biggest cities – Melbourne and Sydney – each have their own charm. Melbourne’s centre is a mish-mash of glass modernity and preserved Victoriana where bars and coffee shops fill mural-splattered side streets. Meanwhile, Sydney dazzles as a shimmering harbour metropolis, rich with green space and fringed by surf-ready beaches. Hilton Melbourne Little Queen Street and Hilton Sydney capture the essence of each city while providing a central base from which to explore. So, which destination is calling your name?

The headlines
Sydney is home to Australia’s big hitters in terms of sightseeing. Just catching a glimpse of the bright white, sail-like shells of the Sydney Opera House is enough to fulfil a bucket list moment and you can delve deeper on a backstage tour inside. Sydney harbour is best experienced by boat trip, or you can take a hair-raising walk across the upper level of Sydney Harbour Bridge. Hilton Sydney puts you in the centre of Sydney’s sights, just around the corner from the ornate Town Hall. For a bustling metropolis, there’s an abundance of green space too and Australia’s oldest park – Hyde Park – is overlooked by Hilton Sydney. An easy stroll away, the Royal Botanic Gardens

back on to the harbour so wanders through the tropical botanica come with the cackle of kookaburras and the whistles of cockatoos, ending with a perfect view of the Opera House and Harbour Bridge. Melbourne’s sights are a little less obvious; hidden down lanes and housed in art deco buildings across the city centre. Hilton Melbourne slots into the city’s historic centre on Little Queen Street, housed in a glorious 1920s build-

ing. Just around the corner, the National Gallery of Victoria boasts one of the biggest stained-glass ceilings in the world – the 1968 design by Australian artist Leonard French is in the Great Hall. Stepping inside Melbourne’s ode to art feels like entering a cathedral where modernism and dadaism are worshipped. For a more casual art experience, explore

the alleyways, such as Hosier Lane, where striking murals and vibrant street art cover every surface. Flinders Street station, Australia’s oldest, was once among the busiest in the world. Its Edwardian

dome and clock tower – there was even once a running track on the roof for staff to use.

Proper good tucker
Sydney’s fine-dining scene is unparalleled in Australia. Plates are presented as works of art, using the abundance of fresh produce from the sea, neighbouring mountains and sprawling fertile land outside the city. While institutions such as Saint Peter seafood restaurant and sleek, sophisticated Bennelong at the Sydney Opera House scratch the

high-level gastronomy itch, a steady influx of immigrants from across the globe have fed Sydney’s casual dining scene. You’ll find sea-fresh sushi, unctuous bowls of pho and perfectly seasoned gyros in the family-run joints of Sydney’s eclectic neighbourhoods. Head to Chinatown – the largest in Australia – for more than just the dim sum and peking duck. Sydney’s nightlife offering includes rooftop cocktail bars boasting views of the city skyline and secret bars tucked away at street level. Beneath Hilton Sydney, its Marble Bar feels like a turn-of-the-century speakeasy where mixology-first cocktails are created within a heritage-listed space that first operated as a live music bar in 1893. There is no shortage of fine-dining options in Melbourne either, where establishments such as Farmer’s Daughters embrace the abundant produce of Victoria’s surrounding farmland. Melbourne’s dining is an all-day affair: long lunches, boozy brunches and plenty of coffee stops in between. Hilton Melbourne Little Queen Street puts the length and breadth

of the city’s dining scene on your doorstep, including Queen Victoria Market. Dating back to 1878, this open-air market is the go-to spot for foodies, where stalls are packed with local produce from kangaroo biltong to Gippsland cheese. At lunchtime, queues snake from street food stalls. The late-night scene here is a little more intimate than in Sydney, with cocktail bars tucked down laneways and taprooms for local breweries leading the beer-drinking scene. Embracing the city’s art deco centre, the Douglas Club within the hotel is a smooth spot for a nightcap, decked out like a buzzing 1930s lounge bar.

Beside the seaside ...
Trams connect the centre of Melbourne with the beachy suburb of St Kilda, where golden sand meets the calm water of Port Phillip Bay. Here, an evening at the iconic Luna Park funfair can be accompanied by salty fish and chips for a classic seaside experience. Slightly farther along the coast, Brighton beach is crowned with a rainbow sweep of colourful bathing huts. Beach days in Melbourne are all

about waterfront cafes and refreshing strolls along the promenade. Sydney’s Bondi beach might be the most famous stretch of sand in Australia. Bone-white and soft as caster sugar, this buzzing spot unsurprisingly attracts swathes of sunbathers, swimmers and surfers alike. If you like your beach days combined with a bit of action – catching waves, jetskiing, paddleboarding – Sydney is the choice for you.

Where to stay
Melbourne and Sydney have very different vibes. Melbourne is all about sipping a flat white, cultural strolls around art galleries and slowly enjoying a laid-back city. Hilton Melbourne Little Queen Street puts you right in the centre, close to the National Gallery of Victoria and Victoria Market. Surrounded by coffee shops, hole-in-the-wall bars and restaurants, it’s the perfect base to explore the city. Housed in the beautiful 1930s former Melbourne Equity Chambers building, it embraces the history of the city in architectural details such as rich wood panelling in plush rooms, and the bar that’s reminiscent of an old-world cocktail lounge. Hilton Sydney is also in the heart of the action – a short walk from the Botanic Gardens, Art Gallery of New South Wales and surrounded by the buzzing rooftop bars and fine dining restaurants of the CBD (central business district). It towers in sleek modernity above the street and rooms at the top have a far-reaching view over the metropolis and out to the islands in Sydney’s labyrinthine bays. Below ground, the Marble Bar eschews modernism for striking turn-of-the-century grandeur – the perfect spot for a night cap. The good news? You don’t actually have to choose between Melbourne and Sydney. Make it a twin city stay with transfers between Hilton Melbourne Little Queen Street and Hilton Sydney and have it both ways: a flat white and a short black.



