

HPC (D) Cadres Lay Down Arms in Mizoram, Join Mainstream in Historic Peace Move

Sesawng, Apr 30: In a major step towards lasting peace, cadres of the Hmar Peoples’ Convention (Democratic) – Lalhmingthanga Sanate faction formally returned to the mainstream by laying down their arms and adopting a peaceful way of life.

To mark the occasion, the Government of Mizoram organised a Home Coming & Arms Laying Ceremony at the Central Training Institute Parade Ground in Sesawng, in the presence of Chief Minister Lalduhoma.

The event was attended by Speaker Lalbiakzama, Home Minister K Sapdanga, ministers, Members of Parliament, MLAs, and other dignitaries.

The ceremony follows the peace agreement signed on April 14, 2026, between the state government and the HPC(D) Lalhmingthanga Sanate faction at Sakawrdaia, formally marking the surrender of arms as per the accord.

Addressing the gathering, Chief Minister Lalduhoma said that peace

discussions in Mizoram have long been linked with the HPC(D) issue. He reaffirmed the government’s commitment to dialogue and commended the Home Minister and officials for their efforts in achieving the breakthrough. He stated that Mizoram can now confidently be called a truly peaceful state.

Emphasising unity, he said there is no division within the Mizo community and urged all sections to move forward together. Stressing the value of peace, he noted that it comes with sacrifice and praised the courage of the cadres who chose to give up arms. He also urged citizens to distance themselves from anything that could incite violence or conflict. Home Minister K Sapdanga described the event as a historic moment and welcomed the cadres into the mainstream. He credited the Chief Minister’s commitment to peace and encouraged the former insurgents to work with the government for the state’s progress.

Speaker Lalbiakzama expressed satisfaction over the successful



agreement, noting that peace has always been a priority, especially in the Hmar-inhabited areas.

Faction leader Lalhmingthanga Sanate acknowledged developmental efforts by the government, including projects like the Unity

Bridge and improvements to the Mauchar road. While stating that the agreement may not meet all expectations, he said it was acceptable and led to their decision to join the peace process.

The programme began with a

prayer led by Pastor Lalhmunsiama. Secretary (Home) Vanlalmawia delivered the welcome address. The number of cadres are 43. The cadres formally handed over their arms to IGP (Headquarters) H. Ramthlengliana, followed by an oath-taking ceremony led by senior police officials, where they pledged to renounce violence. The event concluded with a vote of thanks by MLA and Adviser to the Chief Minister Lalmuanpuia Punte.

Historically, sections of the Hmar community had formed the HPC after feeling their aspirations were unmet following the 1986 peace accord. A 1994 agreement led to the creation of the Sinlung Hills Development Council, while the HPC(D) later emerged under Lalhmingthanga Sanate. Another faction had already signed a peace deal in 2018. Talks with this faction resumed in 2024 and culminated in the recent agreement.

With this development, Mizoram no longer has any active underground ethnic insurgent groups.

Bail Denied in Zubeen Garg Death Case as Court Turns Down Accused’s Plea

Guwahati, Apr 30: A Fast Track Court has rejected the bail application of Shyamkanu Mahanta, one of the prime accused in the death case of Zubeen Garg.

During the hearing, Mahanta claimed that he was far away from the location at the time of the incident. However, the prosecution strongly opposed the bail, arguing that he is an influential person and had fled to Malaysia after the incident instead of cooperating with the investigation. According to the prosecution, a lookout notice had to be issued to secure his return.

Public prosecutor Ziaul Kamar contended that there is no guarantee Mahanta would not flee the country again if granted bail. He also raised concerns that the accused could influence witnesses. The prosecution further alleged that Mahanta had supplied alcohol to Zubeen Garg and failed to ensure proper medical safeguards.

After hearing arguments from both sides, Judge Sharmila Bhuyan rejected the bail plea.

Meanwhile, several electronic devices belonging to Mahanta remain in police custody. His wife had filed a petition seeking the return of items such as SIM cards and mobile phones registered in her name. However, the court ruled that these items are crucial evidence in the ongoing investigation and returning them could lead to tampering or deletion of important data. The court, therefore, dismissed that plea as well.

Assam Rifles Apprehend NSCN Cadre, OWG

Itanagar, Apr 30: Assam Rifles launched a well-coordinated intelligence-based operation on Tuesday and apprehended an NSCN (Khango) cadre and an overground worker in the general area of Rima-Putok circle in Arunachal Pradesh’s Changlang district, official sources informed on Wednesday.

