

Himanta Biswa Sarma Launches BJP's 'Jan Ashirwad Yatra' Ahead of Assembly Polls

Dhekiajuli, Feb 28: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday launched the BJP's 'Jan Ashirwad Yatra' from Dhekiajuli in Sonitpur district, as the party gears up for the upcoming Assembly elections aiming for a third consecutive term in power.

Seeking public support, Sarma urged voters to ensure that the BJP retains power so that the "journey of a developed and secure Assam" continues uninterrupted. Accompanied by state BJP president Dilip Saikia, Union Minister Pabitra Margherita and other senior leaders, the Chief Minister stood atop an open vehicle leading the procession. Large crowds gathered along both sides of the roads, welcoming the leaders with traditional Assamese gamusas and flowers as they waved to cheering supporters. Before commencing the Yatra, Sarma offered prayers at the Gupteswari Temple in Dhekiajuli. Addressing the gathering, Sarma recalled the BJP's political journey in Assam. "It was in 2014 that you placed your faith in Narendra Modi ji and elected him as Prime Minister.



ter. In 2016, you installed the first BJP government in Assam under the leadership of Sarbananda Sonowal.

Again in 2021, you voted for the BJP," he said. He stated that over the years, the government had worked

tirelessly for the welfare of the people and that the visible development across the state reflects those efforts.

While acknowledging that certain shortcomings or unmet expectations may have arisen, Sarma maintained that there was no lack of effort on the government's part.

"That is why we have a developed and secure Assam today. I appeal to all of you to help the BJP retain power so that we can continue moving the state forward," he added. On its first day, the Yatra is scheduled to cover the Assembly constituencies of Borsola, Tezpur, Naduar and Rongapara. State BJP president Saikia earlier stated that the campaign will travel approximately 70 to 80 kilometres daily, with an outreach target of nearly one lakh people per day. The first phase of the Yatra, set to conclude on March 9, will cover 34 Assembly constituencies across Assam. State Cabinet Minister Ashok Singhal has been appointed as the chief convener of the programme, while Union Minister Margherita and other senior leaders will serve as co-conveners. Additionally, 'Jan Ashirwad Sabhas' will be organised in constituencies not directly covered by the Yatra route.

In Brief

Security forces nab four PREPAK (Pro) cadres

Imphal: Security forces arrested an active cadre of PREPAK (Pro) from Khuman Lampak area under Imphal-PS, Imphal West district, identified as Oinam Dhananjay Singh (36) of Liwa Road Maibam Leikai, Imphal West district. A mobile phone along with two SIM cards was seized from him. Security forces also arrested an extortionist, a PREPAK (Pro) active cadre from Uyal Makha Leikai area, PS and district- Thoubal, namely Thokchom Rabichandra Singh (36) of Heirok Part-II, Bazar Laikol Leirak, Thoubal district. A mobile phone was seized from him. Security forces also arrested an active cadre of PREPAK (Pro), identified as Khuraijam Rojitkumar Singh (37) of Thongju Part-II Makha Leikai, Imphal East district from his residence under Singjamei-PS, Imphal West district.

Importance of skill development training stressed

Imphal: A training programme on "Mushroom Cultivation and Beekeeping (Apiculture)" as part of livelihood restoration efforts for rehabilitated Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) was held at the Community Hall, Serou Mayai Leikai. The training programme was organised by the District Officer, Horticulture and Soil Conservation, Thoubal in collaboration with the Sub-Divisional Officer, Waikhong in Kakching District. The programme was attended by Arvind Hanglem, IAS, SDO Waikhong as the Chief Guest; Supreme Thongam, BO, DC Office Kakching as Guest of Honour and Kh. Malemnganba Meitei, District Officer (Horticulture and Soil Conservation), Thoubal, as President. Akoijam Ratanakumar Singh, Senior Scientist at ICAR, delivered a session on mushroom cultivation, while P. Bhumika, Assistant Professor at Central Agricultural University, spoke on beekeeping as resource persons.

16 held for attacking police

Guwahati, Feb 28: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said that 16 people have been arrested at Azara on the outskirts of Guwahati for allegedly attacking police and other officials who had gone to serve eviction notices to encroachers. He said a permanent police camp is being set up in the area and asserted that all encroachers, who are "unknown people", will be evicted. Sarma maintained that police had gone to serve notice to a section of people in Azara area, which falls under his constituency, when they were attacked. "Even after 1.5 lakh bighas of land have been evicted in the state, encroachers continue to fight it. If BJP is not there in our state, they will not follow any rules and regulations," he told reporters.

Security forces nab four PREPAK (Pro) cadres



Imphal, Feb 28: Security forces arrested an active cadre of PREPAK (Pro) from Khuman Lampak area under Imphal-PS, Imphal West district, identified as Oinam Dhananjay Singh (36) of Liwa Road Maibam Leikai, Imphal West district. A mobile phone along with two SIM cards was seized from him. Security forces also arrested an extortionist, a PREPAK (Pro) active cadre from Uyal Makha Leikai area, PS and district- Thoubal, namely Thokchom Rabichandra Singh (36) of Heirok Part-II, Bazar Laikol Leirak, Thoubal district. A mobile phone was seized from him. Security forces also arrested an active cadre of PREPAK (Pro), identified as Khuraijam Rojitkumar Singh (37) of Thongju Part-II Makha Leikai, Imphal East district from his residence under Singjamei-PS, Imphal West district. A one mobile phone and one Aadhaar card were seized from the arrestee. Security forces further arrested an active cadre of PREPAK (Pro), identified as Kshetrimayum Laiba Meitei (42) of Lamdeng Khunou, Imphal West district from his residence under Lamsang-PS. A mobile phone and an Identity card were recovered.

Assam signs MoU with Airports Authority of India for pre-feasibility study of five greenfield airport

Guwahati, Feb 28: The Assam government has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Airports Authority of India (AAI) to undertake a pre-feasibility study for the development of five greenfield airports in the state.

The MoU was signed in the presence of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma in Dispur on Friday evening.

The MoU was signed by Commissioner and Secretary, Transport, Akashdeep, and Chairman, AAI, Vipin Kumar. The proposed greenfield airports are planned at Manas National Park, Umrangshu, Majuli, Diphu and Charaideo.

Speaking on the occasion, Chief Minister Dr. Sarma thanked the Airports Authority of India for undertaking the initiative to carry out the pre-feasibility studies at the five identified locations. He stated that a greenfield airport at Manas would not only address strategic and security considerations but would also significantly boost wildlife tourism in the region. He further said that the proposed airports at Majuli, Umrangshu, Diphu and Charaideo would enhance regional connectivity and increase tourist footfall, thereby contributing to local economic development.



conomic development.

The Chief Minister also observed that the development of these greenfield airports would enable Assam to set a model that could be replicated by other states. He requested AAI to consider upgrading Rupsi Airport into a full-fledged airport, keeping in view its strategic proximity to the Siliguri Corridor, Chicken's Neck. Additionally, he urged AAI to take steps to enhance international flight

connectivity from Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport.

He also said that the greenfield airports and consequently launching flight operations from these airports is expected to provide a major fillip to regional connectivity, while boosting tourism, industry and commerce, and strengthening strategic communication infrastructure across the state. He further said that the move would reinforce Assam's

role as a key gateway to North East and South East Asian nations.

MLA Dharmeswar Konwar, CEM of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council Tuliram Ronghang, CEM of NC Hills Autonomous Council Debobal Gorlosa, Chief Secretary Ravi Kota, Secretary, Civil Aviation, Government of India Samir Kumar Sinha, along with other senior officials and dignitaries, were present on the occasion.

Meghalaya MLAs travel by bus to inspect New Shillong Township projects



Shillong, Feb 28: Conrad K. Sangma and several legislators of Meghalaya chose a different route as they set aside their official cars and chauffeurs and travelled together by bus to the New Shillong Township. The visit was organised at the end of the Budget Session. Instead of moving in separate vehicles, MLAs boarded a bus and headed to the township, where major infrastructure projects are coming up. The atmosphere during the ride was described as lively. Legislators interacted with one another and discussed the progress of development works while on the way. At the site, the Chief Minister showcased key projects under construction, including the upcoming state

secretariat and the new legislative assembly building. He explained the scale and design of the projects and shared updates on their current status. Sangma said the New Shillong Township is being developed as a modern administrative hub to meet the state's growing needs. According to him, the new secretariat complex and assembly building are part of a larger plan to strengthen governance infrastructure in Meghalaya. He added that the township project aims to improve institutional capacity and provide better facilities for public administration. Several other constructions are also underway in the area as part of the broader development plan.

Mizoram CM Lalduhoma Defends Amendments to Mizo Marriage and Inheritance Law Amid Controversy

Aizawl, Feb 28: Amid a heated debate on social media and public platforms, Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma has defended the recent amendments to the Mizo Marriage and Inheritance law, asserting that the changes were the outcome of a broad consultative process rather than a unilateral government decision. The Mizo Marriage and Inheritance of Property (Amendment) Bill, introduced by Lalduhoma in his capacity as Law Minister, was passed by the Mizoram Assembly earlier this month. The legislation further codifies Mizo customary law and strengthens the principal Act of 2014 by incorporating provisions on polygamy, inter-community marriages, and women's property rights. The amendment formally bans polygamy and grants women the right to claim up to 50 percent of matrimonial property. However, controversy erupted after interpretations surfaced suggesting that Mizo women marrying non-Mizo men could lose their Mizo identity and Scheduled Tribe (ST) status. Civil society groups, particularly the Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl (MHIP), have criticised the Bill, urging the government to withdraw it on grounds that it may jeopardise the rights and security of Mizo women. Responding to the concerns during a discussion on a private member's resolution in the Assembly,

Lalduhoma stated that the Bill was based on the recommendations of the Mizo Customary Law Review Committee. He pointed out that the committee includes representatives from 10 organisations, including MHIP, the Central Young Mizo Association (CYMA), as well as experts from Mizoram University and the state law college. The Chief Minister explained that under the earlier Mizo Marriage, Divorce and Inheritance of Property Act, 2014, a Mizo woman marrying outside the community was considered to have joined her husband's family, effectively distancing her from Mizo customary rights. "Our customary law does not clearly define the status of Mizo women who marry outside the community; it simply rejects them," he said. He added that the law is also silent on the status of children raised strictly according to Mizo culture and traditions. Referring to a May 1977 circular issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Lalduhoma noted that a Tribal Certificate may be granted to children of inter-caste or inter-tribe marriages if they are raised as tribals, face similar social disadvantages, and are accepted by the community. However, such cases must be examined individually and cannot be applied as a general rule. He also cited an October 2019 circular by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empow-



erment concerning children of divorced women. The Chief Minister further clarified that a Supreme Court ruling delivered in November last year was specific to the petitioner in that case and did not amount to a blanket judgment applicable to all Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes. Observing that inter-community marriages are inevitable in today's "global village," Lalduhoma urged people to move beyond what he described as an "insular mentality." He said he person-

ally knows several Mizo women married to non-Mizos who continue to maintain their cultural identity and contribute meaningfully to Mizo society.

Acknowledging the complexity and sensitivity of the issue, Lalduhoma proposed the formation of a separate committee to examine more deeply the legal and social status of Mizo women who marry outside the community and their children, signalling the government's openness to further dialogue and review.

NE/EAST

Mizoram sent back 1,177 non-tribals for ILP violations in two years: Minister

Aizawl, Feb 28: At least 1,177 non-tribal people were sent back from Mizoram for violating Inner Line Permit (ILP) regulations over the past two years, Home Minister K Sapdanga informed the Assembly on Friday. In a written response to a query from opposition Congress member C Ngunlianchunga, the home minister stated that more than 3.39 lakh ILPs were issued in 2024 and 2025. "Of these, 3,17,807 were temporary permits, while the remaining 22,185 were regular ILPs," he said. Data provided by the home minister revealed a steady increase in ILP issuance, with 1,59,608 permits issued in 2024 and 1,80,384 in 2025. Kolasib district issued the highest number of 1,90,528 permits, followed by Aizawl district (1,23,063), he said. Notably, 46,482 of the Aizawl permits were issued at the Lengpui Airport counter.



Sapdanga further said the state government generated a revenue of Rs 15.12 crore through ILP issuance during the period. Meanwhile, the

state's apex student body, Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP), has demanded a comprehensive revamp of existing frameworks to strengthen ILP

enforcement following reports of rising influx and the circumvention of entry protocols. During a recent press conference here, the organisation leaders said an increasing number of non-locals are securing entry into Mizoram via "self-sponsorship" or through the sponsorship of other non-local entities, thereby bypassing the traditional requirement for indigenous permanent resident endorsement. The body urged the government to plug regulatory gaps and called for the immediate rescission of two notifications issued in 2016 and 2017. These provisions allow non-tribal trade licence holders to act as self-sponsors and authorise the sponsorship of up to five subordinate managers or labourers, which, according to the MZP, undermines the ILP integrity and threatens the demographic stability of the Mizo people.

Drugs and illegal liquor seized in Assam, 3 held

Guwahati, Feb 28: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said three persons have been arrested for allegedly smuggling banned Yaba tablets worth around Rs 4 crore and liquor in two separate operations by the state police.

He lauded the police personnel for the successful operations. "Hidden compartments in cars won't hide crime," Sarma said in a post on X on Thursday. He said 80,000 Yaba tablets, worth around Rs 4 crore, were recovered from a secret chamber of a vehicle in Bagori. Two persons were arrested in this connection, Sarma said. Yaba tablets are banned in India as they contain methamphetamine, a Schedule II substance under the Controlled Substances Act. In another operation at Digorkhal in Cachar district, 81 cartons with bottles containing 819 litres of illegal Indian Made Foreign Liquor were "recovered from a hidden hold" of a vehicle, the CM said. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said three persons have been arrested for allegedly smuggling banned Yaba tablets worth around Rs 4 crore and liquor in two separate operations by the state police. He lauded the police personnel for the successful operations. One person was arrested along with the seized liquor bottles, he added.



491 land pattas distributed in Digboi under Mission Vasundhara 3.0

Digboi, Feb 28: The Paragadhar Chaliha Auditorium in Muliabari, Digboi, hosted the 'Mission Vasundhara 3.0' digital land patta distribution program on Wednesday, aimed at strengthening land rights across Assam. Organized by the Digboi district administration, the program formally handed over 491 land pattas (ownership certificates) to beneficiaries. Digboi MLA Suren Phukan, the chief guest, personally presented the documents, underscoring the government's commitment to securing legal ownership for rightful citizens. Earlier in the morning, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma inaugurated the headquarters of the 6th Assam Police Commando Battalion at Ambikapur, Sadiya, in Tinsukia district.

Built at a cost of Rs 160 crore on 331 bighas, the sprawling, state-of-the-art campus is designed to accommodate 400 commandos with world-class infrastructure and operational readiness. The facility features a three-storey commandant building, advanced barracks for 254 commandos, 149 residential quarters, surveillance towers, parade grounds with a gallery, shooting ranges, classrooms with computer labs, indoor sports complexes, hospitals, schools, ration and clothing shops, ATMs, and Namghars. CM Sarma highlighted that the campus demonstrates the government's commitment to strengthening Assam Police and ensuring a safer Assam, equipped with modern training and operational facilities. The third phase of the government's flagship Mission Vasundhara, led by CM Sarma, aims to benefit 30,000 families statewide, following the success of the first two phases. The initiative focuses on securing legal land rights for indigenous residents, lawful citizens, educational and religious institutions, social organizations,



and tribal communities residing on forest land. In Digboi, 379 institutional pattas were issued to schools, healthcare centers, and social service organizations, while 112 individual land rights were granted to local residents. Addressing the gathering, MLA Suren Phukan noted efforts to extend land entitlement to residents in tea garden areas. He also outlined his tenure's achievements, including the construction and repair of around 900 roads, reconstruction of over 700 Namghars and 750 temples, and renovation of schools and colleges. The program saw participation from dignitaries including Digboi Co-District Commissioner Phyllis V.L. Rangsall, Pavitra Bharali, Sanchita Chetia, educationist Hitendra Nath Sharma, Chairperson of Digboi Anchalik Panchayat Trishna Phukan Bairagi, Chairman of Digboi Municipality Sudvip-ta Dutta Chowdhury, along with panchayat representatives, administrative officers, and community leaders. MLA Phukan noted that nearly one million people across Assam have already secured land rights under Mission Vasundhara, with the campaign set to expand further.

Public representatives must uphold transparency: Tripura CM

Agartala, Feb 28: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Friday said democracy can be strengthened only when public representatives uphold transparency, accountability and responsibility in the discharge of their duties, and remain answerable to the people.

Addressing a seminar on the responsibility and accountability of public representatives, Saha urged elected representatives at all levels to work with integrity.

He said public representatives must listen to citizens and interact with them politely and respectfully, adding that humility, accessibility and a positive approach are essential for those entrusted with democratic responsibilities.

The conference — the first of its kind in Tripura — was held with the guidance of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), and brought together public representatives from different tiers of governance.

Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairman Harivansh Narayan Singh, Tripura Governor N Indrasena Reddy, Leader of the Opposition in the state assem-



bly, Jitendra Chaudhury, besides MLAs, ministers and representatives from zilla parishads, municipalities and nagar panchayats, attended the event.

The programme was organised by the Tripura Legislative Assembly with the support of the CPA,

a premier international organisation.

Reiterating the vision of building a 'New Tripura', the chief minister called upon public representatives to rise above party lines and contribute collectively to the state's development.

He said transparency, dedication and accountability should remain guiding principles so that future generations remember today's leaders with respect.

Singh said democracy cannot thrive without accountability and public representatives must discharge their responsibilities through regional coordination, capacity building and well-planned legislative strategies. He said greater awareness of government programmes would enable representatives to present their work more effectively "in the court of the people". Singh stressed that development initiatives must reach the grassroots so that the benefits of governance go to all sections of society, adding that overall public welfare should remain the guiding principle.

He also said economic prosperity would be possible only through collective efforts, especially in view of the prevailing geopolitical situation.

Japan to back Northeast India connectivity to Bay of Bengal: Deputy Foreign Minister

Guwahati, Feb 28: Japan will back projects that improve links between Northeast India and the Bay of Bengal as well as the wider Indian Ocean region, said Japan's Deputy Foreign Minister Horii Iwao on Friday. He added that Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) policy includes plans for an "Industrial Value Chain" linking the Bay of Bengal with Northeast India, which will boost regional development and connectivity to the sea. The announcement follows recent



high-level interactions between the two countries. Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Japan in August 2025 and met Prime Minister

Takaichi during the G20 summit in South Africa in November. In January, External Affairs Minister Jaishankar hosted his Japanese counterpart Toshimitsu Motegi in New Delhi to further bilateral discussions. Speaking at the Sixth India-Japan Intellectual Conclave in Shillong, organized by the foreign policy think tank Asian Confluence, Horii underlined the strategic importance of Northeast India. He described the region as a gateway to Southeast Asia with the potential to

drive economic growth when integrated with neighboring countries like Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, and Southeast Asian nations. Horii said Japan is committed to supporting the region's growth, including improving trade, infrastructure, and people-to-people ties. Under Japan's new government led by Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi, Tokyo also aims to foster private-sector cooperation in areas such as semiconductors, clean energy, and economic security.

Three Manipur-based Amurfalcons with satellite tags arrive in Africa

Imphal, Feb 28: Three satellite transmitter tagged Amur falcons in Manipur reached Africa where they are currently spending their winter migration period.

Officials here reported them to be active and healthy and spending their winter in three African countries.

Under phase-2 of the Manipur Amur Falcon Tracking Project, the three Amur falcons were tagged with satellite transmitters in November 8, 2025 in Manipur's Tamenglong district where they roosted for days during their annual stopover. The satellite tagging exercise was carried out by the state forest department in collaboration with the Wildlife Institute of India.

The three falcons — Ahu, Alang and Apapang — were released from the Chiuluan roosting site in Tamenglong district by a joint team of scientists from the Wildlife Institute of India, officials of the Tamenglong district forest division and volunteers from Chiuluan village. Officials today said that the tagged Amur falcons have reached Africa in a record time of about nine to ten days. Since then, the birds have been spending their wintering migration period in different African countries.

Dr R Suresh Kumar of the Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun, in the latest update, confirmed that all three fal-



cons were active and doing well. "Earlier concerns were raised about Ahu's movement, but the latest tracking data indicates that the bird is making local movements and is currently confined to Somalia," Dr Kumar said in the update. As per the latest location data, he said, Ahu is currently in Somalia while Apapang is in Zimbabwe and Alang is in Botswana. The update noted that during the previous wintering cycle, a tagged falcon from Chiuluan had begun its northward migration to its

breeding grounds on April 14, 2025.

The satellite-tagging project of the Amur falcons aims to generate scientific data on the long-distance migration of the migratory bird (known for one of the most remarkable journeys in the avian world) and to strengthen conservation efforts in Tamenglong.

Another objective of the project was to better understand the migratory behaviour of Amur falcons and enhance conservation measures for this globally migrating species.

Police in Meghalaya arrest nine mining workers and confiscate 55 MT of coal

Imphal, Feb 28: Nine mine workers were arrested by Meghalaya police from an illegal coal mine at Umthe area in East Jaintia Hills district, even an approximately of 55 metric tonnes of illegally extracted coal from the site was seized from the site in the presence of an Executive Magistrate, following due legal procedures, officials said on Friday. Acting on specific intelligence gathered through drone surveillance, a police team conducted a mine raid on Thursday, leading to the detection of the illegal operation running in violation of existing environmental and mining regulations. "The raid was conducted on Thursday in compliance with the ban imposed by the National Green Tribunal on illegal coal mining and transportation, and in accordance with directions issued by the Meghalaya High Court for strict enforcement against unlawful mining in the state, Pankaj Rasgania, the district police chief of East Jaintia Hills, said. He said the raid was conducted following an aerial drone survey detected the coal mine in Umthe area under Umpleng Police Outpost. "Nine mine workers were found engaged in illegal mining activities at the site," Rasgania said, adding that the mine workers were arrested and taken into custody for necessary legal action under relevant provisions of law. An FIR has been registered, and further investigation is underway to identify those responsible for financing and operating the illegal mine, the police official said. Meanwhile, Meghalaya police reiterated their commitment to stringent enforcement measures, asserting zero tolerance towards any form of illegal mining in the district. The police crackdown at Umthe area after the Meghalaya High Court took cognisance of the illegal coal mining activities in East Jaintia Hills district due to repeated instances of unlawful coal extraction despite the continuing ban.

A division bench of the Meghalaya High Court had recently ordered the State government to act against NGOs and officials who are part of the whole chain in illegal min-



ing and transportation of coal in the State.

"What is deemed necessary by this Court is also the examination of the manner of the transport of illegally extracted coal and the role of transport officials, police, non-State players, such as NGOs, which is part of the whole chain in the facilitation of illegal mining operations," a division bench of Justice Hamarsan Singh Thangkiew and Wanlura Diengdoh said. Notably, a total of 33 people died following a deadly explosion that occurred on February 5 at an illegal coal mining site in the Mynsgat-Thangsko area of East Jaintia Hills District. A suo-motu FIR has been registered in connection with the incident at Khliehriat Police Station, and a Special Investigation Team (SIT) headed by the DIG (Eastern Range) has been constituted to investigate the case. Seven persons have been arrested so far in connection with the blast. The state government has also constituted a judicial commission of inquiry to probe the incident and its wider implications. The commission is being headed by Justice (Retd.) R. S. Chauhan, former Chief Justice of the Uttarakhand and Telangana High Courts, with former IPS officer H. Nongpluh and former IAS officer Peter Dkhar as members. The commission has been given six months to submit its report.

Importance of skill development training stressed

Imphal, Feb 28: A training programme on “Mushroom Cultivation and Beekeeping (Apiculture)” as part of livelihood restoration efforts for rehabilitated Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) was held at the Community Hall, Serou Mayai Leikai. The training programme was organised by the District Officer, Horticulture and Soil Conservation, Thoubal in collaboration with the Sub-Divisional Officer, Waikhong in Kakching District. The programme was attended by Arvind Hanglem, IAS, SDO Waikhong as the Chief Guest; Supreme Thongam, BO, DC Office Kakching as Guest of Honour and Kh. Malemnganba Meitei, District Officer (Horticulture and Soil Conservation), Thoubal, as President. Akoijam Ratankumar Singh, Senior Scientist at ICAR, delivered a session on mushroom cultivation, while P. Bhumika, Assistant Professor at Central Agricultural University, spoke on beekeeping as resource persons. Addressing the gathering the chief guest of the function, Arvind Hanglem spoke



on the importance of training and skill development in ensuring sustainable livelihoods, citing the example of an Internally Displaced Person. He also highlighted the need for collaboration among various line departments to effectively implement government schemes and ensure that benefits reach the people. Supreme Thongam, BO, DC Office Kakching, highlighted the initiative of the District Administration Kakching to ensure that every department reaches out with its schemes to every nook and corner of the district, with special

focus on supporting the general public and IDPs to improve their livelihoods. He further informed that logistic support would be extended for the purchase of mushroom spawn and necessary assistance will be provided to those interested in taking up mushroom cultivation as a follow-up to the training. Attending the programme as President of the function, Kh. Malemnganba Meitei gave detailed information regarding various government schemes available to support individuals interested in mushroom cultivation and beekeeping.

74th birth anniversary of noted poet AK Seram observed in Bangladesh

Imphal, Feb 28: The 74th birth anniversary of noted poet A.K. Seram was observed at Bhanubil, Bangladesh. The programme was organised by the Manipuri Library & Research Centre. On the occasion, the “Leichombam Rajendro Memorial Lifetime Achievement Award 2026” was ceremonially presented to Yaiskul Khwairakpam from Manipur. The commemorative event was held at Luxmi Narayan Mandap, Bhanubil, where 42 literary works of the celebrated poet were displayed. During the function, two books were also formally released, “Thammoigri Manin” written by Ayeekpam Anju, Founder of the library, and “Bangladeshki Leimaida” authored by Manipuri poet Umabati Athokpam. The programme was attend-



ed by several distinguished literary personalities, including Khoirom Kamini, President of Bisgaon Branch of Bangladesh Manipuri Sahitya Sangsad (BANSAS); Rakesh Naorem, Secretary of Patriotic Writers Forum (PAWF), Manipur; Laiphrakpam Ibungohal Shyamal, President of BAMSAS Kamalganj Branch; L. Prashanta Kumar, Vice President of BANSAS Central Committee; and Chingtham Sangeeta, Advisor of the Manipuri Library & Research Centre,

L. Jayantakumar Singh, presided over the function. Delivering the keynote address, Founder Ayeekpam Anju stated that the observance of the 74th birth anniversary of his mentor, poet A.K. Seram, was organised to honour his immense contributions toward the promotion of Manipuri language, literature, and culture in Bangladesh. She noted that more than 40 literary works of A.K. Seram have been published and that the poet's contributions have been widely recognized by

various organizations in both Bangladesh and India through numerous awards and honours. Speaking at the event, Rakesh Naorem of PAWF, Manipur, remarked that poet A.K. Seram is a significant literary figure among the Manipuri/Meitei community worldwide. He highlighted the poet's tireless efforts in promoting Manipuri literature across Bangladesh and other regions inhabited by Meitei communities. As a tribute to the birth anniversary, three selected works of A.K. Seram—covering poetry, short stories, and a novel—will be transliterated and published in Meitei Mayek script. Other speakers also paid rich tributes to A.K. Seram, acknowledging his lifelong dedication and invaluable contributions to Manipuri literature and society.

16 held for attacking police, govt officials on Guwahati outskirts

Guwahati, Feb 28: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said that 16 people have been arrested at Azara on the outskirts of Guwahati for allegedly attacking police and other officials who had gone to serve eviction notices to encroachers. He said a permanent police camp is being set up in the area and asserted that all encroachers, who are “unknown people”, will be evicted. Sarma maintained that police had gone to serve notice to a section of people in Azara area, which falls under his constituency, when they were attacked. “Even after 1.5 lakh bighas of land have been evicted in the state, encroachers continue to fight it. If BJP is not there in our state, they will not follow any rules and regulations,” he told reporters. He maintained that the illegal settlers are “not indigenous people, but all unknown individuals”. Sarma, who also holds the Home department, said he directed action against the attackers, and about 16 have already been arrested. “A permanent police camp will be set up there, and law will be tough against encroachers in the tribal belt and block areas,” he added.

Japan Minister calls on Assam CM, discusses investment potential

Guwahati, Feb 28: Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma met with Japan's State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Iwao Horii, and the Ambassador of Japan to India, Keiichi Ono along with a Japanese delegation, in Dispur on Friday evening. The meeting underscored the need to establish Assam as a priority and strategic destination for investment. Chief Minister Sarma highlighted Assam's rapidly growing economic potential, investor-friendly policies, improved connectivity, strong push in infrastructure development, and its strategic advantage as the gateway to Southeast Asia under the Act East Policy. Both sides discussed the scope for enhanced Japanese investment in Assam across sectors such as infrastructure development, renewable energy, manufacturing, information technology, semiconductor industries, skill development, and sustainable development. The Minister informed that several Japanese companies have expressed interest in investing, particularly in the semiconductor project being developed at Jagiroad. The meeting also explored expanding cooperation to create greater employment opportunities for As-



sam's youth in Japan through Japanese language training. Minister Iwao Horii invited the Chief Minister to visit Japan to further advance bilateral cooperation. The Chief Minister, in turn, invited the Prime Minister

of Japan and Japanese industry leaders to visit Assam to deepen mutual friendship and explore the state's vast investment potential. He reiterated that the Government of Assam is keen to build a stronger economic and strategic partnership with Japan.

Assam Chief Secretary Dr Ravi Kota, Additional Chief Secretary to the Chief Minister Dr. KK Dwivedi, and other senior officials were present in the meeting.

Pherzawl gears up for upcoming digital census

Imphal, Feb 28: The District Administration of Pherzawl has rolled out an extensive public awareness campaign to prepare residents for the upcoming Census 2027, which officials describe as India's most technologically advanced population survey to date. The programme, conducted under the aegis of the Government of Manipur, was held at Parbung Village on Friday and later at the Pherzawl DC Office Complex on Saturday. Officials briefed participants on key timelines, procedures and the digital features of the nationwide exercise. According to the administration, the Houselisting Operations will take place from April 16 to May 15, 2026. Prior to this, citizens will have the option of Self-Enumeration through a dedicated mobile application from April 1 to April 15, 2026. Addressing the gathering, Deputy Commissioner Mannuamching, IAS, described the 16th Indian Census (2027) as a historic, fully digital, two-phase enumeration process. She noted that the exercise will include caste-based data collection and introduce more than 34 updated data points covering internet connectivity, smartphone ownership and other socio-economic indicators, reflecting the changing profile of Indian households. Officials emphasised that the shift to digital data collection is intended to enhance accuracy, transparency and efficiency. Residents were urged to actively participate in



self-enumeration and extend full cooperation to enumerators during the houselisting phase. In a parallel initiative, the District Administration also conducted an awareness campaign on “Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G) Act,” highlighting the government's focus on inclusive development. The scheme, officials said,

replaces MGNREGA and guarantees 125 days of wage employment per rural household annually. Informational calendars and Placards translated into Hmar were distributed to attendees. The awareness drive concluded with a call for collective responsibility, as Pherzawl prepares to contribute meaningfully to a landmark national exercise.

Mizoram Reasserts 1875 Inner Line Boundary with Assam

Aizawl, Feb 28: Mizoram on Friday reaffirmed the 1875 Cachar Inner Line as its historical and legal boundary with Assam. In a written reply to a query from Opposition Congress member C. Ngunlianchnunga, Home Minister K. Sapdanga informed the Assembly that the government remains committed to the Cachar Inner Line notified in 1875 as its boundary with Assam. He said this position



has remained unchanged and has been supported by all political parties and major NGOs since the 1950s, when Mizoram was still a district council under As-

sam. Conversely, the Assam government continues to maintain its stance based on the “Inner Line” of the Lushai Hills District as described in a notification is-

sued on March 9, 1993, he said. As the views of both states differ, the Mizoram government has taken several steps and approached the Centre multiple times. The two states have also held discussions on many occasions, he added. He clarified that the Council of Ministers meeting held on July 8, 2019, did not newly accept the Cachar Inner Line of 1875 but reaffirmed that it remains the government's original and existing position.