ENTERTAINMENT

In response to Arijit Singh’s decision to stop playback singing, Vishal Dadlani



New Delhi: Earlier this year, singer Arijit Singh shocked the music business by deciding to give up playback singing. In an interview on the podcast Untriggered with Amin-Jaz, musician and vocalist Vishal Dadlani has now offered his thoughts on Arijit’s choice. Vishal expresses his complete support for Arijit and his desire to pursue his musical endeavors in the future. Vishal responded, “Do what makes you happy, man,” when asked about Arijit’s choice to stop playback singing. He has released an explanation of some sort. Tere dil ka hain, tu kar, jo bhi hain. With or without any of us, music is an ocean. So let’s toast! The man is a musical talent. There isn’t any doubt. Life is meant to be explored. Vishal responded, “Yes, but one can only conclude that after listening to

that first,” when the host mentioned that it would be fantastic if Arijit continued to create independent music. “Guessing is not my game,” he continued. From my perspective, I support him. It doesn’t matter what he wants to do. I adore that man. He is a decent man. genuinely decent person. Great music, a nice heart, and a good mind! Do as you please. For those who don’t know, Arijit’s “wonderful” journey came to an end on January 27 when he declared he would no longer accept new assignments as a playback vocalist. But Arijit made it clear that he will continue to compose songs. “Just to be clear that I won’t stop making music.” Fans responded well to Arijit’s new independent song, Raina, which was released a few weeks later.In response to rumors that he was retiring, Arijit recently told his fans on X that while he is no longer taking on new projects, he is still working through a sizable backlog of previously recorded tracks. He stated that these songs will continue to be released in the upcoming months and perhaps even into the upcoming year. Tum Hi Ho, Channa Mereya, Agar Tum Saath Ho, Raabta, Kesariya, Ae Dil Hai Mushkil, Tera Yaar Hoon Main, Tujhe Kitna Chahne Lage, and Tum Kya Mile are just a few of the famous songs he has contributed his voice to over the years.

Alpha, starring Alia Bhatt and Sharvari, escapes a box office collision with Salman Khan’s Battle of Galwan

Mumbai:In order to avoid a box office conflict with Salman Khan’s Battle of Galwan, there have been rumors over the past several months that Alia Bhatt and Sharvari’s Alpha may be delayed. Some have even said that the movie may forego a theatrical release in favor of an OTT premiere. By confirming that the movie will be shown in theaters and establishing a new release date, the producers have now cleared the air. The film’s producers revealed the revised release date for the eagerly awaited flick on Monday. Along with a new poster, the update dispelled persistent rumors that the movie may launch straight on an OTT platform rather than in theaters.The movie is scheduled to be released on July 10. The release date of Al-

pha was rescheduled from Christmas 2025 to April 17, 2026. The movie has reportedly been postponed once more in order to prevent conflict with Salman Khan’s Battle of Galwan, which is scheduled for release on April 17. There were rumors in December of last year that the movie had been rescheduled to avoid conflict with Salman Khan’s Battle of Galwan. Trade expert Taran Adarsh posted the information on X, formerly known as Twitter.Alpha, which is directed by Shiv Rawail, is the sixth movie in the YRF Spy Universe, which also includes Pathaan and the Tiger and War movies. This year, the movie debuted in a post-credits sequence in War 2. Last year, Alia gave a sneak peek at Alpha at the Red Sea Film Festival. The actor gave a quick



sneak peek at the spy thriller, according to Deadline. Speaking about the project, Alia understood the dangers of playing the lead in an action movie in a series that has historically

featured male heroes. Alia stated, “Alpha is the first female-led action movie from the YRF universe, so that’s also a risk because you’ve not historically seen that perform in the same

way that the other male-led films have.” Alpha features Bobby Deol and Anil Kapoor in addition to Sharvari and Alia. It is hailed as YRF’s first female-led spy thriller.

Amitabh Bachchan did not watch the T20 World Cup final, thus he thinks India won

Mumbai: On March 8, the Men in Blue defeated New Zealand by 96 runs to successfully defend their global title in the T20 global Cup final at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad. Bollywood celebrities, including Shah Rukh Khan, Kareena Kapoor, Alia Bhatt, and Vicky Kaushal, congratulated the Indian team on social media. Amitabh Bachchan, on the other hand, had a somewhat different perspective on India’s momentous accomplishment. The seasoned actor revealed that he didn’t watch the match, which is why India won! He posted images from his home television screen of the priceless moments when the Indian team raised the



trophy on his X account. He wrote, “I said I wouldn’t watch, and they’d win!” in the caption. Amitabh’s post alludes to the widespread belief among supporters that their team performs better when they don’t see the game in person. The

seasoned actor has already claimed on social media that he is “bad luck” for Team India. His message was met with amusing reactions and comments from fans. “Great sacrifice, sir, please continue,” someone wrote. “If that is the case,

then you did well,” responded another person. Do this each and every time. “I also did the same, thank god India won,” someone commented. India has now won three T20 World Cups in a row, making them the only team to do it and the first to do so at home. India scored the biggest total ever in a T20 World Cup final, 255 for 5 in 20 overs, batting first after New Zealand opted to field. NZ was skittled out for just 159 in retaliation. Because of his stats of 4/15, wrecker-in-chief Jasprit Bumrah was named Player of the Final. With 321 runs, including consecutive half-centuries in the final and semi-final, Sanju Samson was named Player of the Tournament.

Lakshmy Ramakrishnan refrained from making fun of Vijay’s private life



Mumbai: Lakshmy Ramakrishnan, a talk show host and filmmaker, recently became embroiled in an unanticipated controversy following her comments regarding the ideal qualities of a political leader. Given that actor-turned-politician Vijay is now in the news for his divorce with Sangeetha Sornalingam, many felt that her remarks were directed at him. Lakshmy has now intervened to set the record straight, adamantly claiming that she never made any comments regarding Vijay’s private life.The filmmaker put a stop to the rumors by emphasizing that her remarks were taken out of context and were not intended at any specific person. Amidst the increasing rumors that she made fun of Vijay’s private life, Lakshmy took to X to correct the record. Lakshmy clarified that her comments had been misinterpreted and mistakenly connected to Vijay’s personal life and political career.”I have not commented on @actorvijay’s political entry or made any statement regarding his personal issues,” she added.”I have always had a great deal of regard for Vijay’s mother, and I only know him as a quiet, composed, and courteous co-artist. My personal

expertise is limited to that. Lakshmy continued, “A few lines from a recent stage speech of mine were misconstrued and incorrectly linked to his political entry and now to his personal matters.” ”When a daily asked for my quote, I only said that people are capable of separating personal issues from political involvement, and that the matter appears to be getting disproportionate attention in an election season.” Lakshmy went on.”Let me also add that, if the issue is genuinely about women’s rights, there are innumerable women who are subjected to mistreatment and injustice and who lack access to financial stability, legal assistance, or simply a meal. They are equally deserving of our support and attention. She said, “This statement is merely to clarify my position and correct the misinterpretation.” Lakshmy stated at a recent political event that one should enter politics with a thorough understanding of people’s issues rather than just out of personal ambition. “If we need a leader to help people at a time of crisis, they should be someone who is trained for it,” she stated. Since then, a lot of people on social media have linked actor Vijay to

Lakshmy’s remarks. The personal life of actor-politician Vijay has recently made news, as reports have confirmed that his wife, Sangeetha Vijay, has filed for divorce. The petition for a dissolution of marriage was submitted to the Chengalpattu District Court. Sangeetha, 48, said in the filing that their marriage was initially registered in the UK on July 10, 1998. On August 25, 1999, a formal Hindu wedding took place in Rajah Muthiah Mandram in Egmore, Chennai. She said in her petition that the early years of the marriage were friendly and peaceful, but that things changed in 2021 after learning of Vijay’s extramarital affair with an actress, resulting in severe emotional distress and mental anguish that amounted to betrayal and a breach of marital trust. According to the petition, the affair allegedly continued despite Vijay’s promises that it would stop, resulting in emotional neglect, mental abuse, and public humiliation as a result of social media posts. Reconciliation attempts apparently failed between September 2021 and February 2022 and again between August 2024 and February 2025.

On August 26, 2000, the couple welcomed Jason Sanjay, their first child, and Divya Saasha, their daughter, in 2005. Sangeetha avoided the spotlight and seldom went to movie or promotional events despite Vijay’s superstardom. The next hearing is apparently set on April 20, 2026, while the legal proceedings proceed. Vijay made headlines on March 5 when he and actor Trisha attended the wedding reception of the son of AGS producer Kalpathi Suresh. As they approached the platform, they greeted the newlyweds.

They left the event simultaneously and posed together for the photos.

Dhurandhar 2 sets a Bollywood record by selling 2 lakh tickets

New Delhi:When Aditya Dhar’s Dhurandhar debuted in theaters in December, it was an unparalleled juggernaut. With only a few days until the sequel’s release, it appears that Dhurandhar: The Revenge will likewise be an unstoppable force. The advance reservations for the preview shows (on the eve of the release) were opened following the release of the movie’s trailer last week. Additionally, the collections have already exceeded the opening-day numbers for numerous films, despite the fact that the current ticket sales are only for a few performances on Wednesday, March 18. After the trailer was released at 11:01 AM on March 7, advance reservations for Dhurandhar 2 began. The movie sold 87K tickets on BookMyShow alone in just one day. The number had increased to over 1.5 lakh on the platform and over 2 lakh in total by the morning of March 9. Sacnilk reports

that 2.06 lakh tickets were sold in India for the movie’s premiere screenings, earning ₹12.29 crore. The Tamil dub has exceeded expectations, earning about ₹10 lakh from preview shows, even though the majority of this collection is from the original Hindi version. Dhurandhar: The Revenge has surpassed Stree 2’s ₹10 crore record to become the Bollywood film with the largest premiere box office receipts. The number is probably going to rise even more because the premiere is still nine days away. Dhurandhar 2 has outperformed the opening-day receipts of other similar Bollywood movies based only on the proceeds from advance reservations for the premiere day. Shahid Kapoor’s O Romeo made more money on its opening day a month ago than Dhurandhar 2, which has collected ₹12.29 crore from its preview shows. In India, the Vishal Bhardwaj movie debuted at just over ₹9 crore.

The truth about Ranbir Kapoor and Sai Pallavi’s “leaked” Ramayana looks is revealed

Mumbai: One more day and one more purported Ramayana set leak. This time, unmistakable images said to feature Sai Pallavi and Ranbir Kapoor as Lord Rama and Sita in the next epic. For the first time, it was possible to see the actors dressed in full regal regalia as the pair from the epic. Many, meanwhile, questioned whether the pictures were real. Additionally, TV actor Ashish Sharma, who portrayed Lord Rama in Siya Ke Ram, has acknowledged their fraud. Pictures of Ranbir and Pallavi dressed as Rama and Sita appeared on numerous social media platforms on Saturday. In the images, Pallavi, who is also wearing regal headgear and jewelry, looks at Ranbir, who is wearing a crown and jewelry, as she stares forward. One tweet said, “Leak Pictures of Ranbir and Sai Pallavi from Ramayana.” Many others asserted that the images were



from the movie’s Ram-Sita wedding scene. However, because of the photos’ sharpness, many social media users questioned their veracity. One said, “Leaked photos can’t be this clear.” “Ramos-Sita wedding must be in Part One, which wrapped filming last year,” someone else reasoned. How are these suddenly showing up? When others questioned Grok about whether AI had been used to make the image, the X Chatbot appeared

to affirm it. It is not actual leaked set photographs from the next movie, but rather a face-swapped cut from the former TV series Siya Ke Ram.

In response, Grok said, “Actual leaks show Ranbir in simpler dhoti/wig attire.” Actor Ashish Sharma disproved the story by sharing one such “leaked” photo during this time. Using a still from his image from the 2015–16 Star Plus series Siya Ke Ram, Ashish,

who portrayed Lord Rama, verified Grok’s claim that the picture was a face-swap. “This is for you.

Another “Original” picture was leaked. The actor shared the original picture from that scene and joked, “AI couldn’t replace my hair.”The epic Ramayana was told from Sita’s point of view by Siya Ke Ram. In addition to Ashish, Madirakshi Mundle played Sita, Danish Akhtar Saifi played Lord Hanuman, Karan Suchak played Lakshman, and Karthik Jayaram played Ravana. Part one of Nitesh Tiwari’s two-part rendition of the epic Ramayana is scheduled to open in theaters this Diwali.