CM joins nationwide launch of HPV vaccination campaign against cervical cancer

Imphal, Feb 28: Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh, attended the nationwide launch of the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Vaccination Campaign against Cervical Cancer, today at the auditorium of Jawaharlal Nehru Institute of Medical Sciences (JNIMS), Imphal East. The programme was launched virtually across all States and Union Territories by Prime Minister, Narendra Modi from Ajmer, Rajasthan. Prior to the programme, the Chief Minister also flagged off 33 ambulances for maternity services to various districts of the State. The ambulances were funded by the North Eastern Council (NEC) and procured by the Directorate of Health Services, Manipur, to strengthen maternal and child healthcare delivery across the State. During the launching event, the Chief Minister visited the Registration Counter, Vaccination Room, and Observation Room at JNIMS. He interacted with doctors, nurses, and beneficiaries. He handed over the vaccination certificate to a girl who received the HPV vaccine. He also inspected the internal roads of the JNIMS campus and reviewed the condition of the infrastructure. In his address, the Prime Minister stated that the Government is leav-



ing no stone unturned to ensure that the daughters of the country are healthy and prosperous. He described the nationwide HPV vaccination drive as a transformative step in preventive healthcare to protect girls from cervical cancer. The HPV vaccine protects girls from HPV infection, which is the leading cause of cervical cancer. Cervical cancer is one of the most common cancers among women. The vaccine

is being administered to 14-15 year-old girls under a campaign mode strategy. It is a single-dose schedule and is a major step towards preventing cervical cancer and safeguarding the health of future generations. Minister Khuraijam Loken Singh; Chief Secretary, Dr. Puneet Kumar Goel; Administrative Secretaries; Director of Health Services; Doctors, nurses, and medical staff, among others, also attended the programme

AIIMS Guwahati celebrates National Science Day

Guwahati, Feb 28: The Departments of Physiology, Biochemistry, and Anatomy at AIIMS Guwahati jointly organised a guest lecture and student activities today to commemorate National Science Day. The event was attended by over 250 delegates, including faculty members, residents and students from AIIMS Guwahati and nearby institutions such as Kendriya Vidyalaya IIT Guwahati, Kendriya Vidyalaya Borjhar, and ESIC Medical College Guwahati. The purpose of the event was to stimulate the scientific temperament and curiosity among students. National Science Day serves as a reminder of India's rich scientific heritage and marks the discovery of the Raman Effect by Sir CV Raman. The theme for National Science Day-2026 was “Women in Science: Catalysing Viksit Bharat”. Women from India have made remarkable contributions across diverse domains of science and technology, including space research, medicine, biotechnology, and fundamental sciences. Prof. Manasi Bhat-tacharjee, Dean (Academics), addressed the gathering. She emphasized on the need of zeal, curiosity and patience in a journey to any discovery. Dr. Pradeep Kumar Srivastava, Ex-Dy Di-

rector, CSIR-Central Drug Research Institute, Lucknow was the guest speaker of the event. He engaged the audience through “Sciencetoon”—an innovative science communication approach developed by him that integrates scientific concepts with creative cartoons to simplify complex ideas. His lecture underscored the importance of creativity, innovation, and learning from nature to promote sustainable scientific advancement. On this occasion, the institute organised activities such as Open Science Quiz, poster competition and Gamification in Learning for the students. The event concluded with prize distribution to students who participated in various activities. National Science Day is observed annually on February 28 across India to honor the discovery of the Raman Effect, which earned Sir C.V. Raman the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1930. The day serves as a reminder of India's rich scientific heritage and its ongoing journey toward innovation and discovery. At AIIMS Guwahati, the celebration was not only a tribute to past achievements but also a call to action for the future. By engaging students, faculty, and the wider community, the institute reaffirmed its commitment to advancing medical science and nurturing the next generation of researchers.

North East Chronicle

MARCH 01 2026 VOL 02 NO. 08



Count Every Voice: The Census and the Promise of Inclusive Governance

A nation that does not know itself cannot govern itself well. As census operations draw near, the country stands at the threshold of one of its most important civic exercises — a moment to count every head, record every household, and map the true face of its population. The preparations underway are extensive. Government machinery is being mobilised, enumerators are being recruited and trained, and digital infrastructure is being put in place to ensure accuracy and efficiency. Public awareness campaigns are reaching villages and cities alike, reminding citizens that their participation is not optional — it is essential. The census is more than numbers. It determines how funds are distributed, how seats in legislatures are apportioned, and how welfare reaches the deserving. An undercount is not a statistical error; it is a denial of entitlement to millions. Yet challenges persist. Migratory populations, remote tribal communities, and the urban homeless have historically slipped through the cracks. Authorities must redouble efforts to ensure no one is left uncoun­ted. Citizens, too, carry a responsibility. Cooperation, honesty, and openness are the cornerstones of a successful census. The data we provide today will shape the policies that define our tomorrow. The nation is counting — and every count matters. (DB)

Education system must be built on proficiency, not pass rates



In Bangladesh, education certificates often promise more than the learning they represent. Many conventionally successful students struggle to read with confidence, mathematics feels too mechanical, and concepts memorised for examinations fade quickly. This is hardly a failure on the children’s part, but a predictable outcome of an ineffective system. Bangladesh achieved remarkable progress in expanding schooling over the past two decades, with more children entering classrooms, more schools built, and increasing participation in public examinations.

Yet, the deeper gaps students have in weak foundational skills in subjects like science and mathematics have not been addressed. The system revolved around measuring what was most convenient, even if superficial, such as enrolment, grade completion rate, pass rate, and syllabus coverage.

Thus, stakeholder behaviour adapted accordingly. Teachers had to focus on completing overloaded curricula, rather than ensuring understanding; examinations emphasised predictable recall; and students progressed even without a proper grasp of the courses they took. Similarly, households responded in predictable ways—those who could afford it, turned to private tutoring and the responsibility for actual learning shifted from the system to families. Social and income

inequality widened and trust in institutions eroded.

A government review of secondary and higher secondary education examined these patterns and it reached a direct conclusion: as long as progression, certification, and institutional performance are considered a more reliable measure of success than demonstrated learning, weak outcomes will persist. So, one of the toughest challenges for the new government is to ensure just educational opportunities for over four crore young people. The way BNP’s election manifesto covered pledges involving educa-

tion—signalling increased public investment in education, stronger teacher capacity, expanded primary support, credible assessment, digital tracking, and wider access to technical and vocational education—is promising. And for these promises to materialise, incentives that shape everyday behaviour in schools have to be aligned with learning at its centre. Any new education policies must keep in mind that a system cannot deliver high-quality technical education if students progress without foundational mastery and examination credibility cannot be restored if results are

expected to remain stable regardless of actual performance. At the same time, digital tools cannot improve outcomes if teachers lack the time, support, and incentives to respond to learning gaps.

To truly reform Bangladesh’s education sector, the curriculum must be realistic and teachable and students’ class progressions must reflect their actual learning. Assessment must be credible and institutions must ensure that any students with a comparatively weaker academic standing are receiving timely support. These principles do not conflict with the new government’s stated com-

mitments, but makes them all the more achievable. Every proposal placed before the BNP administration should therefore be judged by a single question: does it strengthen real learning and the system’s ability to respond to gaps in real time? If the answer is yes, it deserves priority. If the answer is no, it must be reconsidered.

For example, the BNP’s stance to prioritise digitalisation in the education sector—presenting “One Teacher One Tab” together with “Edu-ID”—reflects a forward-looking approach. These initiatives will advance learning only if they are implemented to help teachers see where students are struggling and adjust their instructions and support accordingly. However, if not tied strictly to actionable practices, these tools will risk being tokenistic, rather than transformative. Bangladesh is nearing the end of its demographic dividend.

The students now in school will soon form the core of the labour force. If they enter adulthood with solid certificates but fragile skills, the cost will be felt in productivity, social mobility, and trust in public institutions. The diagnosis is clear: Bangladesh must realign incentives, restore credibility, and enforce standards that put learning at the forefront. The current government has both the chance and the obligation to bring about this change.

Why the Jamaat-i-Islami in Bangladesh Needs to be Watched More Closely

The outcome of the just-concluded election in Bangladesh is a critical chapter to be analysed and watched more closely in the days to come. Not only does it signify a fundamental shift and transition in Bangladeshi society, but the impressive result of the Jamaat leaves sufficient reason for New Delhi to be extra cautious about the security scenario all along its eastern and northeastern border, as the Jamaat has won the maximum number of its seats from those districts of Bangladesh that have borders with India. Now let us have a look at Jamaat’s success figure. It has secured 68 seats and 31.76 per cent of votes. Its vote percentage is something to be noted with all seriousness. Most of the opinion poll surveys conducted before the election gave Jamaat 25-26 percent of votes, at the most. However, in reality, the party has experienced a significantly larger increase in support. Surely the Jamaat-i-Islami (JeI) in Bangladesh has come out of a peripheral zone and has now placed itself at the centre stage of Bangladeshi politics. Its previous best record was in 1991 when it won 18 seats and 12 per cent of popular votes. Most importantly, it has done reasonably well in Dhaka, where it won six out of 20 seats. This is another example of its growing acceptability among the Western-type-curricula-educated population. However, this year’s election in Bangladesh has highlighted a stark reality: not only the Jamaat-i-Islami, but the entire Islamist bloc has significantly increased its vote share. This should cause no surprise, as both the Awami League and the BNP have curried favour with the Islamist bloc, particularly the Jamaat, for a long time. In 1991 the BNP had entered into a political coalition with the Jamaat, and this had helped the former win that year’s election. But the scenario changed before the 1996 poll. The Jamaat’s relationship with the BNP deteriorated, leading to the Awami League forming an alliance with the Jamaat to



organise movements against the BNP-led government. That the Jamaat-i-Islami has done so well in the last election should not cause much surprise. It goes without saying that Awami League votes were not transferred to the Jamaat; rather, they have gone to the BNP kitty. That explains the surge in BNP’s vote percentage. But how can one account for the big jump in Jamaat’s vote percentage? The answer lies in the votes from Gen Z, a significant portion of which must have gone in Jamaat’s favour. This is the most important lesson from this year’s election. It signifies that a new type of cloud formation is taking place in Bangladesh’s political horizon. Tariq Rahaman will have to deviate from conventional political tools to deal with the situation. It bears imports for India, too. But why has a large section of Gen Z supposedly reposed its faith in the Jamaat-i-Islami? It is due to long-standing political and societal corruption, unemployment and weak governance perpetrated by mainstream political parties. According to a survey by Transparency International, in 2024 Bangladesh ranked 151 out of 180 countries in terms of quality of governance. A year later it was ranked 149th, reflecting a steady erosion of governmental institutions. Although an Anti-Corruption Commission came into be-

ing in 2004, it remained ineffective due to government control. So it is no wonder that corruption has become a common discourse in Bangladeshi life, with a very large number of political incumbents accused of having hands in it. Unfortunately, a false sense of economic progress was created throughout the years of Awami League rule under Hasina Wazed. One after another, big infrastructure projects were undertaken which gave very little succour to the poverty-stricken people of Bangladesh. The urban unemployment rate is eight per cent in Bangladesh, and one-third of Bangladeshi university graduates have to remain jobless for a year or two. The Labour Force Survey of 2022 of the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics revealed that while the national unemployment rate was 3.53 per cent, the youth unemployment rate was 8 per cent, with the share of unemployed youth in the country’s total unemployment as high as 83.2 per cent. It is no wonder then that a large number of these voters may have voted for the Jamaat not only in Dhaka but in medium and small towns as well. Tariq Rahaman knows that the Jamaat-i-Islami is a formidable force in Bangladesh, and that is why he had gone out of his way to meet Shafiqur Rahaman, the Ameer of the Jamaat, after becoming the Prime Min-

ister. The Prime Minister of Bangladesh knows better than anybody else that the Jamaat is economically so firmly entrenched that it may be difficult for him to run the country if the latter decides to come to the streets to oppose the BNP government’s programs and policies. Now let us look at the Jamaat’s economic power. For this we have to rely on the seminal work of Abul Barkat, a professor of economics at Dhaka University, who is now in jail. After long years Jamaat submitted its audited accounts for 2024. According to it, the JeI earned nearly 29 crores of Bangladeshi Taka, the highest among all the parties registered with the Bangladesh Election Commission. Out of it, the party spent more than 23 crores. Nearly five and a half crores of Bangladeshi taka remained with it. This is sufficient to give an idea about the party’s financial strength. Keeping aside Abul Barkat’s own comments about the Jamaat-i-Islami, we may now turn to the facts he has given in his study report. According to it, the JeI is now almost everywhere in Bangladeshi society, like large financial institutions, household-level microcredit organisations, madrasas, mass media, information technology, big trading houses and non-governmental organisations. Barkat calculated his estimates

a few years back. But the situation remains the same now. According to Barkat Jamaat’s net annual profit from the above-mentioned ventures, it amounts to \$278 million, and the largest portion of it - 27.5 per cent - comes from banks, insurance and leasing companies. The NGOs contribute 18.7 per cent, 10.5 per cent comes from trade and commerce, 10.1 per cent from pharmaceutical industries and health care institutions, 9.4 per cent from the education sector, 8.8 per cent from real estate business, 7.3 per cent from transport and 7.7 per cent from media and information technology business. This is sufficient to give a clear idea about the JeI’s pervasive penetration into nearly all sectors of Bangladeshi society. It gives the party power to sustain itself during adverse periods, which it did during the rule by the Awami League when its registration was cancelled. The party’s vast economic outreach makes sustenance for it a breeze. The Jamaat-controlled economy grows by 9 per cent per annum, while the state-controlled one grows by only 6 per cent. Abul Barkat has calculated that Jamaat transfers 10 per cent of its annual profit for political activities, and the amount is enough to sustain 6 lakh cadres. Now readers can have a fair idea about the JeI’s deep roots in Bangladeshi economy and society. Tariq Rahaman cannot wish away all these ground realities. He is fortunate that the Jamaat-Ulema-e-Bangladesh did not join the JeI-led alliance and fought separately. This was a jolt to the Islamist bloc. Had it been otherwise, then Jamaat’s number of seats might have increased, as the Jamiat Ulema has sliced away not an insignificant number of votes in a good number of constituencies. On the whole, policymakers in New Delhi should thought-out Bangladesh policy, as a completely new political situation has arisen in the land of our eastern neighbour, a scenario which has never been seen before since the independence of Bangladesh.

A political killing risks tearing the French left apart – and the far right is taking full advantage

In 2023 Jean-Luc Mélenchon, the firebrand leader of the radical left party La France Insoumise (LFI), made a fundamental miscalculation. He publicly promoted a small group of young antifascist activists. La Jeune Garde, founded in Lyon in 2018, were politically inexperienced and had organised a series of sometimes violent confrontations with far-right groups. Members of the group, which was banned in 2025, are now suspected of involvement in a killing that has convulsed France. The victim, Quentin Deranque, was a 23-year-old mathematics student and a far-right activist. Deranque died in Lyon on 14 February two days after a violent street confrontation that allegedly involved members of Jeune Garde. Eleven suspects, including a parliamentary aide to an LFI member of parliament, have been arrested. The assault occurred on the sidelines of a far-right protest against a conference held by Rima Hassan, an MEP for Mélenchon’s party. Since Deranque’s death, Mélenchon has continued to defend Jeune Garde. His close ties to the organisation date from 2023, when he and other LFI figures allegedly attended a Jeune Garde summer camp. The organisation offered him a committed base of young people at a time when LFI was trying to expand its appeal beyond institutional politics to young and grassroots activists. It was an appealing partner for mobilisation. To many of Mélenchon’s critics however, his dogged commitment to what is now a proscribed group is yet further evidence of his unwillingness to admit to an error of judgment.

To do so would be to recognise that his polarising strategy is flawed, if not dangerous. Deranque reportedly joined the demonstration in Lyon to protect members of the anti-immigrant Némésis collective, who were protesting against the conference. The killing is under investigation but it was during the protest that the 23-year-old was beaten and kicked, suffering head injuries. He later fell into a coma and died two days later. Across France, the case has sparked outrage. In Lyon itself, far-right groups marched on 21 February to mourn Deranque. But the outcry has also rocked LFI and raised questions within the French left about the organisation and Mélenchon’s leadership. Among those arrested are three close associates of Raphaël Arnault, an LFI member of parliament and former spokesperson for Jeune Garde. Arnault was himself convicted in 2022 for aggravated assault. Another Jeune Garde member who has been arrested in connection with Deranque’s death had previously been charged with a violent antisemitic assault on the Paris metro in 2024. That Mélenchon knowingly fostered a relationship with Arnault and helped to get him elected to parliament in 2024 casts a spotlight on problems with Mélenchon’s leadership style that have long concerned many on the left. Deranque’s death has provoked a perhaps understandable debate in France about political violence. But considering that most victims are targets of far-right aggression, the reaction is astounding. Jordan Bardella, the president of the far-right National Rally (RN), has gone as far as to call for a cordon sanitaire to be placed around LFI – despite the fact that Until recently, such remarks would have sounded risible; today, hardly anyone would dare to publicly refute them. The RN is using the fallout to gain full acceptance into the

political mainstream. Clearly, the party views this killing as an opportunity to complete its detoxification ahead of the 2027 presidential election. The political heirs of Jean Marie Le Pen’s Front National are constantly trying to make people forget that his party, founded in 1972, brought together former Vichy collaborators, former Waffen-SS members, members of the neofascist student movement and former members of the far-right paramilitary OAS – a group that organised in defence of continued French colonisation of Algeria. The RN has never officially repudiated its ties to French fascism. This legacy has long kept the party on the fringes, despite Marine Le Pen’s efforts to make it socially acceptable. Nevertheless, the LFI has a problem. It is organised around Mélenchon’s autocratic control. His rejection of internal democracy, justified by considerations of political efficiency, has transformed the movement into a fortress in which a sectarian polarisation has developed, making leftwing unity difficult. By claiming that his party “has nothing to do, either directly or indirectly” with the tragedy in Lyon, Mélenchon is rejecting his ethical responsibilities as a leader. Meanwhile, the far right is exploiting Deranque’s death to redefine anti-fascism as the “new fascism” and anti-fascists as neo-Nazis. What would France’s resistance fighters think of this reversal of roles? The revisionism is as brazen as it is disturbing: historical reality is erased with a stroke of the pen, and the RN absolves itself of its extremist ideas, past and present. It is a perverse falsification of history.