Sunny Deol plays Lord Hanuman, Yash plays Ravana, and Ravie Dubey plays Lakshman in the movie. With VFX from the Oscar-winning firm Prime Focus, Ramayana is likely the most expensive Indian production ever.

Hardik Pandya refers Mahieka Sharma as his “lucky charm”

Mumbai: Following India’s T20 World Cup victory, Hardik Pandya had a beautiful moment that stole the show amid the thunderous applause and confetti-filled celebrations.

Hardik and his girlfriend Mahieka Sharma celebrated the significant victory on the pitch. Mahieka was spotted running up to give him a hug and a tender peck on the cheek. Later, an ecstatic Hardik gushed about her, referring to her as his “lucky charm.”Hardik was instrumental in both of India’s T20 World Cup victories, making them the first side to do it. At the Narendra Modi Stadium on Sunday, Suryakumar Yadav’s India defeated New Zealand by 96 runs to win the T20 World Cup for the third time. Speaking to the host broadcaster following Sunday’s victory in Ahmedabad, Hardik talked about his girlfriend Maheika’s support, claiming that he has been winning consistently ever since she entered his life.”I have always lived for this victory.” I have played cricket for this reason. My goal is to take home trophies. My goal is to take home as many trophies as possible. I had declared in 2024 that I would win whatever trophy I played for. And that’s what I think. “This trophy is proof of that,” Hardik remarked. “There is a lot of hard work. There is not only talk, but there is a lot of hard work. Work hard, stay silent, be a good person. Since Maheika has come into my life, I have only been winning,” he added. In the meantime, a number of pictures from the festivities show Hardik and Mahieka savoring the moment of triumph. Shortly after the win, she was seen embracing him and joining him on the field. As they commemorated the momentous occasion together, Mahieka was also spotted kissing Hardik on the cheek. After that, the couple walked hand in hand across the field, taking in the festive mood.Later, Mahieka shared a photo of Hardik posing happily on the field following the significant victory on Instagram Stories as a special shout-out.

Junior Physicians in Madhya Pradesh Are Striking Due to Stipend Delay



Bhopal, Mar 09: Due to the non-implementation of a long-pending stipend modification, approximately 8,000 junior physicians in Madhya Pradesh went on strike on Monday, disrupting health-care services throughout government medical colleges. The Junior Doctors Association (JDA) called the strike, which started at nine in the morning and has hampered regular services in medical institutions in Bhopal, Indore, Jabalpur, Rewa, Sagar, and Khandwa, such as OPD consultations and elective procedures. The doctors claim that despite their repeated requests, no decision has been made about the stipend revision tied to the Consumer Price Index (CPI), which was meant to take effect on April 1, 2025, per a government directive. As a result, routine services have been discontinued by interns, senior residents, and resident physicians throughout the state, but emergency treatment is still

provided. The Junior Doctors Association's vice president, Dr. Yashveer Gurjar, stated that all government medical colleges strongly support the protest. "Everyone will eventually join, but the conversation is still ongoing. The level of this movement will rise significantly. Indore, Bhopal, Jabalpur, Rewa, Sagar, and Khandwa's government medical institutes have joined. Everyone's voice is united, and we are a single organization," he declared. Dr. Gurjar emphasized the importance of resident physicians in managing hospitals, stating that junior physicians constitute the foundation of the healthcare system. The link that keeps the hospital running is the junior physician. Junior doctors remain in the hospital around the clock, while senior doctors enter, make rounds, and then depart. They consistently manage duties and patient care. Junior physicians are, in many respects, the foundation of the whole healthcare system," he stated. Doctors maintain that vital care will not be impacted by the strike. "Emergency services are up and running. No life-saving therapy will be compromised. Surgery will be carried out if it is necessary. Patients in emergency situations won't suffer because we recognize our duty as medical professionals," Dr. Gurjar continued. Patients awaiting standard care, however, are already being impacted by the strike. At Gandhi Medical College in Bhopal, a number of patients reported that they had been waiting for medical care for hours. Gulabchand Sahu, who

came early in the morning with excruciating knee pain, claimed he was only given a prescription and medication after learning about the strike. Sonu Vishwakarma, who traveled from Damoh to have treatment, claimed he had been waiting since the morning for his admission documents to be completed. Saurav Rajak, a patient with an insect bite on his leg, claimed he had to wait over five hours to receive a wheelchair. Another patient who was waiting outside the hospital, Tanveer, claimed that he had been wandering the hospital grounds since the morning because of leg pain, but he was unable to receive treatment. The anxiety, according to doctors, is a result of the government's repeated promises not being followed through on. Dr. Mahendra Pratap, president of Madhya Pradesh's Junior Doctors Association, indicated that ongoing protests stem from unmet government commitments following a 2021 strike, which raised stipends but neglected promised revisions. Initially, doctors held symbolic protests but escalated to a strike, maintaining emergency services while boycotting elective procedures. Their demands include the implementation of the 2025 stipend revision and payment of pending arrears. Although the government has begun dialogue, doctors seek firm commitments due to previous unfulfilled assurances. A meeting with Deputy Chief Minister Rajendra Shukla is planned, and the strike may intensify if demands remain unaddressed.

Maharashtra's Fuel Supplies Are Affected by the Middle East's Growing Conflict



Mumbai, Mar 09: The Maharashtra government has taken precautionary steps to protect vital services from possible gasoline supply shocks as the Israel-Iran war heats up. Although there have been reports of severe shortages of gasoline and diesel, the state government is taking steps to maintain stability. Authorities have already instructed Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) in districts like Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar to set aside particular fuel inventories solely for government and emergency vehicles. In the event that global supply chains experience additional turbulence, this "precautionary reservation" is intended to maintain vital administrative and emergency operations. A strategic change in gas distribution is the conflict's most obvious effect to date. The central government has used emergency powers under the Essential Commod-

ities Act in response to a high-level decision from the Union Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas made on March 5, 2026. All refineries have been instructed to prioritize propane and butane, the main components of LPG for domestic use alone, in order to prevent a cooking gas crisis for India's 332 million home households. As the country buffers its household stockpiles, this has caused a purposeful "supply squeeze" for non-domestic sectors, resulting in the temporary closure of commercial facilities like gas-based crematoriums in cities like Pune. Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis has strongly urged people to refrain from panic buying in the face of mounting public worry. The Chief Minister made it clear that there isn't a general gasoline or diesel scarcity in Maharashtra while speaking to the state prior to the important Budget discussion.

He emphasized that the Indian government is using "oil diplomacy" to obtain crude oil from non-conflict areas. India currently has a sizable energy buffer of about 50 days' worth of reserves, and in order to maximize fuel output, state-run refineries have postponed maintenance shutdowns. The government still controls the fuel supply, but Maharashtra's industrial sectors are feeling the economic fallout. Due to the disruption of about 20% of the world's oil supplies passing through the Strait of Hormuz, Brent crude prices have surged toward \$110-\$120 per barrel. This has resulted in a 10%-25% increase in industrial input costs for Maharashtra's extensive manufacturing and chemical hubs. Since the war intensified in early March, diesel futures have experienced severe periods of volatility, thus the state's transportation industry is likewise keeping a careful eye on the situation.

The gasoline situation is anticipated to be a major area of contention as the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly starts budget talks tomorrow. Managing the consequences of the Middle East conflict will be the House's top priority, even though the 2026-2027 Budget focuses on long-term energy independence through renewable solar projects for agriculture.

In order to prevent the "war heat" from derailing the state's economic momentum, the Mahayuti Government is anticipated to explore additional subsidies or relief measures if global oil prices continue high.

Gautam Gambhir dedicates the win of the T20 World Cup to two individuals



New Delhi: For Gautam Gambhir, the 2026 T20 World Cup has served as a kind of vindication. The world champion player received a lot of negative feedback during Test series defeats against South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand. Some of his critics may become less vocal after Sunday. Gambhir said on Sunday that he is only answerable to those in the dressing room, adhering to his no-nonsense approach. India became the first team to win three T20 World Cups (2007, 2024, 2026), the first to defend their championship, and the first to do so at home after defeating New Zealand by 96 runs in the summit match. "People on social media are not my responsibility. During the press conference following the game, Gambhir stated, "I am accountable to those thirty people in that change room." "A coach is only as good as his group. "I am the coach I am because of the players," Gambhir continued. But even in his prime, Gambhir remembered Laxman, the current head of the BCCI Center of Excellence, and Dravid, who led the squad to victory in 2024. "I will dedicate this trophy to VVS Laxman and Rahul Dravid. To Laxman for building the pipeline at the CoE and Rahul bhai for placing the Indian team," he continued. The former India opener also expressed gratitude to Jay Shah, the former BCCI secretary and current ICC chairman, as well as head selector Ajit Agarkar. "Ajit Agarkar, who worked honestly and took a lot of criticism." And to Jay, bhai. He phoned me when I was at my lowest point in my career after losing to NZ and then SA (at home in Test series in 2024 and 2025), he said. "The fear of losing must be

let go. It's acceptable to get out for 120 instead of playing conservative cricket. Bravery and displaying fortitude to score 250 in the semifinals and finals have been the characteristic, according to Gambhir. Suryakumar Yadav, the captain, was commended by the head coach for collaborating with him. My work was made easy by Surya. He has served as a father figure and leader. Celebrating trophies rather than milestones is the larger goal. We have commemorated anniversaries for far too long. Gambhir reaffirmed, "I will urge you people to stop celebrating personal milestones." Gambhir's remarks were supported by Suryakumar. I was captain of the Kolkata Knight Riders for four years. Since the team's victory was our shared objective, we have never had disagreements. We were set to become pals. "I walked two steps and he walked two steps," Suryakumar remarked, adding that the team's current goal is to win gold at the 2028 Olympics in Los Angeles. "I can't say this is India's white-ball era," he continued. We wouldn't have lost two of the previous three ODI series if it had been our white-ball era. "I have chosen teams based on trust and faith. I've never chosen a team based only on optimism." India's top order went on a six-hitting rampage to leave the New Zealand bowlers stunned in the title match, amassing an overwhelming total thanks to a scorching 89 from Sanju Samson and explosive half-centuries from Abhishek Sharma (52) and Ishan Kishan (54). As usual, Jasprit Bumrah (4/15 in four overs) was outstanding with the ball, and Axar Patel (3/27) also had a significant impact as India easily defeated the Kiwis.

A Message For Gautam Gambhir In MS Dhoni's Invaluable Post Regarding India's T20 World Cup Victory

New Delhi: After the Indian cricket team won the T20 World Cup on Sunday at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad, MS Dhoni congratulated them on social media. India became the first team in history to win the competition three times after defeating New Zealand by 96 runs. Since the renowned cricketer is rarely very active on social media, it was a unique message from Dhoni, the former captain of India who guided the team to victory in the 2007 T20 World Cup. In addition to praising star pacer Jasprit Bumrah by referring to him as a "champion bowler," Dhoni wrote a special greeting for head coach Gautam Gambhir. "History gets created at Ahmedabad, big congratulations to the team and support staff and to all the fans of Indian Cricket Team worldwide. Such a pleasure to see all of you play. Coach Sahab smile looks great on you, intensity with smile is a killer combo, very well done. Enjoy guys (BUMRAH ke baare mein kuch na likhooon tou hi acha hai. CHAMPION BOWLER)," he wrote on Instagram. In the meantime, Gambhir dedicated India's triumphant T20 World Cup tile defense to veterans Rahul Dravid and VVS Laxman, saying he is only answerable to those in the dressing room. Social media users are not my responsibility. During the press conference following the game, Gambhir stated, "I am accountable to those thirty people in



that change room." A coach is only as good as his group. "I am the coach I am because of the players," Gambhir continued. But even in his prime, Gambhir remembered Laxman, the current head of the BCCI Center of Excellence, and Dravid, who led the squad to victory in 2024. "I will dedicate this trophy to VVS Laxman and Rahul Dravid. To Laxman for building a pipeline at CoE and Rahul bhai for placing an Indian team," he continued. The former India opener also expressed gratitude to Jay Shah, the former BCCI secretary and current ICC Chairman, as well as head selector Ajit Agarkar. Ajit Agarkar, who worked honestly and absorbed a lot of criticism. And to Jay, bhai. He phoned me when I was at my lowest point in my career after losing to NZ and then SA (at home in Test series in 2024 and 2025), he said.