The opportunistic Macronist centre-right and the rightwing Les Républicains (LR) approve, believing that the downfall of Mélenchon ahead of the 2027 presidential election is more important than historical truth or political ethics. The international far right is also attempting to exploit the tragedy to further its anti-left agenda. The US state department wrote on X that Deranque’s death demonstrated the threat to public safety from the rise of “violent radical leftism”. Italy’s prime minister, Giorgia Meloni, called it “a wound for the whole of Europe”. The French left, embarrassed, remains mostly silent. A few voices are radically opposed to LFI, notably Raphaël Glucksmann, leader of the centre-left Place Publique. Just two years ago, four left-wing parties – including LFI – joined forces to form a popular front to contest snap elections and defeat the far right. Now, in the aftermath of Deranque’s killing, Glucksmann has definitively severed links with LFI, charging Mélenchon with the “brutalisation” of politics. The ostracisation of Jeune Garde and LFI indirectly constitutes an attack on the broader left, in France and beyond. In the aftermath of Charlie Kirk’s assassination, Donald Trump’s administration classified Antifa as a “terrorist movement”. Trump is not just targeting fringe leftwing groups, but all opponents of his policies. The left faces a dilemma: if it openly criticises LFI, it facilitates the ongoing anti-left offensive. If it unquestioningly supports Mélenchon, it will be seen as endorsing his deleterious strategy. The left, caught in a vice, is under threat. The right and far right are attempting to criminalise the antifascist struggle. This is not only an insult to the memory of the antifascist activists of the past, but it is also a revisionist approach that undermines French democracy.

Stocks making the biggest moves midday: Tejas Networks, Vishal Megamart, RVNL, Technologies

New Delhi: Indian equity benchmarks have been under pressure in midday trade, with selling visible across sectors and no meaningful attempt at recovery in the broader market. The Nifty has now slipped below 25,300, down nearly 0.77%, while the Sensex hovered near 81,700, lower by about 0.67%. The tone was cautious, and the index levels made that obvious enough. Sanofi Consumer Healthcare shares surged as much as 2%. The company reported a 50.11% year-on-year increase in net profit to Rs 66.5 crore for Q4 CY25, compared with Rs 44.3 crore in the same period last year. The numbers were disclosed in a regulatory filing dated February 25. Under the collaboration, Netweb’s rack-scale solutions will utilise Vertiv’s liquid cooling infrastructure, including coolant distribution units and free cooling chillers, along with advanced power infrastructure such as busways and uninterruptible power supply systems with power conversion and dynamic load management. The tie-up is expected to help customers manage rising power requirements of AI workloads and the thermal densities associated with high-performance accelerators. The companies said the validated rack-scale solutions would enable higher rack densities, faster deployment, and reliable performance for AI training and inference environments. The market reaction suggests that participants view the partnership as strategically meaningful. Balu Forge Industries Shares of Balu Forge Industries was up 0.69% the company entered into a five-year Memorandum of Understanding for the supply of large calibre ammunition. In an exchange filing dated February 26, the company said it has entered into an MoU for the supply of empty shells from its green-field manufacturing campus in Belgaum, Karnataka. “This is the next phase of our journey post the onboarding onto the NATO supply chain & commercialisation of our empty shell line. This is in line with the company’s strategy to build a strong foundation in the defence consumable space starting with large calibre ammunition & will further expand towards medium & small calibre in the near future,” the company said. Gold, silver extend rally: MCX & COMEX rally spark ETF buying frenzy The stock has gained roughly 14% over the past week and about 13% over the month. On a year-to-date basis, it is up close to 1%. It had touched a 52-week low of Rs 3,975 on February 24, 2026, while its 52-week high of Rs 5,894.50 was recorded on June 30, 2025. The sharp earnings growth has clearly altered short-term sentiment. Netweb Technol-



ogies Netweb Technologies India shares advanced over 4% during the midday following the announcement of a strategic collaboration with US-based Vertiv Holding Co. The company said it will partner with Vertiv to jointly engineer and validate its in-house designed GPU compute platforms with Vertiv’s integrated AI data centre solutions. Here are the stocks making the biggest moves at midday: The stock had touched its 52-week high of Rs 447.80 on May 20, 2025, while its 52-week low of Rs 301.20 was recorded on December 9, 2025. The order flow appears to have provided near-term support, though the stock remains well below its peak levels. Tejas Networks extended its rally for the second consecutive session. The stock surged as much as 14.05%. In the previous trading session, the stock had rallied nearly 17%, adding to the current momentum. Over the past week, shares have gained more than 25%, and over the past month, the rise stands at about 38%. On a year-to-

date basis, however, the stock remains down around 9%. Samayat Services LLP plans to sell up to 305 million shares at Rs 115 each. The block deal price is nearly 10% lower than the previous closing price of Rs 127.53 per share. The transaction would fetch around Rs 3,508 crore to Samayat Services LLP, which held a 54.09% stake in the company as of December 31, 2025. Rail Vikas Nigam (RVNL) Shares of Rail Vikas Nigam traded in positive territory after the company secured multiple orders worth Rs 1,978.04 crore from National Mineral Development Corporation (NMDC). At midday, the stock was marginally higher, trading around Rs 317 on the NSE. Earlier in the session, the scrip rose as much as 1% to Rs 321 apiece. It later pared some gains and was seen holding modest advances. The company informed exchanges that it has received a Letter of Award from NMDC for the construction of residential towers at iron ore Deposit-5 at Bacheli, Chhattisgarh. The order is valued at Rs 796.80 crore

Stranded for over 30 hours, Kathmandu-bound

New Delhi: Passengers are protesting against Air India Express after two days of flight diversions that disrupted their plans, claiming poor communication and mismanagement caused chaos at Kempegowda International Airport (KIA), Bengaluru. Travellers claimed that they were not fully informed when the Bengaluru-Kathmandu service left at 10:30 am on Thursday and returned without touching down in Kathmandu. The plane subsequently flew again on Friday morning but they said that it was redirected to Lucknow after failing to land in Kathmandu once more, as reported by PTI. The Air India Express blamed the Kathmandu weather for the disruption. A representative of Air India said in a statement, “Our Bengaluru-Kathmandu flights on 26 and 27 February were diverted because of unfavourable weather in Kathmandu.” For the same reason, a second flight was operated to retrieve passengers from yesterday’s interrupted service. Hotel accommodations and the choice of a free rescheduling or a full refund cancellation has been offered to the impacted persons. To accommodate these passengers, a second flight is scheduled for today. We apologise for any difficulty caused by circumstances outside the airline’s control. “What complaints are travellers making at the airport in Bengaluru? Throughout the lengthy disruption, passengers said that they were left without proper information and preparations and they reportedly waited inside the plane for more than 30 hours in total during the diversions. More than 40 travellers who spoke Kannada were also impacted, as reported by PTI. Several of the passengers also reported that the delays cost them money. According to the airline, the impacted travelers received home accommodation, free rescheduling of their flights or full refund cancellations. What happened during the diversions? Travellers claimed that they were not fully informed when the Bengaluru-Kathmandu service left at 10:30 am on Thursday and returned without touching down in Kathmandu. Protesting passengers claim that during the detour, they were kept seated inside the aircraft for hours after landing. This led to an onboard protest, which ultimately resulted to the flight’s return to Bengaluru. After arriving, a number of travelers protested for accountability and compensation by staging a sit-in close to the immigration station. “Without adequate information, we were detained inside the aircraft for hours. During the protest, a passenger remarked, “No one gave a clear explanation of what was happening,” as quoted by PTI. Another tourist claimed that the disturbance had destroyed their holiday and caused them to lose money. The CISF and other security personnel sought to calm the passengers by stepping in at the airport.

NRI health insurance purchases jump 126% YoY

New Delhi: Health insurance purchases by non-resident Indians (NRIs) have surged 126% year-on-year, with Gulf countries accounting for nearly 50% of total demand, according to data released by Policybazaar. The report noted that the sharp rise indicates a structural shift in how the Indian diaspora approaches healthcare, increasingly relying on India’s insurance ecosystem for cost-effective, high-quality medical treatment. Another significant shift is the rising popularity of outpatient department (OPD) coverage. OPD adoption nearly tripled, increasing from 7% to 20%, as NRIs increasingly view Indian health insurance not just as protection against hospitalisation but as a complete healthcare solution. OPD benefits cover doctor consultations, diagnostics, dental care and pharmacy expenses, making them particularly useful for parents managing chronic conditions such as diabetes or hypertension. NRIs are also moving decisively towards higher coverage levels, with a 70% increase in customers opting for larger sum insured policies. This reflects greater awareness of medical inflation, estimated at around 14% annually, and the desire to access advanced treatments such as robotic surgeries and specialised procedures without out-of-pocket costs. Multi-year policies Multi-year health insurance policies have seen a 19% rise in adoption, as NRIs seek to lock in premiums, hedge against rising healthcare costs and avoid the administrative burden of annual renewals. Longer tenures also reduce the risk of policies lapsing, ensuring uninterrupted cover for family members back home. Siddharth Singhal, Business Head – Health Insurance at Policybazaar. com, said the data points to



a fundamental shift in NRI behaviour. “The data points to a fundamental shift in how NRIs approach health insurance in India. Technology has effectively dissolved geographical barriers to healthcare, enabling NRIs to use Indian health insurance not just for emergencies but also for preventive care, planned treatments and long-term health management. As international medical costs continue to rise, India’s combination of world-class care and up to 40% cost savings is positioning the country as a global healthcare value hub for the diaspora,” said Singhal. The growth has been driven by the rapid adoption of AI-enabled tele-medical check-ups, digital-first onboarding and regulatory changes such as the removal of GST on select NRI health policies. Together, these factors have significantly reduced cross-border friction, allowing NRIs to buy and manage health insurance in India seamlessly, regardless of their country of residence. Europe accounted for about 25% of demand, largely driven by long waiting periods for non-emergency procedures in public healthcare systems. NRIs based in Europe are increasingly using Indian health insurance to access hospitals, particularly for surgeries such as cataracts,

joint replacements and elective procedures. The US and Canada together contributed around 17% of demand, as high medical costs abroad push NRIs to seek treatment in India, where even airfare plus surgery is often cheaper than planned procedures overseas. Comprehensive family coverage A major trend emerging from the data is the strong shift towards comprehensive family coverage. The share of family-floater policies has jumped from 20% to 70% year-on-year, with NRIs opting for higher sum insured levels, typically ₹25 lakh and above. At the same time, policies purchased specifically for parents rose from 32% to 60%, underscoring the growing priority NRIs place on safeguarding the health of ageing family members in India. Gulf countries vs others The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region -- led by the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait -- emerged as the largest contributor, accounting for around half of NRI health insurance purchases. Shorter travel times and a stark cost differential have made Indian healthcare an attractive option for NRIs in the region. Annual premiums for Indian health insurance typically range between \$120 and \$300, compared with \$2,000 to \$3,000 for comparable coverage in the Gulf.

Suzlon shares fall 20% in 2026 to hit new 52-week low; analyst see over

New Delhi: ICICI Securities has reiterated its ‘buy’ rating on Suzlon Energy, following a comprehensive review of Suzlon’s transformation, debt reduction, and strategic management changes, with further details of the plan anticipated in the coming months. Suzlon’s recent initiatives are considered a positive signal for growth prospects by ICICI Securities. Suzlon has announced its ‘Suzlon 2.0’ vision, aiming to expand from wind energy solutions into diversified renewable energy (RE) offerings, including solar and battery energy storage systems (BESS). The move is seen as a response to recent execution challenges in the wind sector, particularly those related to transmission infrastructure, land acquisition, and regulatory delays. ICICI Securities points out that demand for wind power has found new growth pillars in FDRE and hybrid power. The company’s order book reached approximately 6.4GW in January 2026, providing more than two years’ execution visibility. “Suzlon, being the market leader in the wind turbine industry, is a natural beneficiary of this shift,” it said. The broader renewable sector benefits from regulatory changes such as the government’s annual tendering of at least 10GW of wind capacity. The outlook for wind energy remains positive in the medium to long term, given India’s ambitious RE and wind targets. According to ICICI Securities, wind may play a crucial role in RE generation going ahead. It recently onboarded Ajay Kapur as CEO, who is expected to drive growth in Suzlon’s existing business. Meanwhile, the newly formed Group Executive Council, comprising Chairman and MD Vinod Tanti, Executive Vice Chairman Girish Tanti, and former CEO JP Chalasani, will focus on diversification and strategy. ICICI Securities believes the diversification could improve growth visibility. Suzlon’s order book, as of January 2026, is 4.1 times its FY25 wind turbine delivery volume. ICICI Securities remains positive on the stock with a target price of Rs 65 apiece, suggesting nearly 53 per cent from today’s low. Key risks include potential surprises in wind turbine generator execution, order intake, and any unforeseen delays, as flagged by the brokerage. Suzlon Energy reported a 14.8 per cent rise in net profit on a year-on-year (YoY) basis to Rs 445.2 crore, while its revenue rose 42.4 per cent YoY to Rs 4,228.1 crore



for the December 2025 quarter. Ebitda increased 48 per cent YoY to Rs 730.5 crore, while Ebitda margins improved by 70 basis points to 17.3 per cent for the reported period. “We believe that bringing in a slew of high-profile CXOs with non-core expertise under a single business (WTG manufacturing) risks setting in unfavourable group dynamics and unrelated diversification. Critically, such a reshuffle is unlikely to relieve the pain of widening gap between deliveries and commissioning,” said JM Financial. This is corroborated by a marketing veteran Deepesh Nanda leaving Tata Power Renewable Energy (TPREL) as MD & CEO in the face of persistent execution challenges, it added, maintaining a ‘buy’ on Suzlon with a target price of Rs 64 based on 25 times FY28E EPS considering 2.5GW/3GW/3.2 GW deliveries during FY26E/27E/28E. Over the past three years, Suzlon has significantly improved its balance sheet, reducing debt from Rs 12,000 crore in FY20 through debt-to-equity conversions and a successful Rs 2,000 crore equity raise in Q2FY24. Amid the ongoing weakness, shares of Suzlon Energy dropped another 2 per cent on Friday, to hit new 52-week lows, and the stock dropped nearly 20 per cent in 2026. Suzlon Energy share price hit its 52-week low of ₹43.85 on Monday, February 23 despite positive

trends on Dalal Street. The company reported its December quarter results last month, posting a consolidated net profit of ₹445 crore, marking a 15% increase from ₹388 crore recorded in the corresponding quarter last year. During the quarter, the wind energy major registered its highest-ever quarterly deliveries of 617 MW, compared with 447 MW in Q3FY25, which helped lift consolidated revenue to ₹4,228 crore. In the year-ago period, the company had reported revenue of ₹2,969 crore. On the operating front, EBITDA rose sharply to ₹739 crore from ₹500 crore, reflecting a growth of 47%. Operating margins also expanded meaningfully, improving by 700 basis points to 17.5% during the quarter. As of the end of the December quarter, the company’s order book stood at 6.4 GW. Within this, the \$144 platform accounted for 5.69 GW, reinforcing its position as the company’s flagship product and a leading offering in the domestic market, according to regulatory disclosures. Commenting on the performance, JP Chalasani, Chief Executive Officer, Suzlon Group, said, “Our closing order book of 6.4 GW stands higher than the opening order book for the quarter, despite the highest-ever deliveries in 30 years. This reflects the demand for our solutions and the effectiveness of our execution. Our balanced EPC strate-

gy—targeting around a 50% share of the EPC business by 2028—is progressing steadily, with the EPC share increasing from 20% to 27% this quarter.” The multibagger stock opened on a muted note at ₹44.47, then rose to its intra-day high of ₹44.97. However, from day’s high, the scrip fell 2.5% to its intra-day low of ₹43.85, also its year-low. On the other hand, the benchmark indices, Nifty 50 and Sensex were trading around 0.6% higher today after the twists in the US tariffs over the weekend. Suzlon Energy stock began its downward run in September, which later turned into a prolonged correction, resulting in it losing 41% of its value from the recent peak of ₹74.30 apiece, hit in May 2025. As of September 2024, it reported net cash positivity with a cash reserve of Rs 1,300 crore, which ICICI Securities highlights as a major factor for financial stability. Suzlon shares: Amid the ongoing weakness, shares of Suzlon Energy Ltd dropped another 2 per cent on Friday, to hit new 52-week lows. The stock is down 44 per cent from its 52-week lows at Rs 74.30 in May 2025, while the stock is down 20 per cent in 2026 so far. Despite this weakness, brokerage firms continued to remain positive on the stock, citing over 50 per cent upside.