The TMC government is being asked to comment on the controversy surrounding President Murmu's visit to Bengal



New Delhi, Mar 09: With Prime Minister Narendra Modi intensifying his criticism of the Trinamool Congress (TMC), Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee retaliating, and the Union home ministry requesting a report from the state government regarding the alleged protocol breach, the political spat over President Droupadi Murmu's visit to West Bengal intensified on Sunday. Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan requested a response by 5 p.m. on Sunday to West Bengal Chief Secretary Nandini Chakravorty on suspected infractions of the "Blue Book" regulations during the President's Saturday visit to a tribal gathering in north Bengal. A private document known as the "Blue Book" describes security and protocol guidelines for the prime minister, president, vice president, and their families. The chief secretary,

the director general of police, and the chief minister were not present to greet the president, which is a grave breach of the Blue Book regulations. The home secretary has requested an explanation. An officer in Delhi with knowledge of the situation stated, "The Center has taken note of the fact that only the mayor of Siliguri was present to receive her." The TMC government's response was not immediately apparent. Modi intensified his criticism of the Bengal administration in Delhi, accusing it of disrespecting the President. This is an insult not just to the President but also to the nation's Constitution and its historic democratic traditions. At the opening of several infrastructure projects totaling ₹33,500 crore, he declared, "It is an insult to a personality who has achieved great heights through a life of struggle." In retaliation,

Banerjee accused the Prime Minister of disparaging the head of India's constitution. She displayed a picture of Modi sitting with the President standing behind him at a sit-in protest against the SIR drill in Kolkata. The PM is seated while the President is standing, as seen in the photo. We don't do that. She presented the picture as "proof" and asserted, "It is the BJP that carries the culture of insulting the President, not us." According to Indian news agency PTI, the image was taken during an event in March 2024 when President Murmu presented LK Advani with the Bharat Ratna at his home in New Delhi. In a rare rebuke of an elected administration, Murmu criticized Banerjee for her absence on Saturday, voiced unhappiness over the 9th International Santal Conference's new location, and questioned the state's tribal population's progress. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee claimed the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was using the nation's highest office to malign the state and questioned the President's "silence" on alleged atrocities against tribal people in BJP-ruled states, while Modi accused the TMC of "crossing all limits" and insulting the President in response to her remarks. The

political verbal sparring on Sunday did not slow down. Modi criticized the TMC for its perceived arrogance and "dirty politics," asserting that the actions of the party regarding their boycott of a significant Santal tribal celebration would not be forgiven by the nation or its women's power. He emphasized the importance of the event attended by President Murmu. In contrast, Banerjee countered by stating the state administration was not responsible for the event, which was organized by the International Santal Council, a private organization. She noted that the state had indicated the private entity was unqualified to host such a celebration and highlighted that they were not asked for assistance.

Banerjee maintained that the presence of Siliguri's mayor at the venue showed no breach of protocol. Further, she remarked on her commitment to fighting for people's rights amidst a protest and clarified she was unaware of the President's arrival due to her ongoing dharna. Additionally, Murmu indicated that a venue change for security reasons limited attendance. The original event location was moved from Bidhannagar to Gosaipur, approximately 25 km away.

The MD of Shakun Group is killed in a BMW incident

New Delhi, Mar 09: The Managing Director (MD) of Shakun Group, Vallabh Maheshwari, died on Sunday after his BMW lost control and rolled over on the Delhi-Mumbai motorway close to Alwar, Rajasthan. At the time of the incident, Maheshwari was traveling from Jaipur to Mathura. The police claim that Maheshwari's driver was operating the vehicle. Before colliding with a culvert wall, he lost control of the vehicle, smashed through roadside barriers, and slammed into the median. The premium car was severely damaged as a result of the violent collision. Maheshwari, a 62-year-old businessman from Jaipur, and his driver were taken to a local hospital, where medical professionals pronounced him dead. But his driver made it out unscathed. The body of Maheshwari has been transported to Jaipur for a post-mortem. According to preliminary findings, the collision might have been caused by the vehicle's speed or a mechanical issue. Maheshwari has held director positions in a number of Shakun Group divisions. Established in early 2000, the group strives to establish the relevant industry before processing the resource. Additionally, they deliver and carry the finished product to final consumers. "It is really terrible to learn that industrialist Vallabh Maheshwari died in a car accident on the freeway near Alwar's Reni police station. I ask God to give the departed soul peace and the grieving family the fortitude to endure this grief. "Om Shanti," he wrote on X.

An ex-judge lost around Rs 1 crore as a result of the "Digital Arrest" fraud

Hyderabad, Mar 09: According to authorities on Monday, a retired district judge lost almost Rs one crore after falling for the "digital arrest" scam. About a week ago, the 69-year-old retired judge received threats from cybercriminals who claimed that his mobile number was connected to crimes like women trafficking. The victim, who lives in Malkajgiri, sent them more than one crore rupees. He filed a complaint three days ago after realizing he had been duped, and an inquiry is currently under progress. When asked how the victim, a former judge, was defrauded, police responded that victims are usually afraid of fraudsters' threats. Fraudsters pose as law enforcement officers in order to trick victims in the digital arrest scam. They coerce people into paying money after falsely accusing them of engaging in unlawful activity.

Smile looks good on you: Dhoni tells Gambhir after India's historic T20 World Cup win

Ahmedabad: India's history-making T20 World Cup triumph here reactivated the enigmatic Mahendra Singh Dhoni on social media after nearly two years and he took the opportunity to tell head coach Gautam Gambhir how good a smile looks on his intense face. Dhoni's last Instagram post was back in 2024.