Somalia Must Confront Israeli Neocolonial Exploitation of “Somaliland”

Washington: This is not merely about “Somaliland”. This is about Africa and the principle that Somalia’s borders cannot be altered without the consent of its people and institutions.Israel’s recognition of the self-declared “Republic of Somaliland” is a neocolonial exploitation project of a complex, deeply divided region in northwestern Somalia. It is a violation of Somalia’s sovereignty, unity, political independence and territorial integrity, as Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud rightly declared during an address to a special joint session of the two Houses of Federal Parliament in Mogadishu. President Mohamud further noted how Israel’s controversial and unilateral decision was a “threat to the security and stability of the world and the region.Another senior Somali Cabinet official demanded that Israel “abide by international law,” as international and regional organizations, including the UN, the League of Arab States, the Organization of Islamic Conference and the African Union — all of which Somalia is a Member State — as well as the European Union and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), strongly declared opposition to Israel’s decision. The Israeli move was also widely rejected across the globe, including in China, Nigeria, Pakistan, the UK and the US, where the State Department declared the US recognizes one Somalia “which includes the territory of Somaliland”. Israel’s tactical decision overlooks the incon-

sistency of its foreign policy, particularly when juxtaposed with Israel’s own refusal to recognize an independent Palestinian state. The UN called for an emergency session to discuss Israeli recognition of “Somaliland”, in a discussion entitled “Threats to International Peace and Security”. No political observer of Somalia missed the underlying irony of Israel’s recognition of Somaliland. After 35 years searching for international recognition, Israel became the first and only UN Member State to recognize Somaliland, a sub-national entity in Somalia that unilaterally declared independence in 1991 after claiming that the former Barre dictatorship in Somalia committed the Isaaq genocide in the 1980s. The Isaaq are the predominant Somali clan group in the central regions of Somaliland, surrounded by Darod clan groups to the east and south and Dir clan groups to the westIn October 2025, a UN inquiry found that Israel had committed four acts of genocide in Gaza. A demonstrably ironic political act is that the proclaimed victims of the Isaaq genocide celebrated recognition from a state that committed genocide in Palestine.Israel’s motivating factorsSomalia’s greatest asset has always been one of its greatest curses. The country’s geographic location, at the crossroads of global shipping lines that connect Africa, Asia and Europe, continues to attract regional and global competition for power. Even before Israel’s unilateral recognition of Somaliland,

which did not come as a surprise to political observers aware of Somaliland’s long quest for Israeli validation as a sovereign state, Taiwan had recognized Somaliland and established a de facto embassy in Hargeisa. So, why is Israel interested in setting up a foothold in Somaliland? To unpack this, we must first understand the regional context. In their response, international actors sought to emphasize the importance and relevance of international law, grounded in legal and political principles that aim to prevent the recognition of separatist states in Africa, which could lead to deeper instability, ongoing secessionist claims, and the undermining of order and political cohesion, thereby destabilizing the entire African continent.In addition, Africa has never allowed an external actor, Israel or otherwise, to lead formal recognition of any new African state, including the only two nation-states to gain independence in post-colonial Africa, namely Eritrea and South Sudan. In this respect, it is highly unlikely that African nations would follow Israel’s decision, which is motivated by its own strategic considerations, such as ongoing military conflicts with a number of regional actors, including Hamas in Palestine, Hezbollah in Lebanon, Houthis in Yemen, Iran and even the new leadership in post-Assad Syria.In particular, Houthi maritime operations in the Bab al-Mandab Strait, a strategic waterway connecting the Red Sea to the Indian

Ocean, forced shipping lines to reroute around Africa, “driving up transit times, insurance premiums, and energy costs”. This is one of Israel’s top strategic objectives in recognizing the separatist Somali region. The strategic location of northwestern Somalia’s proximity to the Bab al Mandab Strait, across from Yemen, provides Israel a military foothold to confront and potentially neutralize Houthi forces who have targeted the Israeli economy through maritime military operations.Second, as voiced by Somali government official Ali Omar, one of Israel’s motivating factors is its pursuit of “the displacement of Palestinians from Gaza”. After two years of Israeli bombardment, targeted killings, and the destruction of critical infrastructure and the local economy of Palestinians in Gaza, leading to starvation, Israel proposed to relocate Palestinians to Somaliland as part of a wider strategy to forcefully dispossess Palestinians of their rightful homelands.A third and equally important reason for Israel’s recognition of Somalia’s separatist region is to use Somaliland as a bargaining chip in negotiations with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to join the Abrahamic in the name of self-defense. There are conflicting historical, social, political, economic and security factors at play, both visible and invisible — not only within Somalia, but also within the boundaries Somaliland claims.

Iran attacks US Navy base in Bahrain, targeting Fifth Fleet Headquarters in ‘Operation Epic Fury’



The Middle East situation has taken a hazardous turn as missiles attacked a vital US Navy installation in Bahrain, escalating the consequences from US and Israeli strikes on Iran. The strike targeted a center linked to the headquarters of the US Navy’s Fifth Fleet, indicating a direct escalation as Iran threatened reprisal for the previous military action.As explosions jolted Bahrain’s capital, Manama, emergency sirens sounded throughout the city. Smoke erupted over areas of the city, while regional capitals like as Riyadh, Abu Dhabi, and Doha reported hearing bombs. The rapidly escalating security situation has put Gulf states on high alert. The US base in Bahrain has been targeted with a missile, as the Middle East descends into a security nightmare following US and Israeli airstrikes on Iran. Iran threatened revenge for the US-Israeli assaults, and the missiles targeted a facility that served as the headquarters for the US Navy’s Fifth Fleet.“The Fifth Fleet’s service centre was subjected to a missile attack. We will supply you with further information later,” says a statement from Bahrain’s National Communication Center.According to security officials, the targeted installation serves the Fifth Fleet, which controls naval action in the Gulf area. The strike is one of the most contentious occurrences

involving US military installations in recent memory. According to reports based on satellite imagery, the US Navy has already removed vessels from its Bahrain base due to escalating Iranian tensions. Military analysts feel that the preemptive relocation of naval units may have mitigated possible harm. However, officials have yet to ascertain the full scope of the effect on infrastructure or personnel. The Fifth Fleet has a strategic function in protecting commerce channels and monitoring regional security concerns. More explosions followed the attack on the US facility, with emergency sirens sounding across Bahrain and smoke billowing in Manama. Explosions may also be heard in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, Abu Dhabi, the UAE capital, and Doha, Qatar. Regional defense systems appeared to respond fast, intercepting incoming threats before they could reach important targets. Officials in numerous Gulf nations warned citizens to stay home and avoid unnecessary travel. The United States and Israel unleashed a volley of preemptive assaults on Iran this morning, dubbed ‘Operation Epic Fury,’ concluding days of speculation about measures to alter Iran’s regime under Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Several explosions were reported near the offices of the 86-year-old Supreme Leader, who has been relocated to a safe place.“Drop

arms or face death,” threatened US President Donald Trump, justifying the attacks against Iran as vital to protect the American people. Iran blocked its airspace shortly after the strikes, vowing to retaliate strongly.”The Islamic Republic of Iran’s Armed Forces will take decisive action against aggressors.””Just as we were prepared for negotiations, we are now more prepared than ever to defend the Iranian nation,” the Iranian Foreign Ministry stated in a statement.Iranian authorities have described the missile launches as defensive retribution, while US officials maintain that their previous operation was intended to avoid security risks.The missile assault on a US facility in Bahrain raises the prospect of a larger regional conflict. Gulf states face heightened security dangers as tensions between Iran and the US-Israel alliance rise.Diplomatic channels may increase attempts to control the situation, but military readiness remains high throughout the area. Analysts worry that additional retribution may disrupt global oil markets and international shipping routes in the Gulf.Authorities in the Middle East continue to evaluate damage, monitor airspace, and prepare for any future strikes. The situation remains unstable, with world leaders urging caution to avoid further escalation.

Israel-Iran War Tension: Iranian Missile Launches Trigger Blasts in Riyadh, Dubai, and Abu Dhabi

Israel-Iran:Tensions in the Middle East rose rapidly when explosions were detected in Riyadh, Dubai, and Abu Dhabi following Iran’s claimed missile launches. The incidents happened after Israel and the United States launched combined operations on Iranian targets, raising concerns about future regional hostilities.According to the report, loud bangs could be heard throughout Abu Dhabi, even along the Corniche beachfront. Witnesses reported many explosions in rapid succession, with windows trembling from the impact of intercepted missiles.The UAE officials stated that they successfully intercepted Iranian missiles nearing their territory. Multiple sources indicate that one person was killed during the defense action in Abu Dhabi. A loud blast was also recorded in Dubai, although officials have yet to confirm if it was directly related to missile interception or air defense activities. Residents in Saudi Arabia’s capital, Riyadh, reported hearing multiple loud explosions at the same time.



According to the journalists, the blasts occurred after Iran announced its readiness to retaliate against US and Israeli military actions.Although Saudi officials have yet to provide detailed details regarding the damage and casualties, there are ru-

mors that security protocols around the country have been increased.The missile activity indicates that the Israel-Iran confrontation has spread beyond its present battle zone, raising worries about Gulf security as well as the safety of internation-

al airspace. The situation remains incredibly chaotic as various nations grapple with the ramifications. World officials are carefully monitoring the situation because they worry the crisis may expand throughout the Middle East.

Summer Lee on Boycotting Trump Speech, Jesse Jackson

Paris: Many Democratic lawmakers boycotted Tuesday’s State of the Union address to attend alternative events, including our guest Congressman Summer Lee of Pennsylvania, who gave the Working Families Party response to President Trump. “The president is disgraceful, and I don’t think it’s worth our time to give him an audience,” says Lee, who encourages opponents to keep challenging his falsehoods. “When you take away the lie, there is no foundation for President Trump.”Lee also challenges Trump’s claims about non-citizen voting, which experts say is exceedingly rare, and the decision by Republican House leadership to deny honors to the late Reverend Jesse Jackson at the Capitol following the civil rights icon’s death. REP. SUMMER LEE: Let’s start with a simple truth. What we are witnessing from our government is authoritarianism. Any response that doesn’t acknowledge that truth is a disservice to Americans who deserve and need honesty right now. I listened to Donald Trump’s speech tonight. While Trump and his friends profit off his presidency, he is gaslighting us. He wants to convince working families that we are better off under his regime. But we know the truth. Our country is in crisis. For millions of Americans, affordability is out of reach. Trump has driven up the unemployment rate, cutting thousands of federal jobs across the country.Everything he does is making Americans less safe at home and abroad. He is bringing us to the brink of wars in the Middle East and South America. And at home, ICE agents are hunting down human beings and cities are under siege. The FBI is raiding election offices in Georgia. Students are being disappeared for protesting tyranny and genocide in Palestine. The environmental protections we earned after a generation of advocacy are being stripped away. AMY GOODMAN: That was Pennsylvania Congresswoman Summer Lee giving the Working Families Party response to the State of the Union. Joining us now from Capitol Hill, Congressmember Lee. If you can carry on from what you were saying last night? You did not attend the State of the Union. Tell us why as wellREP. SUMMER LEE: Because the president is disgraceful and I don’t think it’s worth our time to give him an audience. That’s what he wants. He wants to be able to tell us to our face lies and gaslight us to our face. And the reality is that we have better things to do with our time and I think that there are people who deserve our attention far more than he does.AMY GOODMAN: Talk about the People’s State of the Union on the Mall last night with many congressmembers like you as well as senators speaking out. REP. SUMMER LEE: I think it was an opportunity for us to get in front of the people who are harmed most by Trump’s and Republicans’ policies.

Right now people in this country, they really want an end to the status quo. They don’t care about the pomp and circumstance and the decorum of this institution. They’re wondering why we’re not disrupting or doing things differently or at least not giving any more credibility to this administration. Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen called the election on Thursday, citing Russia as one of Denmark’s most serious dangers. Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, who is trailing in most surveys, is using Ukraine as a diversion from the country’s deteriorating social services, rising living costs, and economic stagnation as Hungary prepares for an election in April, policy analysts say. Orbán’s rightwing populist administration has employed artificial intelligence to create billboard images depicting Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and EU leaders with their hands spread. “Our message to Brussels: We won’t pay!” reads the taxpayer-funded advertisement, reflecting the rhetoric carried through radio, television, and social media advertisements. So the People’s State of the Union I was grateful for, because it was an attempt for us and an opportunity for us to walk away from him, to turn our backs on a president that is insistent on lying to us, and just talking straight to the people about a truth that they were just not going to get last night. That started obviously before the State of the Union but there was no reason for any of us to believe this would be the first night that he finally actually tells the American people the truth about the state, the truth about his policies and the truth about what his intentions are for the country.AMY GOODMAN: As you stand at the Rotunda, I’m reminded that the House speaker has said that Jesse Jackson’s body cannot lay in honor in the Capitol as John Lewis did, as Rosa Parks did. Can you talk about the significance of this and what Jesse Jackson meant to you?REP. SUMMER LEE: Certainly. I don’t find that shocking. This whole administration this past year has been about attacking Black folks, attacking our history, attacking the legacy that has been created out of movements like the Civil Rights Movement, like the Black Power Movement and so many more. So for him to kind of try to insult the Reverend Jesse Jackson and his legacy at this last final resting point is not shocking. But the reality is that he could do no such thing, right? What Reverend Jesse Jackson has done and what he has meant to this country is not interrupted or is not changed by the fact that Donald Trump would not do right by him in his last moment. This is a man who has impacted people, my district, and my life—me, myself—around his ministry, his activism, his politics, laying the groundworks for more progressive campaigning when there is a desperate need for an alternative message and for

alternative ways of doing your politics. Jesse Jackson came and ran for president. He set the foundation for so many people after him, including me, to run on a progressive, unapologetically bold platform. So I am grateful for the work that he has done. Whether or not he is in the Rotunda or not, we still honor the history. We still honor the work that he did. But more importantly, we recognize that right now more than ever we have to carry on the work. That what those civil rights activists, heroes, movement leaders did 50 years ago is still happening right now and that we have to re-up that battle. So right now, listen, don’t focus as much on that. Focus on the attacks not on his person, on attacks not on his final farewell, but focus on the attacks on his work. AMY GOODMAN: Let’s go back to President Trump criticizing Democrats last night for not supporting the SAVE Act, which voting rights advocates warned could disenfranchise millions.PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: And the reason they don’t want to do it—why would anybody not want voter ID? One reason! Because they want to cheat. There’s only one reason.PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: They make up all excuses. They say it’s racist. They come up with things you almost say, what imagination they have. They want to cheat. They have cheated. And their policy is so bad that the only way they can get elected is to cheat. And we’re going to stop it. We have to stop it, John.AMY GOODMAN: That was President Trump last night. I’m looking at a piece in The Hill saying in fact instances of noncitizen voting are exceedingly rare. A 2016 general election study showed an estimated 30 incidents of suspected-not-confirmed noncitizen votes out of 23.5 million, which is .0001% of the votes cast. Voter fraud generally also exceedingly rare. Numerous studies have found fraud rates that are just a fraction of 1%. Talking about Trump’s claims of widespread fraud the 2020 election rejected by 62 courts that reviewed the matter. If you could comment further, Congressmember Lee, on what President Trump is trying to do here by questioning the legitimacy of U.S. elections?REP. SUMMER LEE: Oh, we all know what he’s trying to do. When you take away the lie—and it’s not just on this topic—when you take away the lie, there is no foundation for President Trump, there’s no foundation for any of his cronies to stand on. They have to lie to people to get folks riled up. They have to lie to get conservatives to participate or to at least not come to the side of where people are actually fighting for their interests. They don’t want people to vote. They don’t want people who won’t vote for them to vote. Clarification—they don’t want people who won’t vote for them to vote.

Can A Bowl Of Salad Be Bad For You? Experts Say Yes, Here’s Why

Few foods carry the health halo quite like a salad. It signals discipline, lightness and clean eating – the default order for anyone trying to lose weight or eat better. But beneath the greens and vibrant toppings, many modern salad bowls quietly rival fast food in calories, sodium and nutritional imbalance. What looks wholesome on the surface can sometimes do the opposite of what it promises.

What Experts Want You To Know

“The term ‘salad’ does not guarantee complete nutrition,” says Veena V, Chief Clinical Dietitian and Head of Clinical Nutrition and Dietetics at Aster Whitefield Hospital, Bengaluru. She explains that the base of leafy greens is rarely the issue, but it’s what gets added on top. Creamy dressings, candied nuts, croutons, processed meats and excess cheese can quickly turn a healthy bowl into a calorie-dense meal.

Just two tablespoons of certain dressings, she notes, can add 150–200 calories from refined oils and hidden sugars. Sodium also spikes easily when olives, pickles and packaged toppings are included.

Echoing this, Sandhya Singh, Head and Chief Clinical Dietitian at Apollo Hospitals Bannerghatta Road, Bengaluru, cautions against treating salads as a complete meal. “Each food group plays an essential role in maintaining overall health. Depending on a single food group

can create multiple nutrient gaps,” she says.

The Hidden Calorie Trap

Portion size is another overlooked factor. Large healthy bowls stacked with cheese, seeds, sauces and fried toppings can match, or exceed, the energy content of a burger and fries. The perception of eating light often leads to mindless additions.

Protein is frequently missing, too. Without adequate protein, Veena explains, blood sugar can fluctuate rapidly, especially when sweetened dried fruits or high-glycaemic toppings are involved. Repeated spikes may increase insulin resistance over time, raising the risk of metabolic disorders like Type 2 diabetes.

When Raw Isn’t Always Better

Salads are often synonymous with raw vegetables, but that may not suit everyone’s digestion. Dr. Singh points out that raw, fermentable carbohydrates – naturally found in onions, garlic, beans and some cruciferous vegetables – can cause gas, bloating and discomfort. “These fibres are poorly absorbed in some individuals and get fermented by gut bacteria, producing gas,” she explains.