"History gets created at Ahmedabad, big congratulations to the team and support staff and to all the fans of Indian Cricket Team worldwide.such a pleasure to see all of u play," he posted after attending the final in which India thrashed New Zealand by 96 runs to win the trophy for an unprecedented third time. "Coach Sahab smile looks great on u,intensity with smile is a killer combo, very well done. enjoy



guys...BUMRAH ke baare mein kuch na likhoun tou hi acha hai. CHAMPION BOWLER (It's better if I don't write anything on Bumrah)," he quipped, referring to Gambhir's mostly serious demeanour. It was a display of all-round brilliance by the Suryaku-

mar Yadav-led India on Sunday night as top-order batters Sanju Samson, Ishan Kishan and Abhishek Sharma went on a rampage to help the team score a record 255/5 after being invited to bat by the Kiwis. Bumrah then produced a master-class to snare four

wickets for a mere 15 runs in his quota of overs. Dhoni was India's first T20 World Cup-winning captain when he led the team to the trophy in the 2007 inaugural edition before a Rohit Sharma-led side added a second title in 2024. Rohit also attended the final on Sunday.

"Accountable To My Players" – Gautam Gambhir

Ahmedabad: India head coach Gautam Gambhir stated on Sunday that he is only accountable to the people in the dressing room, and dedicated India's successful T20 World Cup tile defence to stalwarts Rahul Dravid and VVS Laxman. With their 96-run shellacking of New Zealand in the summit showdown here, India became the first team to win three T20 World Cups (2007, 2024, 2026), the first to defend their title and also the first to do so at home. "My accountability is not for people on Social Media. My accountability is to those 30 people in that change room," Gambhir said during the post-match press conference. "A coach is as good as his team. Players made me the coach I am," Gambhir added. But even in the hour of his glory, Gambhir did not for-



get Dravid, who guided the team to triumph in 2024, and Laxman, the current head of the BCCI Centre of Excellence. "I would dedicate this trophy to Rahul Dravid and VVS Laxman. To Rahul bhai for putting Indian team in a place and Laxman for creating pipeline at CoE," he added. The former India opener also thanked chief selector Ajit Agarkar and Jay Shah, the current ICC Chairman and the former BCCI

secretary. "Ajit Agarkar, who took a lot of flak and worked with a lot of honesty. And to Jay bhai. During my lowest ebb in my tenure after losing to NZ and then SA (at home in Test series in 2024 and 2025), he called me," he noted. India produced an explosive performance with the bat to post a massive 255 for five, and then bundled out New Zealand for 159 to emerge comfortable winners. "We have to let go

fear of losing. Rather than playing conservative cricket, getting out for 120 is okay. The hallmark has been bravery and showing courage to score 250 in semis and finals," Gambhir said. The head coach praised captain Suryakumar Yadav for working in tandem with him. "Surya made my job easier. He has been a leader who is a father figure. Bigger purpose is to celebrate trophies not milestone. For too many years we have celebrated milestones. I will urge you people to stop celebrating personal milestones," Gambhir reiterated. Suryakumar backed Gambhir's words. "I played 4 years under GG's captaincy (for Kolkata Knight Riders). We have never had arguments as common goal was how team can win. Our friendship was set.

How advice from Sachin helped Sanju transform in T20 WC

Chennai: Minutes after India defended their men's T20 World Cup title, Sanju Samson opened up on how he kept in constant touch with batting maestro Sachin Tendulkar when things were not going his way a couple of months ago. "From last couple of months, I have been in constant touch with Sachin Tendulkar sir. I think when I was outside, sitting outside in Australia, I was not playing a game. So, I thought about, okay, what is the mindset required now? So, I reached out to sir and I had huge, huge big conversations with him," Samson, who was adjudged Player of the Tournament, told broadcaster after India defeated New Zealand in the T20 World Cup final on Sunday.

The Kerala wicketkeeper-batter played only five matches in the tournament but emerged as the leading scorer of India with 321 runs. He also finished third in the leading run scorers' chart. Samson slammed three back-to-back half-centuries — one each against West Indies in the must-win Super Eights match, versus England in

the semifinal and against New Zealand in the final — to help India win their third title. Samson said the former India called him up ahead of the match as well. "And yesterday also, he called me up to check how am I feeling. So, I think getting a guidance from someone like him, what more can I ask for? I think that clarity, that game preparation, that game awareness, that game sense, I think I'm very grateful for everyone who supported me." The last two years have been a rollercoaster ride for Samson. He was in the squad for the 2024 edition of the marquee event but didn't get a game. Samson almost played the final where India defeated South Africa but unfortunately ended up sitting on the bench due to team combination. In the lead up to the T20 World Cup co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka, Samson's struggles only grew adding to his woes. His show against New Zealand in the five-match bilateral series meant he was benched for the opening game against the USA and got a chance only when opener Abhishek Sharma was hospitalised



due to serious stomach inspection. With India losing wicket to on-spinners in the first over in the next three matches meant Samson came back to the playing XI and since then he never looked back making the opening slot his own. It all started with a Super Eights contest against Zimbabwe and got only better when he hammered an unbeaten 97 against the West Indies at Eden Gardens in Kolkata. He was overwhelmed with emotions when asked about his comeback. "Feels

like a dream, actually. Very, very happy, very grateful. Out of words, out of emotions. I'm just going through it, so it feels a bit surreal. To be very honest, I think it all started one to two years before. When I was with the 2024 World Cup-winning team in West Indies, I couldn't play a game. I kept on visualizing. I kept on dreaming. I kept on working. This is exactly what I wanted to do then. I thought I need to work in, I need to put in so much of work that this

is exactly what I wanted to achieve. And by God's grace, I think today things have turned around. I think right after the New Zealand series, I was broke. I was completely out of my mind. I was like, okay, my dreams have shattered. Okay, what else can I do? But God had different plans. I think I suddenly came back into the crucial games and I did what I could for my country. So, I think I'm very proud and very happy that I was courageous enough to dream about it," he said.

Sabalenka, Osaka set Indian Wells clash as Gauff retires injured

Indian Wells: Aryna Sabalenka and Naomi Osaka lined up a fourth-round clash at Indian Wells on Sunday as fourth-ranked Coco Gauff retired with a left arm injury. World number one Sabalenka powered past Romania's Jaqueline Cristian 6-4, 6-1 to book a last-16 meeting with former champion Osaka.