Sudden increases in fibre intake can also overwhelm the gut. “Fibre has to be increased gradually,” she advises, allowing the microbiome time to adapt. Without balance, excessive raw salads may worsen symptoms for those prone to

IBS or small intestinal bacterial overgrowth.

The Nutrient Gap Problem

Relying exclusively on salads can unintentionally reduce overall calorie and protein intake. Over time, this may contribute to muscle loss, low immunity, fatigue and even undernutrition.

“Raw vegetables consumed with very low carbohydrate and low-protein intake increase the risk of under-nutrition,” Dr. Singh says. A balanced plate, she stresses, should include adequate energy, protein and healthy fats alongside vegetables. There’s also a practical concern: pesticide residues. Both experts highlight the importance of thoroughly washing leafy greens and sourcing produce carefully. Building A Smarter Bowl So what makes a salad truly healthy? The answer lies in balance. Start with fibre-rich vegetables, add a clean protein source like legumes, eggs or grilled lean meats, include healthy fats such as nuts or olive oil in moderation, and keep processed toppings minimal. Ultimately, a salad’s value comes from its composition, not its label. Healthy eating isn’t about chasing trends or assuming certain foods are automatically virtuous. It’s about thoughtful combinations that support digestion, metabolism and overall wellbeing. When built intentionally, a salad can nourish the body. When overloaded or unbalanced, it can quietly sabotage itself.



For Mary Portas, queen of shops, small is beautiful on the high street

The British high street may have faced huge challenges in recent years, but Mary Portas is more passionate about retail than ever. “This is such an exciting time, because we’re rebuilding,” says the consultant and broadcaster. “There’s so much talent, innovation and creativity in this country – we just have to support it.” Portas earned the title “queen of shops” after transforming the fortunes of the luxury London department store Harvey Nichols in the 1990s and has since worked with too many big-name brands to count, from Louis Vuitton to Sainsbury’s, at her consultancy, Portas. Now, she’s channelling her decades of expertise into a mission to rethink the way we shop, by championing the small, independent businesses that, she says, “create the much-needed vibrancy and fresh thinking that our high streets and economy desperately need”.

In partnership with Mastercard and Worldpay, Portas has curated this year’s Thrive Street Retail Market: pop-up retail events taking place in October at Altogether Otherwise, a creative hub in Manchester’s NUB quarter, and the Truman Brewery, an event space in Brick Lane, Shoreditch, east London; each featuring 15 community-minded businesses hand-picked by Portas. By day, across two long weekends, the markets will be unmissable shopping destinations showcasing products with “purpose, character and innovation”, from eyewear to pre-loved fashion, homeware and jewellery. “It will be a mix of fantastic products and ideas you wouldn’t normally see together,” says Portas.

The markets will moonlight as hubs of inspiration, with business masterclasses, expert panels and networking events open to all local entrepreneurs and



retailers. “It will be a great chance for local businesses to connect with one another, compare notes and learn from each other,” she says. It’s Portas’s fourth year of involvement in the initiative, which she views as a vital opportunity to show shoppers and policymakers alike, a different, more enticing vision of how our high streets could look. “The high street as it used to be, with all those big brand names, is never coming back in the same way,” she says. “That era’s gone, but that doesn’t mean it’s dead – far from it. The post-Covid re-evaluation of how we want to live and work has created a need and desire for more resources on our doorstep. We’re also placing greater value on businesses that demonstrate they care – they respect our planet and our communities.

All of which has created exciting opportunities for smaller brands with brilliant new ideas. “Small and

growing businesses are the beating heart of our economy and the soul of our communities,” Portas says. “They bring creativity, culture, and character to our high streets – and they need more than applause; they need real support.

That’s why we created Thrive Street 2025 together with Mastercard and Worldpay. A space where brilliant independent brands can come together, be seen, be supported, and show the world what the future of business truly looks like.”

Portas has long been a fan of markets, seeing them as a key way for town centres to “reclaim their soul”. Not only do markets give businesses a relatively low-cost opportunity to try selling their products in a physical space, but they bring people together. “People want that human connection, which we all value more now that we’ve seen what happens when we lose it,” she says. Every detail of both Thrive Street ven-

ues is being painstakingly planned by Mastercard, Worldpay, Portas and her team to ensure visiting is “a wonderful sensory experience”, she says. “That’s so important; shopping should be a fabulous, social way to pass the time.” She points to her stint at Harvey Nichols as an example of the success that can come when shopping destinations put a sense of community at their heart. “We turned it into a place where people wanted to hang out with their friends,” she says.

Digital shopping is great for some things “but when I want to buy a great bottle of wine, or fashion, or something lovely for my house, I want to go to a physical shop, where I can spend time browsing”, she says. “It’s about discovery; you don’t necessarily know what you’re coming to buy, but then you find something unexpected that you love. That sense of lightness and joy I’ve felt during my best retail experiences is what

I want to bring to Thrive Street. “We’re thinking about everything from the music playing to the beautiful wood finish of the design and, of course, great service. I want customers to think, ‘I want this on my doorstep.’” Portas was deluged with entries from brands hoping to be chosen to take part.

As well as earning a spot in one of the markets, the 30 that made the overall cut will attend expert workshops from Portas, Mastercard and Worldpay, plus receive guidance and tools to support them. “We were looking for forward thinkers who are solving problems or reimagining a product or service in a way that’s unique,” she says. “We were also looking for people with ambition and hunger for their business to thrive, and businesses which are contributing to the wellbeing of their community or the environment.” One stand-out for Portas is Round Retail, a

resale platform that takes pre-loved fashion from individuals and responsible brands, resells it and splits the proceeds between itself, the person who donated it and a charitable cause. “It’s a gorgeous idea,” says Portas.

Another is Soaked, a Manchester-based umbrella company started after the founders came across a suggestion that 1bn broken umbrellas are discarded globally every year, potentially ending up in landfill. “Soaked’s umbrellas are consciously designed to last and created from fabrics made from recycled plastic bottles, which really impressed us,” says Portas. She can’t wait for the Thrive Street markets to open, to “show the world the creativity, culture and character these brands can bring to our high streets”, she says. “And hopefully, customers will leave excited about supporting the independent businesses in their own local areas, too.”

From PCOS To Perimenopause, Indian Women Are Choosing Prevention Over Cure

For years, women’s health in India followed a familiar script: symptoms first, solutions later. Doctor visits were triggered by discomfort, not curiosity. Hormonal issues like PCOS or the early signs of menopause were treated only when daily life became difficult. Today, that timeline is being rewritten. Across urban India, women in their 20s, 30s and early 40s are turning to preventive screenings, cycle tracking, metabolic testing and stress management long before visible warning signs appear. Hormonal health is no longer reactive care; it is becoming a conscious, everyday investment.

Awareness Before Alarm “We are witnessing a powerful shift in how women approach their health today,” says Kashika Malhotra, Founder and CEO of Yoginii. She notes that women are seeking preventive solutions not out of fear, but out of awareness, adding that lifestyle disorders and chronic stress have made reactive healthcare insufficient. Instead, women want to understand their cycles, manage insulin resistance, improve metabolic resilience and regulate stress early. She explains, “Preventive care has become a form of empowerment, shifting the conversation from symptom control to long-term balance.” PCOS Beyond Periods One of the biggest mindset shifts is around Polycystic Ovary Syndrome. Once viewed largely as a menstrual or fertility issue, PCOS is now increasingly recognised as a metabolic and endocrine condition with lifelong implications. “In over years of my clinical practice, few transformations have been as striking as the evolution of women’s health awareness,” says Dr Hemant Deshpande, Professor and Head of Department at Dr D. Y. Patil Medical College. He observes that younger patients no longer focus solely on regulating periods. “They are concerned about insulin

resistance, cardiovascular risks, mental health and fertility planning,” he explains. That broader understanding allows for earlier intervention – through nutrition changes, structured exercise, and consistent monitoring – potentially reducing long-term complications. Equally notable is the way women are addressing perimenopause. Earlier, conversations began only after irregular cycles, sleep disruption, or mood changes became overwhelming. Now, women in their late 30s are proactively seeking guidance on bone density, heart health, sleep quality and hormonal transitions. “This proactive mindset allows for timely lifestyle modification and risk stratification,” Dr Deshpande says, emphasising that early screening and counselling can dramatically improve long-term outcomes. Perimenopause, once treated as an abrupt disruption, is increasingly seen as a gradual phase that can be navigated with preparation. What ties these trends together is consistency rather than crisis. Women are incorporating mindful movement, balanced meals, stress regulation, and regular lab checks into their routines. Cycle tracking apps, strength training, metabolic testing and hormone literacy are becoming as common as skincare regimens. The focus has shifted from quick fixes to sustainable systems – habits that build resilience over time rather than waiting for diagnosis. Preventive women’s healthcare is no longer niche or optional. It reflects a larger cultural shift toward ownership and agency. Instead of waiting for symptoms to dictate action, women are designing health strategies that support every life stage – from early adulthood to menopause and beyond. By prioritising awareness, education and small daily changes, they are creating a model where prevention isn’t a luxury. It’s simply the standard.

The reasons behind Dharmendra's rejection of "Agent Vinod"



New Delhi: The response to his war movie Ikks left filmmaker Sriram Raghavan perplexed, but he now expects that more people will see it on streaming services. Ikks, a biographical drama based on the life of Second Lieutenant Arun Khetarpal, starring Agastya Nanda as the war hero, was released on January 1. Despite receiving favorable reviews that praised its story of peace, the movie did not significantly increase attendance at theaters. Actually, we were really perplexed by the reaction to the release of the movie Ikks. On the sidelines of a function, Raghavan stated, "I hope people will watch the film at the click of a button (on OTT)." Two timelines are shown in the movie: one centers on Khetaapal as a young recruit in the India-Pakistan war of 1971, and the other follows his aging father as he visits Pakistan years later to learn more about the day his son fought and died. Merry Christmas, directed by Raghavan in 2024 and starring Vijay Sethupathi and Katrina Kaif, did not perform well either, even though movie was praised by critics for telling a story about two strangers meeting on Christ-

mas Eve over the course of one night."I've been hearing there is less work," Raghavan remarked, acknowledging that the business is going through a difficult time. I'm not sure how horrible it is because I haven't gone out with my next subject yet. It's not simple, and I've had two failures. According to Raghavan, the famous French director Francois Truffaut once stated, "A filmmaker who's not making a film, or doesn't have a subject, is the most miserable person on earth." This statement sums up his current mental state. Nanda plays Khetarpal, who was killed at the age of 21 at the Battle of Basantar in the 1971 Indo-Pak War, in the movie Ikks, which is presently available for streaming on Prime Video. Jaideep Ahlawat, Dharmendra, and others are also featured in the movie.Inspired by classic war films such as Ballad of a Soldier, Flags of Our Fathers, Cranes are Flying, and Battle of the Bulge, Raghavan stated that he aimed to make a movie that emphasizes human emotions. Director Raghavan shared insights on his film Ikks, emphasizing that its dual narratives enriched the storyline.

The most liked Instagram picture in India is from Rashmika Mandanna and Vijay Deverakonda's wedding

Mumbai: The talk of the town this week was the actresses Rashmika Mandanna and Vijay Deverakonda's wedding.

On Thursday, the two stars were married in a private ceremony that was only attended by their families and close friends at a resort close to Udaipur. The first photos from Rashmika and Vijay's wedding were posted on Instagram a few hours after the ceremony, and they soon went viral.

In fact, Rashmika's post has become the most popular image from an Indian account on Instagram in less than 48 hours. On Thursday night, Rashmika posted a carousel of pictures from the wedding



that included Vijay on Instagram. She first revealed Vijay as her husband to the world in the caption. Fans and social media users praised the note and the

photos for being genuine and touching. 24 million people had liked the post by Saturday afternoon.

On Instagram, no image from an Indian account has received more likes. Virat Kohli owned the previous record. When he uploaded moments from the Indian cricket team's victory at the 2024 ICC T20 World Cup, the legendary player from India went viral.

There are 22.8 million likes on the post. In addition, Vijay's post is about to surpass Kohli's record. It already has 18.8 million likes and is rapidly growing.

After a viral Reel shared by content maker Kishore Mondal in April of last year, Rashmika's post is

the second most liked Instagram post from an Indian account. With 51 million likes—the fourth-highest number in the platform's history—the video, which featured Kishore singing "Jeene Laga Hoon," smashed all previous records. According to reports, Rashmika and Vijay have been dating since they collaborated on the movies Dear Comrade (2019) and Geetha Govindam (2018).

The two performers never discussed their relationship in public, despite rumors to the contrary. Fans had called them Virosh, a combination of Vijay and Rashmika's nickname Roshu, long before they formally announced their relationship.

"Beyond extraordinary": Yami Gautam shares her thoughts after seeing Dhurandhar 2



Mumbai: Like a tidal wave, Dhurandhar swept into theaters and changed the course of box office history. The high-octane show, which starred Ranveer Singh, earned an in-

credible Rs 1300 crore worldwide, solidifying its status as one of the biggest commercial successes in recent memory.

Excitement for the franchise has reached a fever pitch as the follow-up chapter, which is scheduled for a March theatrical release, draws closer. Actor Yami Gautam, who is married to director Aditya Dhar, provided unique insight into the much anticipated continuation of the popular drama during her appearance at the News18 Rising Bharat Summit 2026. She spoke highly of her husband's artistic development and his commitment to launching bold motion picture projects. She thought about how he had lately led Dhurandhar to enormous success and had previously completed significant initiatives like Uri: The Surgical Strike.

She claimed that only a person with unyielding conviction and creative fire could make a movie that big. Yami answered with moderation and humor when the talk became lighthearted and she was asked whether she had any personal releases scheduled for March 19. She insisted that Aditya would be the source of all official franchise information. She also alluded to the fact that, like many followers, she would be in a theater on that momentous day, experiencing the same thrill as viewers around the country. Yami recalled an extremely emotional experience when she first saw the original script. She read an early manuscript of Dhurandhar, which at the time was only forty pages long, when she was filming Article 370.

She was deeply moved by the story, even

in its early stages. She found it difficult to respond, but her obvious feelings were clear. She highlighted Aditya's tremendous dedication, sincerity, and faith in turning the movie into a historic triumph.Yami made the shocking admission that she had previously seen Dhurandhar 2. She proposed that the follow-up exceeds expectations in every way. After seeing it, she was so overcome with emotion that she was unable to concentrate on anything else, not even on a planned flight. She thought carefully about how to describe her sentiments about the cinematic experience as she was traveling and watching the sunset. She thinks the second installment, which was passionately created for the country and its people, will make a lasting impression on viewers everywhere.

Bhagyashree Attacks New Movies for Displaying "Intimacy"



Mumbai: In a recent interview, Bhagyashree contrasted modern films with those from the 1990s. She claimed that 'unnecessary' displays of closeness are frequently included in contemporary storytelling, claiming that many of these passages are entirely avoidable and contribute little to the plot."Cinema reflects society," she said to Variety India. It was the only form of entertainment and family-friendly outing available in the 1990s. Families are now nuclear, people are more independent, and there are many different forms of creative work. As a result, there are numerous options. But it's now hard to please every kind of audience," the actress continued. Movies are now divided into genres, art films, indie films, cliques, etc. Although realism is the new market, I firmly believe that you don't have to be so intimate with your parents or kids that it makes you squirm. Stories don't have to be rebellious against society to be daring, varied, and captivating.She also considered how the industry operated in the 1990s, pointing out that patriarchal characters dominated stories. She claimed that because roles and possibilities tended to decline after marriage, this left little room for women to continue acting. According to Bhagyashree, some segments of society still consider married, working women to be relatively new. But as more educated women pursue employment, she thinks perceptions are progressively shifting.

Ektaa Kapoor cautions against fraudulent casting calls that misuse the name of Balaji Telefilms

New Delhi: Balaji Telefilms Limited's producer, Ektaa Kapoor, has issued a warning against phony casting call postings that are being shared by phony accounts that seem to be affiliated with her production company. The impersonators have been unlawfully requesting "registration fees" and audition expenses from prospective actors and directors, she clarified. Ektaa posted an official statement from her banner company, Balaji Telefilms, on Instagram on Friday, alerting the public about phony casting calls that are being made under its name. The production company made it clear that there are never any fees associated with registration, role confirmations, or auditions. She wrote, "Official Notice: Beware of fake casting calls," as the caption for the announcement. Always double-check. Keep yourself informed. The production company highlighted numerous social media profiles that "misuse" their business identity to "publish false casting opportunities for our upcoming TV serials, web series, and motion pictures" in the statement."- Balaji Telefilms Limited hereby issues this formal clarification to notify the general public that several unauthorized individuals and fraudulent social media accounts are currently misusing our corporate identity to publish false casting opportunities for our upcoming TV serials, web series, and motion pictures," the note stated. "We categorically distance ourselves from these unaffiliated organiza-



tions and vehemently denounce any attempt to take advantage of young actors' and directors' aspirations through such dishonest tactics. Please be aware that Balaji Telefilms never requests monetary deposits, "audition charges," or registration fees. We also never issue formal agreements without first holding in-person meetings at our official location," the statement continued. "Therefore, we urge the public to exercise extreme caution, verify all credentials, and refrain from sharing personal data or funds with any unverified representatives claiming to act on our behalf," the banner explained, adding that "all legitimate recruitment and casting

for our projects are conducted exclusively through our verified channels and official casting directors." Ektaa is the daughter of Shobha Kapoor and renowned actor Jeetendra. On January 27, 2019, Ektaa gave birth to her first surrogate kid, whom she named after Jeetendra's given name, Ravie Kapoor.From Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi to Kahin Toh Hoga to Bade Achhe Lagte Hai, Ektaa has created a number of well-known small-screen series over the years. The Dirty Picture, Lootera, Main Tera Hero, Dream Girl, Crew, and The Sabarmati Report are just a few of the Hindi movies she has produced through Balaji Motion Pictures.