Japan's Osaka, seeded 16th, pounced for a 6-1, 3-6, 6-1 victory over Camila Osorio to avenge a demoralizing first-round loss to the Colombian here last year. They were joined in the fourth round by the Philippines' rising star Alexandra Eala, who was leading Gauff 6-2, 2-0 when the American retired with a left arm injury. Gauff said the pain "felt like a firework going off inside of my arm, and then my whole arm felt like it was on fire." And then as the match played, it got progressively worse, even on shots that I wasn't even using my left arm for ... it was a scary feeling." Gauff trailed 5-2 in the first when she took a medical timeout, a trainer massaging and manipulating her left arm and shoulder. After Eala broke to take the set on a double fault from Gauff the trainer wrapped her left forearm. It was to no avail, and after 54 minutes Gauff went to the net and told Eala she was calling it a day. "I really didn't want to win this



way," said Eala, who was cheered on as usual by a big contingent of Filipino fans. "But this is still a really big moment for me to be able to play on Stadium One of Indian Wells and against such a great competitor," she added, wishing Gauff a speedy recovery.Earlier action was relatively drama-free. "So many things I felt like I did great today," Sabalenka said after overpowering Cristian with a performance that included 23 winners. "Serving well, happy with the way I stayed focused no matter what (and) of course happy with the win." Sabalenka is chasing a first title in the prestigious ATP and WTA Masters 1000 event after twice coming up empty in the final. Osaka won her first title in Indian Wells in 2018, going on to win the US Open that year in a run that included a victory over Sabalenka. That's the only meeting to date between

the two -- who are now both four-time Grand Slam champions. "I'll have a chance to get a revenge, hopefully," Sabalenka said. Attitude adjustment Osaka, playing her first tournament since withdrawing before her Australian Open third-round match with an abdominal injury, roared through the opening set against Osorio but lost her way in the second. The Colombian broke Osaka for a 4-2 lead and fended off a break point in the ninth game to take the set.That proved the end of her resurgence. Osaka broke on the way to a 3-0 lead in the third as she brought it home without facing another break point. "I can only say that I tried to be more positive," said Osaka, who said she let frustration with her mistakes "consume" her. "I feel like the second set I was complaining a lot and then I just kind of thought my daughter could be watching me mope around the court.

Reinier de Ridder's Return Meets Middleweight Reality at UFC 326

Las Vegas: At UFC 326, Reinier de Ridder's return was centered on a singular theme: physical redemption. After a grueling stretch of five fights in 11 months—a pace he admitted "wrecked" his body—the Dutchman entered his bout against Caio Borralho claiming he finally felt restored. "My body gave out," de Ridder told News18 Sports, reflecting on his previous loss to Brendan Allen. "I need to treat my body better... I'm very happy to have my body back." Despite his self-assurance, the Octagon told a different story. De Ridder's technical read on Borralho was precise—labeling him "balanced" and "risk-averse"—but the execution faltered. While de Ridder aimed to impose his signature grappling pressure and high-cardio pace, Borralho remained disciplined. The Brazilian used superior footwork and calculated counters to reset the distance every time de Ridder surged forward. Key Match Moments: The Blueprint: De Ridder planned to "go hard" and hunt for a finish in the first two rounds. The Reality: Borralho's defensive wrestling neutralized clinch attempts, making de Ridder's level changes predictable. The Result: By the third round, Bor-



ralho dictated the tempo, leading to a unanimous decision victory. Before the fight, de Ridder believed a spectacular win would catapult him back into the top five and the title race. Instead, the loss leaves him in a state of recalibration. While he successfully "reclaimed his body" from fatigue,

he must now find a way to reclaim his momentum in an increasingly elite middleweight division. For the "Dutch Knight," the immediate future is no longer about title shots, but about refining a style that can bypass the world's most disciplined defenders.

Celtic Down Rangers: Pitch Invasion Sparks Fan Clash

Yet again, there were scenes of clamour at Ibrox as Celtic got the better of Glaswegian rivals Rangers 4-2 on penalties in the Scottish Cup quarter-final on Sunday after the game ended 0-0 after extra time as dozens of Celtic supporters invaded the pitch after their 4-2 victory, triggering a response from hundreds of Rangers fans who attempted to confront them. Missiles and fireworks were thrown, and insults exchanged, until police and stewards managed to form a barrier. The Scottish Football Association initiated an investigation following a pitch battle between the fans of the Glaswegian rivals, which resulted in injuries to police officers. Police arrested a man after Celtic players, including Tomas Cvancara, rushed to the scene of an incident involving a Celtic staff member who seemed to be confronted by a Rangers supporter. Cvancara, later interviewed on television with bloodstains on his kit, witnessed Celtic right-back Julian Araujo being pushed by a Rangers fan. The SFA condemned the "behaviour from supporters entering the field of play" and announced an investigation in accordance with the

Judicial Panel Protocol. Chief Superintendent Kate Stephen of Police Scotland described the rioting as shameful and called for it to be condemned by everyone involved in football and wider society. She reported that several arrests had been made and expressed gratitude to the officers and staff who faced extreme hostility and violence, noting that many individuals had armed themselves with harmful items. The incident occurred during the first Old Firm derby in nearly a decade to feature a large allocation of tickets for away fans. Following numerous clashes in previous meetings, away supporters were banned in 2023 but were allowed back on a reduced basis last year. Celtic had received fewer than 1,000 tickets for games at Rangers since 2018, with the Scottish Cup tie serving as a test for greater numbers of away fans. Celtic manager Martin O'Neill commented on the incident involving his staff member, expressing disappointment if the celebrations had gone too far. Despite failing to register a single shot on target in 120 minutes, his team moved into the semi-finals. In the shoot-out, Rangers



captain James Tavernier hit the bar with the first penalty before Djeidi Gassama missed. Cvancara scored to secure Celtic's victory, followed by chaos. O'Neill remarked that Old Firm games are always explosive and hoped the incidents wouldn't overshadow their performance. Rangers manager Danny Rohl stated he was unaware of the events on the pitch at the time, acknowledging the intense emotions following the game. Despite 24 shots and a disallowed goal due to a handball by Emmanuel Fernandez in extra time, Rangers fell short against their rivals. This defeat was particularly disheartening after they squandered a two-goal half-time lead in their 2-2 draw with Celtic in the Scottish Premiership at Ibrox the previous weekend.