A release date has been set for Dhanush's film Kara

New Delhi: The producers of "Kara," an action entertainer directed by Vignesh Raja and starring Dhanush, have officially declared that the movie will be released on theaters around the world on April 30 of this year.Ishari K. Ganesh, whose production company Vels Film International is working on the movie, made the announcement.Producer Ishari K Ganesh, the university's founder and chancellor, stated, "If I were to call something my dream project, it would certainly be 'Vada Chennai 2' with actor Dhanush," while taking part in VELS University's two-day cultural festival, VELS Nakshatra 2026. Additionally, on April 30, Dhanush's next movie, KARA, will be released in theaters. As you may remember, the film's title was revealed by the producers on Pongal this year.

Additionally, a poster for the movie featuring Dhanush with an intense expression was published by the producers. According to the poster, "Sometimes, staying dangerous is the



only way to stay alive." Mamitha Baiju plays the lead role in the movie, which was previously referred to as #D54.The picture offers an impressive technical crew in addition to a solid cast.In addition to Dhanush and Mamitha Baiju, key roles in the movie will be played by director K S Ravikumar, Jayaram, Suraj Venjaramoodu, Karunas, and Prithvi Pandiraj.

Technically speaking, Sreejith Sarang will handle the editing, and one of the top photographers in the industry, Theni Eswar, will handle the cinematography. G V Prakash, a National Award winner, will com-

pose the music. More importantly, the film's plot was co-written by director Vignesh Raja and writer Alfred Prakash, who collaborated on the highly acclaimed investigative thriller "Por Thozhil." In a previous interview, writer Alfred Prakash, who has been close friends with filmmaker Vignesh Raja, revealed that he and Vignesh had a great understanding of one another.

The authors, who spent four years crafting the final draft of "Por Thozil," foster the idea that two writers working together is preferable since each may utilize the other as a sounding board to test their ideas.

Isha Koppikar on Working Long Hours in the Film Industry



New Delhi: Following rumors that Deepika Padukone requested an eight-hour work shift for movies like Spirit and the sequel to Kalki 2898 AD, a new discussion over working hours in the film industry has gained traction. A number of performers and industry experts have expressed their thoughts on the matter over the past year, with views ranging from skepticism about the viability of controlled

hours to support for them. Recently, the topic came up again in a discussion on comedian Bharti Singh's YouTube channel, where Bharti and her husband, Haarsh Limbachiya, were joined by actress Isha Koppikar. When discussing how to balance work and family obligations, Bharti stated that she would like to run for office but that she would not have much time because of her two kids."But these days, you're expected to give only 8 hours," Isha replied, grinning. "Those who have children get just eight hours," a remark that seemed to allude to the broader discussion about working fewer hours after becoming a mother. Playfully, Haarsh responded, "Who said that?" Isha said, laughing, "I don't know." The conversation addressed the challenges of long shooting schedules in the film industry.

Daisy Shah asserts that having children does not require marriage



Mumbai: Daisy Shah, an actress, recently shared her opinions on marriage and parenthood. She disclosed

that she has previously frozen her eggs and said that having children does not require marriage.She stated

in an interview that "every day something happens, like couples splitting up or those startling 'blue drum' situations. It's really frightening. She went on to say that she hasn't really thought about it or how such news impacts her. It is up to the 'Almighty' to decide what is best for her, she continued. The actress, 41, went on to say, "I've frozen my eggs so I can become a mother whenever I want." I'm a parent.Daisy Shah also discussed her thoughts on romantic pragmatism. Speaking of love and the reasons she believes it is

insufficient, she stated, "It's not about money since I earn plenty for myself. Money is important, too. I simply cannot become a mommy to an adult male. Sweet talk feels fine in the beginning, but not later. I have my own money, but you should be making a certain amount too. She ended by stating that she had so far achieved all of her goals in life, including giving back to her family and owning her own home and two dogs. Daisy Shah will appear in the next film directed by Palash Muchhal and Shreyas Talpade.

Rekha Gupta hopes to vaccinate 1.6 lakh girls in three months



New Delhi, Feb 28: Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, along with BJP MP Manoj Tiwari, Health Minister Dr. Pankaj Kumar Singh, and MLA Sanjay Goyal, attended an HPV vaccination session at Guru Teg Bahadur Hospital on Saturday. She added that in three months, they wanted to vaccinate 1.6 lakh girls in the nation’s capital.Speaking to the media, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta stated: “Cervical cancer claims the lives of thousands of women each year. It became our duty to take

action when it was discovered that HPV vaccine may totally prevent this illness. The risk of contracting this illness is greatly decreased if the vaccination is given during adolescence.”A nationwide HPV vaccination drive has been initiated under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, for which I express my heartfelt gratitude,” she continued. This initiative has also been started in Delhi. Our goal is to vaccinate 1.6 lakh girls over the course of the next three months. We’ll make sure

nobody is excluded.”It is a matter of great fortune that the current Delhi government is making every effort to strengthen healthcare services in the city,” stated BJP MP Manoj Tiwari. Dr. Pankaj Kumar Singh, our Health Minister, is in attendance. The Chief Minister launched five important healthcare-related initiatives today. An important step in India’s battle against cervical cancer was taken earlier in the day when Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced a statewide HPV vaccination campaign for girls from Ajmer who are 14 years of age or older.The Prime Minister engaged with the schoolgirls after administering vaccinations to a number of them during the ceremony. The initiative’s goal is to eliminate cervical cancer in Indian women. It is anticipated that the program will shield millions

of girls nationwide against potential life-threatening malignancies by increasing access to the HPV vaccine. The Governor, Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhanlal Sharma, and other high-ranking officials greeted the Prime Minister upon his arrival at Kishangarh Airport.He took an Army helicopter from the airport to the Ghughra helipad, after which he drove to the location of the public meeting. The Prime Minister’s visit was emotionally and centrally focused on women’s health. In order to eradicate cervical cancer, one of the main causes of cancer-related mortality among Indian women, the HPV vaccination campaign has been framed as a national initiative.The government’s dedication to long-term public health security and preventive healthcare is reflected in the campaign.

Menaka Guruswamy, the TMC’s Rajya Sabha candidate, may be the first LGBTQ MP in India

New Delhi, Feb 28:Menaka Guruswamy, a senior counsel, and three other candidates have been nominated by West Bengal’s ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC) for the Rajya Sabha elections, which are set for March 16. In addition to Guruswamy, Mamata Banerjee’s party has put forward actor Koel Mallick, former Bengal DGP Rajeev Kumar, and minister Babul Supriyo.“We send them our warmest congratulations and well wishes. In an announcement posted on X, the party said, “May they continue to uphold Trinamool’s enduring legacy of resilience and its unwavering commitment to safeguarding the rights and dignity of every Indian.” Notably, if elected to the Upper House, Guruswamy might become the first openly LGBTQ member of parliament in India.Guruswamy, a veteran Supreme Court advocate, was one of the attorneys who argued the landmark constitutional case that led to the decriminalization of homosexuality in India following the 2018 repeal of Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code.She began working for former Indian Attorney General Ashok Desai in 1997, and she considers him

to be her mentor. She focused mostly on litigation and constitutional issues during this time, according to a quote from Kiran Manral’s book “Rising: 30 Women Who Changed India.” She continued her education at Oxford University approximately a year and a half later. After earning her LLM from Harvard and her BCL from Oxford, she temporarily worked as an associate at Davis Polk & Wardwell in New York in 2001. Later on, she went back to India and made New Delhi her home.In addition to being listed alongside her partner Arundhati Katju in Time magazine’s 2019 list of the 100 most influential people, she was listed as one of the 100 most influential Global Thinkers by Foreign Policy magazine.According to the book excerpt, Guruswamy is the first Indian and only the second woman to have her portrait on display at Milner Hall in Rhodes House at the University of Oxford. In recent court cases contesting Enforcement Directorate (ED) raids at the I-PAC’s offices, Guruswamy defended the TMC.Guruswamy would be the first openly gay member of parliament in the country if elected.

Panic statewide after a bomb scare hoax at the Surat Passport Office



Surat, Feb 28: The bomb threat that was sent to the Regional Passport Office in Surat on Friday turned out to be a hoax, but the email was inadvertently shared to post offices throughout the state, causing fear, according to police.According to Assistant Commissioner of Police V R Malhotra, the Surat Passport Office received an email at 5:55 a.m. warning that there would be an RDX explosion on the property at 12:10 p.m. and that everyone should leave. Nothing untoward

was discovered when a squad from the Bomb Detection and Disposal Squad and the Umra police station arrived at the location, he claimed.”Due to a misunderstanding, the entire state’s post offices received the same bomb threat e-mail which led to panic situations and security was stepped up,” according to him.According to him, the Surat RPO forwarded the email with the Navsari Division Post Office in the CC to the Surat police commissioner’s office.According to Gohil, it was unknown why it was copied to the Navsari post office.However, the confusion didn’t end there. The Navsari Division Post Office transferred it to the Ahmedabad Post Office, which then forwarded it to post offices throughout Gujarat, including Valsad, Godhra, Rajkot, Bhavnagar, and other districts, notifying local police.

Ajit Pawar and Others Cleared, Cooperative Bank Case Closure Report Accepted

Mumbai, Feb 28: In a case involving an alleged Rs 25,000 crore scam at the Maharashtra State Cooperative Bank (MSCB), a Mumbai court has accepted the police closure report. Former deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar, who had been a director of one of the district banks, his wife Sunetra Pawar, and other others have been exonerated in the case, according to the closing report of the police’s Economic Offenses Wing (EOW).The new Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister is Sunetra Pawar.The EOW informed the special court that the purported case contained no criminal offenses. Additionally, the investiga-



tors reported that they did not discover any anomalies in the loan and recovery approval processes. After approving the closure report, the court denied the activists’ request for an investigation into the purported swindle.A month after Ajit Pawar lost his life in a plane crash in Baramati, Maharashtra, the closure report was accepted.Activist

Anna Hazare and others filed protest petitions contesting the closure report, but Mahesh Jadhav, the special judge, denied them.A thorough judicial order is anticipated. The suspected fraud is connected to loans that district and cooperative banks allegedly made without adhering to regulations to cooperative sugar plants, spinning mills, and other organizations. The leading cooperative bank in Maharashtra is the MSCB. The Bombay High Court ordered the investigation to start in 2019. The first information report (FIR) listed government officials, the MSCB’s then-directors and officials, and Pawar, who was a direc-

tor of one of the district banks at the time. The EOW first claimed that errors in loan disbursement caused the state to lose Rs 25,000 crore between January 2007 and December 2017. Since 2020, the case has taken many different turns. The EOW submitted a closure report during the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) administration, while Ajit Pawar served as finance minister, indicating that no criminal offenses had been found.According to reports, the probe agency attempted to revive the case following a change of administration in 2022, but that did not occur. The EOW eventually submitted the closure report once more.

Beginning on March 1, the SIM-Binding Rule will alter how Telegram and WhatsApp operate in India

Mumbai, Feb 28: On November 28, India’s Department of Telecommunications (DoT) formally ordered popular messaging apps like WhatsApp, Telegram, Signal, Snapchat, ShareChat, JioChat, Arattai, and Josh to make sure that their services only function when the registered Subscriber Identity Module (SIM) card is present in the user’s mobile phone.A compliance report must be submitted within 120 days of the corporations’ 90-day deadline to comply with the order, which ends on February 28. The new requirement will therefore take effect on March 1st. Last year, the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) legally instructed the regulation to major app-based



communication services under the Telecom Cyber Security (TCS) Rules, 2024 as amended. These applications must always be connected to the active Subscriber Identity Module (SIM) that was used to create the account.Messaging apps will only work under the new architecture if the registered SIM card is in the device and activated. Apps must cease functioning on that device until

the right SIM is reinserted and validated if the SIM is taken out, switched, or deactivated. Additionally, the regulations require that desktop and web sessions of apps like Telegram Web and WhatsApp Web be automatically logged out after six hours, necessitating new authentication, which is often accomplished by scanning a QR code from a phone with an active SIM. By guaranteeing more ro-

bust identity verification and traceability, officials said the SIM-binding rule aims to reduce the rise in cyber frauds, including as SIM-swap schemes and impersonation assaults. Jyotiraditya Scindia, the minister of communications, has emphasized the significance of the step for digital security and reiterated that the deadline will not be extended. Concerns regarding possible annoyance for users, particularly those who use several devices or travel frequently, have been voiced by industry associations that represent messaging platforms. The government, however, insists that the regulations are required to safeguard consumers and fortify India’s whole cybersecurity framework.

India Completes Successful Short-Range Air Defense Missile System Flight Tests

New Delhi, Feb 28: Three successful flight tests of a very short-range air defense missile system were carried out from Chandipur off the coast of Odisha, according to the defense ministry on Friday. The experiments, according to the statement, were conducted in order to “revalidate” the VSHORADS (Very Short-Range Air Defence System) missile system’s capacity to neutralize high-speed threats flying at different speeds, ranges, and altitudes.Research Centre Imarat (RCI) collaborated with other DRDO (Defence Research & Development Organization) institutions and Indian industry partners to design and develop the VSHORADS, a man-portable air defense system. The ministry claimed in a statement that the missiles met all extreme engagement points throughout all flight tests by intercepting and destroying high-speed aerial targets that mimicked enemy aircraft in various threat



scenarios. ”The tests were carried out in final deployment configuration, where target acquisition and missile firing were carried out by field opera-

tors,” added the statement. Rajnath Singh, the minister of defense, commended the DRDO, the military, and the business community on the missile system’s successful flight testing.He stated that VSHORADS’s three consecutive flight tests had been a huge success and that the system will soon be integrated into the military. The efficiency of VSHORADS against a variety of airborne threats was confirmed by the flight data obtained by a number of range equipment, including telemetry, an electro-optical tracking system, and radars installed by the Integrated Test Range in Chandipur, according to the ministry. It stated that senior officials from DRDO and development-cum-production partners, as well as representatives of combined forces, witnessed the execution of these user validation flight-trials.

Rinku Singh will return to the Indian squad in Kolkata for the T20 World Cup

New Delhi: Indian cricketer Rinku Singh will still play for the team in Kolkata before their next match against the West Indies at the ICC T20 World Cup, despite having struggled through the death of his father. After his father was cremated on Friday, the left-handed batter will rejoin the team from his family’s house in Aligarh. Khanchand Singh, Rinku’s father, died of stage four cancer on Friday morning in a Greater Noida hospital following health issues. He was then brought back to Aligarh, where Rinku went through the customary procedures in his hometown. A sizable crowd attended his cremation. Rinku Singh had traveled from Ahmedabad, where India’s Super Eight match versus South Africa began, to Greater Noida earlier this week, when his father was hospitalized. He



then traveled to Chennai, where India defeated Zimbabwe, but after hearing the heartbreaking news, he had to return quickly to Uttar Pradesh.But according to a BCCI insider, Rinku is still determined to contribute to India’s World Cup campaign. He is scheduled to go to Kolkata on Saturday. On

surely be a rock of support for his younger teammate as he struggles through this trying period. He has his own experience of turning to cricket as a young man while grieving his father. Rinku was seen in the dugout and during warm-ups during India’s resounding victory over Zimbabwe at Chepauk in Chennai. But considering the faltering batting unit, he lost his spot in the team to Sanju Samson as India decided to add more top-order resilience.It remains to be seen if captain Suryakumar Yadav and coach Gautam Gambhir decide to turn back to Rinku as he makes his way to the location where he plays IPL cricket for the Kolkata Knight Riders. To advance to the semifinals, India have to win their final Super Eight match; if they lose, West Indies would advance in their place.

Sunday night, India’s crucial match against the West Indies will take place at the Eden Gardens. Following the devastating news, Rinku and his family received good wishes from a wide range of people, including Indian cricket officials and leaders, Rinku’s guru Virat Kohli, and many others. Kohli will

Jos Buttler receives Harry Brook’s finalvote of confidence



New Delhi: Jos Buttler’s performance in the T20 World Cup 2026 has been disappointing, with only 62 runs scored across seven innings, including five consecutive single-figure scores. His initial innings of 26 and 21 against Nepal and the West Indies were followed by a duck against New Zealand, caught off Lockie Ferguson’s bowling. Despite Buttler’s struggles, England captain Harry Brook expressed confidence in him, labeling him the “best white-ball player ever” and acknowledging his current rut as temporary. Brook noted

Buttler’s significant contributions to the team, reminding critics of his record of over 150 T20 international matches and a striking average of 34. In the last five matches, Buttler’s scores were 3, 3, 7, 2, and 0, totaling just 15 runs, and he has not scored a half-century in 24 innings. England achieved a four-wicket victory over New Zealand, securing their place at the top of Group 2 in the Super 8s, with the decision on Buttler’s position likely to be made before the semi-final against either India or the West Indies.

How Pakistan needs to defeat Sri Lanka in order to go to the T20 World Cup semi-finals

New Delhi: Following England’s exciting four-wicket victory over New Zealand on Friday, Pakistan’s prospects of making a late push into the T20 World Cup semi-finals are still alive. Pakistan had to rely on other outcomes to salvage their campaign after struggling against more formidable teams earlier in the tournament. They needed England to defeat New Zealand, and Harry Brook and his team delivered by chasing down the target with three balls remaining, giving Pakistan another opportunity. After dominating the majority of the match, New Zealand advanced to the Super 8 stage with a victory thanks to late cameos from Will Jacks (32*) and Rehan Ahmed (19*), who completely changed the course of the match in the final three overs. In order to overtake New Zealand’s Net Run Rate, Pakistan must win their final Super 8 game against Sri Lanka. With a current NRR of +1.390, New Zealand is ahead of Pakistan, which is at -0.461. Pakistan needs to win by roughly 65 runs in their next match against Sri Lanka, or 13 overs if they are chasing, but the equation may shift a little after the first innings score.Pakistan lost to England earlier in the Super 8 stage after Harry Brook’s incredible century led them through a difficult chase. Pakistan was put on the defensive after the loss. They had a single point but no momentum when their campaign started with a wash-

out versus New Zealand. In the meantime, Mitchell Santner, the captain of New Zealand, chose to bowl first against England in Colombo after winning the toss. With determination, New Zealand put England on the defensive early in the Powerplay, racing to 53 without a loss. However, once England reorganized their attack and captain Harry Brook relied primarily on spin, rotating up to five slow bowlers in the middle overs, the tide changed. The strategy came off nicely as England used 16 overs of spin to limit the Blackcaps to 159 for 7 and squeeze the scoring rate. Adil Rashid’s 2 for 28 brought his total to 11 wickets, the most for England in the competition thus far, while Jacks led the charge with 2 for 23. Tim Seifert added 35 at the top, while Glenn Phillips hit 39 off 28 balls. New Zealand pacers Matt Henry and Lockie Ferguson were excellent in their opening stints, dismissing England openers Phil Salt and Jos Buttler early while defending a moderate target. Shortly after Phillips removed Brook for 26, a wicket that halted England’s progress at a critical juncture, the spinners tightened their hold. The hitters found it difficult to regain momentum after that, and the innings lost focus. But Jacks and Rehan counterattacked Phillips and Santner in the final three overs, and England won with three balls remaining when Henry’s final over required just five runs.

Lionel Messi tackled by pitch invaders in Chaotic Inter Miami Puerto Rico friendly

Bayamon: Lionel Messi was caught up in a chaotic moment during Inter Miami's friendly against Independiente del Valle in Puerto Rico, after an overexcited fan ran onto the pitch and ended up taking the Argentine superstar down in the closing stages of the match. The incident unfolded in the 88th minute at the Juan Ramon Loubriel Stadium in Bayamon. As the game was winding down, a shirtless fan broke through security and sprinted towards Messi near the centre circle.

The supporter managed to reach him and wrapped his arms around the forward in an attempt to hug him. Seconds later, security rushed in to intervene. A guard tackled the fan to the ground, but in the process also knocked Messi over. For a brief moment, the situation looked worrying as the Inter Miami captain was left on the turf amid the scramble. Messi, however, got back on his feet almost immediately and walked away calmly, appearing completely unharmed. The late drama came at the end of what had been a productive outing



For Inter Miami. Messi had come on at halftime and made an impact by converting a penalty in the 70th minute, helping Miami secure a 2-1 win. Santiago Morales scored the other goal in a match that had originally been scheduled earlier but was postponed due to a minor leg issue Messi had picked up in a previous exhibition game. It was not The only pitch invasion of the night. At least two other fans had already Made

Their way onto the field earlier, with one managing to snap a selfie while another got close enough for a brief interaction before being escorted away. Inter Miami, who began their MLS season with a 3-0 defeat to LAFC, will now shift their focus to their upcoming clash against Orlando City next weekend. Inter Miami's preseason tour took a dramatic turn in Bayamón, Puerto Rico, when Lionel Messi was unexpectedly tackled

to the ground during a chaotic pitch invasion in a friendly against Ecuadorian champions Independiente del Valle. The incident, which unfolded late in the match, highlighted both the immense global appeal of Messi and the challenges of maintaining security when fans are desperate to get close to the Argentine superstar. The drama erupted in the 88th minute at the Juan Ramón Loubriel Stadium. Several fans breached security and sprinted onto the pitch, aiming to embrace Messi. One particularly over-excited supporter grabbed him around the waist, pulling him down to the turf. In the ensuing scuffle, a security guard also collided with Messi while attempting to restrain the invader. For a brief moment, the seven-time Ballon d'Or winner was on the ground, sparking gasps from the crowd. Fortunately, Messi quickly got back to his feet, appearing unharmed, and calmly walked away as additional security personnel rushed in to restore order. The incident raised serious questions about stadium security.

Lovlina, Nikhat to headline 20-member Indian squad for Asian Championships

Boxers selected for discipline, performance

New Delhi: Olympic medalist Lovlina Borgohain and two-time world champion Nikhat Zareen will spearhead the 20-member Indian contingent at the Asian Boxing Championships in Mongolia from March 28-April 11. The 20-member squad was finalised after an intensive month-long evaluation process, with players inducted into the ongoing national camp in Patiala following the National Championships in January. As per the selection policy, finalists at the Asian Boxing Championships in the approved weight categories for the Commonwealth Games and Asian Games will be selected as direct entries for the respective multi-sport contingents. The continental championship therefore carries added significance as both a medal opportunity and a key qualification pathway for The upcoming multi-



Sport events. Lovlina (75kg), who recently struck gold at the Boxam Elite Championship in Spain, will headline the women's squad alongside Preeti (54kg), Arundhati Choudhary (70kg), and Priya (60kg), all of whom also won gold in Spain and have shown consistent form. They will be joined by reigning world champions Minakshi (48kg) and Jaismine (57kg). The remaining categories include

World Boxing Cup Final gold medalist Nikhat Zareen (51kg), Ankushita Boro (65kg), Pooja Rani (80kg), and Alfiya Tarannum Akram Khan Pathan (80-kg), completing a well-rounded squad that blends experience with emerging talent. In the men's category, World Boxing Cup Final and Boxam Championship gold medalist Sachin (60kg) leads the contingent. He is World Boxing Finals.

Jammu and Kashmir clinch maiden Ranji Trophy title, scripting historic triumph



Hubballi: Jammu and Kashmir etched their name in the history books by clinching their maiden Ranji Trophy title on the basis of a first-innings lead, after the final against Karnataka ended in a draw here on Saturday. Having secured a massive 291-run lead on Friday, J&K tightened their grip on the contest on the fifth and final day with another commanding batting display. Resuming their second innings at 186 for four, Qamran Iqbal, who was unbeaten on 94 overnight, and Sahil

Lotra, who was on 16, completed well-crafted hundreds as J&K swelled their overall lead to 633 runs. Iqbal and Lotra were batting on 160 and 101 respectively, with J&K at 342/4, when the two captains agreed to shake hands. The side was 285 for four at lunch on day five. Earlier, replying to J&K's imposing first-innings total of 584, Karnataka were bowled out for 293 in 93.3 overs, with pacer Auqib Nabi claiming five for 54 to put his side in total control. J&K opted not to enforce the

follow-on and instead battled Karnataka out of the contest. The victory marks Jammu and Kashmir's first-ever Ranji Trophy title, a landmark achievement in the region's cricketing journey since it started playing the tournament 67 years ago. Jammu and Kashmir 584 and 342/4 in 113 overs (Qamran Iqbal 160, Sahil Lotra 101; Prasidh Krishna 2/42). Jammu and Kashmir created history on February 28, 2026, by clinching their maiden Ranji Trophy title, defeating eight-time champions Karnataka in the final held at the KSCA Rajnagar Stadium in Hubballi. The victory marked a watershed moment in Indian domestic cricket, as J&K became the 19th team to lift the prestigious trophy, finally breaking through after years of near misses. For decades, Jammu and Kashmir had been considered an Outlier in India's landscape.

England women's hockey squad arrives in Hyderabad For crucial FIH World Cup 2026 qualifying campaign

Hyderabad: The England women's national hockey team has officially touched down in Hyderabad, ready to compete in the highly anticipated FIH Hockey World Cup 2026 Qualifiers, Hyderabad, Telangana, from March 8 to 14, according to a release. England brings a proud legacy to the eight-nation tournament. Having competed in 11 previous FIH World Cups, the squad will be hungry to secure their ticket to Belgium and the Netherlands. The team will ultimately be aiming to surpass their best-ever global finish—a hard-fought Bronze medal in the 2010 edition. The squad arrives with strong momentum and a clear focus. Speaking on their arrival, Captain Flora Peel expressed confidence in the team's form. "We've had a really good training block in England, and before that, we were out in China for



The Pro League with some very competitive games. The team is in a great place right now, and we're really looking forward to getting started." Talking about familiarity with the Indian condition, Lili Walker shared the group's excitement and their unique acclimatisation process for the Indian climate.

"A lot of the group has been to India before, and we're really excited for the crowds and the atmosphere during the games. To prepare for the heat, we've even been getting in the sauna, doing as much as we can to ensure we are fully ready for the conditions." To secure one of the three coveted World Cup berths, England will need to

Navigate Pool A. They kick off their campaign against Italy on March 8, face the Republic of Korea on March 9, and conclude the group stage against Austria on March 11. Further, sharing key points from Tejal's matches, coach Park added, "Her first match in the Robin match was crucial, as it was against the top-ranked.

Clifford Miranda's Football Vision At Chennaiyin

Chennai: On the surface, former India midfielder Clifford Miranda comes across as a quiet and an unassuming person. But deep inside he seems to be emotional. This was evident in the past few months when the Indian Super League (ISL) was delayed due to deadlock over the agreement to organise the league. In his coaching career so far — where he saw success across various clubs as both coach and assistant coach — his current position in Chennaiyin FC might be the toughest, in terms of inculcating his ideas and getting the club to sail safely after a tough financial period. The head coach opened up on his time working in the club and more in an free-wheeling chat with this daily. To start with, I am very pleased with the attitude of the players. What also gets me excited is the fact that they want to learn.

Craig Fulton's struggling Indian hockey team battles uncertainty, seeking path to recovery



New Delhi: Resurrection is simply put, Indian hockey coach Craig Fulton's biggest job on hand. In fact, never in his career would he have faced this big a challenge. Indian hockey, by now, known to him and the countless people who follow the sport, at their own demise, know it's a sporting labyrinth - a complex structure, winding passages, some with dead ends but often designed to confuse not only themselves but the multitude. Yet, when it works, it does leave you with a sense of wonder and play; like the Shilanand Lakra goal against Australia in the 4th quarter in the recent Pro League game in Hobart, the enterprising bit, apart from Lakra's imaginative strike was the build-up started by Hardik through Abhishek, Poovanna with

the Lakra screamer in the end. It's exactly that build-up that Fulton and Indian hockey need now. Brick by brick, layering it up. Especially after the demolition that happened in Rourkela. And to a lesser extent in Hobart. Let's get one point straight here: It wasn't a one-off or a series of rash results that had Argentina score eight goals! Neither was the goal aggregate in Rourkela, 5-19, an aberration. These numbers were building up. After eight matches, the numbers aren't pretty either The silver lining, mercifully, was the two draws in regulation time against Spain and Australia in the last two games, both finishing 1-1. After the implosion in Rourkela, no one would have been surprised if they had rolled over in Hobart. The team, howev-

er, stuck it out, brought out the playbook that had made them unbeatable in Asia and given them the 2024 Olympic bronze; a team that had battled back from adversity against England playing with ten men for 43 minutes and then beating back the challenge of Spain in the 3rd/4th game. That resilience needed to show its face. Hope is not a tsunami. It doesn't start with a deluge. It's a drop, a trek, bleeding fingers, bruised wrists, and scraped elbows, inch by inch, until you start remembering every rock, every outface, and every little crevice you 'had' encountered on your way up. It's only then that you rediscover what made you good, better, and at times, exceptional. All's well that ends well" would have been the perfect ending for the Indian hockey

team after their last game, the shootout win against Australia. But the truth is far removed from that fact. To understand the recovery, one must first look at the Pro League debris. It will not be out of the ordinary to say that India wasn't just on a losing spiral, there was a decay that needed to be stalled. Right after the Hockey India League, the team assembled and played the Pro League within a week, a time many may say was not enough to get back the 'team' feeling. Yet, in a world of professional sport, you don't just lose your bearings. But it did feel the team had suffered a collective amnesia. Not only did they lose shape and structure on the pitch, but the players had also lost their power of expression. To boost grassroots women's sports and nurture emerging talent, Roundglass Hockey Academy (RGHA) will start 'Punjab Hockey League - NexGen Girls (SS)'-- Five-a-side tournament. The event will be held across Malerkotla and Jalandhar. The 19 participating teams have been drawn into four competitive pools (Pool A, B, C, and D), featuring young, enthusiastic squads from centers, including Barnala, Patiala, Malerkotla, Baba Bakala Sahib, and Khalsa College Amritsar, among others. Speaking on the launch of the 'Empowering the Next Generation Hockey League.

Indian Railways win 72nd Senior Men's Kabaddi Nationals, defeating Maharashtra by 18 points

Vadodara: Indian Railways secured the 72nd Senior Men's National Kabaddi Championship 2026 trophy at the Sama Indoor Stadium, Vadodara, after beating Maharashtra 49-31 in the final. Railways led by Sunil Kumar, the most successful PKL captain, prevailed over 29 teams divided into 8 pools, who played across 54 matches over the last four days, according to a release. On their road to the final, the Railways beat the likes of Chandigarh and Karnataka before claiming their final victory over a strong Maharashtra side led by Aslam Inamdar, one of the top players in the Pro Kabaddi League.

The concluding day of the tournament featured four teams in action, starting off with two semifinal games played between Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra, and Indian Railways and Chandigarh, respectively. After beating their respective opponents in the semifinals, Railways and Maharashtra advanced to the finals, which were dominated by the former with a strong all-round performance. Pankaj Mohite led the raiding unit with 12 raid points, while Ashu Malik, who also led Dabang Delhi K.C. to victory in PKL 12, contributed eight points. Railways' defence complemented the raiders effectively, finishing with 14 tackle points and applying sustained pressure on Maharashtra throughout the contest. Despite efforts from Shivam Patare and Aslam Inamdar, Maharashtra struggled to match Railways' intensity as the latter pulled away decisively to seal the championship by an 18-point margin. In the first semifinals earlier, Maharashtra registered a convincing 49-36 win over Uttar Pradesh. The team Maintained control through most of the contest, with Aditya Shinde leading the raiding unit by scoring 12 raid points. Aslam Inamdar and Shivam Patare also complemented Aditya's efforts by scor-



ing 11 and 8 points respectively. Along with the raiding unit, Maharashtra's defence played a key role in the outcome, finishing with 14 tackle points compared to Uttar Pradesh's eight, who were visibly struggling. The second semifinal between Indian Railways and Chandigarh ended in a 38-38 tie, with the former progressing to the final after registering a 7-4 victory in the tie-breaker. Ashu Malik was the top performer for the Railways with 10 points, while Narendra Kandola added another 10 points. Chandigarh stayed in the contest through strong raiding efforts from Pawan Sehrawat, who scored 12 points, and Rakesh Singroha, who contributed seven points. Bhavani Rajput, who played for Goa, ended the raiding standings on top, with a total of 58 raid points, secured in 81 raids. Meanwhile, Shubham Shinde, who is a part of the champions team, secured the most number of tackle points--27 Speaking about the trials, DDCA President Rohan Jaitley said,

"Delhi has historically produced some of India's finest bowlers who have not only represented the state with distinction but have gone on to bring laurels to the country. From Ishant Sharma to Ashish Nehra and several others, Delhi's bowlers have defined eras with their impact at the highest level. This initiative is about finding the next wave of such Match-winners. In a major announcement, the Union Minister said that future editions of the Winter Games in Gulmarg will be expanded into a 15-day integrated sporting event by combining sports with tourism and cultural activities. "Now the Winter Games will not be limited to four days. By integrating tourism, we will organise a 15-day-long Winter Games that will include a Fit India Carnival, cultural programmes and multiple competitions," he said. "After the abrogation of Article 370, there is a newfound belief in J&K. Earlier, stone-pelters used to make headlines; now it is sports.