The security forces acted on specific intelligence inputs regarding the presence of an overground worker (OGW) in contact with an armed Naga extremist (ANE).

“During the course of the operation, security forces apprehended Kamnong Pangtha, who is an ANE affiliated with NSCN (Khango) along with a Changlang-based OGW Gopang Negimu,” sources informed. It was revealed that both individuals were actively involved in extortion activities and played a significant

role in the recruitment of local youth into insurgent ranks. Their activities were primarily concentrated in the general areas of Changlang and Jairampur. “Further investigation brought to light that the OGW was attempting to facilitate the defection of cadres from the NSCN (Khango) faction to the NSCN (Angmai) faction in the Rima-Putok Circle.

The effort was aimed at augmenting the cadre strength and operational influence of the NSCN (Angmai) faction in the region, indicating ongoing factional dynamics within insurgent groups,” an official statement said. “The apprehended ANE and OGW, along with their belongings, were subsequently handed over to the local police authorities for further investigation and necessary legal action,” it stated.

Innovation and Experience Hub Launched in Arunachal College to Boost Tech-Driven Agriculture in Northeast

Itanagar, Apr 30: The College of Agriculture, Central Agricultural University, Pasighat has launched a first-of-its-kind Innovation and Experience Hub to promote next-generation, technology-driven agriculture in the North East.

Inaugurated by Sonalika Jiواني, Deputy Commissioner, East Siang District, the event highlighted the role of drones and the importance of responsible technology use.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Guest highlighted the importance of drone technology and its role in accelerating development programmes. She encouraged students to effectively



utilise the facility for innovation and skill development. In a unique initiative, she also brought district Class 10 toppers to witness live demonstrations, inspiring young minds towards science and future-ready careers. The Hub is equipped with agricultural drones, multispectral sensors, and 3D printing systems, enabling applications such

as precision spraying, crop health monitoring, and data-driven farm management. It is envisioned as a centre for experiential learning, capacity building, and regional outreach.

The programme included a live drone demonstration, inauguration of the facility, and interaction with students and faculty, with enthusiastic participation from staff and students.

Vasant Bhatt, Founder and Director of Triithi Robotics, participated as the technical expert. A pioneer in precision agriculture using drones in India since 2014, he is an awardee of the Ministry of Agriculture and a recipient of support from NITI Aayog.

Kuki Christian Forum Urges Hill Unity

Imphal, April 30: The Kuki Christian Leaders’ Forum (KCLF) has expressed grave concern over the escalating tension and violence between sections of Kuki and Tangkhul communities in Ukhrul and Kamjong districts of Manipur. Appealing for peace and unity in the midst of emerging tension between the hill tribes of Manipur, the Forum urged the authority concerned to speed up investigation of the cases that has led to the escalation of violence. “It is most unfortunate that a misunderstanding between a few individuals at Litan village, a local issue, has been allowed to escalate to this level of violence. At a time when Manipur has already suffered immense pain from prolonged conflict, it is heartbreaking to witness another wave of division emerging among communities that have worshipped the same God, read the same scriptures, and professed the same gospel of peace,” the KCLF said in a statement. The Forum further called upon all members of the public to refrain from spreading rumours, false narratives and inflammatory messages, whether through social media, public discourse, or other means.

The HPC-D Lalhmingthanga Sanate Faction Lays Down Arms And Formally Returns To Mizoram Mainstream

Aizawl, April 30: Cadres of the Hmar Peoples’ Convention (Democratic) Lalhmingthanga Sanate faction formally returned to the mainstream on Thursday, laying down their arms at a Home Coming and Arms Laying Ceremony held at the Central Training Institute Parade Ground in Sesawng. The event was attended by Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma, Speaker Lalbiakzama, Home Minister K. Sapdanga, along with ministers, a Member of Parliament, the Deputy Speaker, advisers, and several MLAs. The ceremony follows a peace agreement signed on

April 14, 2026, between the Government of Mizoram and the HPC (D) Lalhmingthanga Sanate faction at Sakawrdaia. Thursday’s programme marked the formal implementation of the agreement through the surrender of arms. Addressing the gathering, the Chief Minister said that discussions on peace in the state have long involved the HPC (D) issue and stated that the government has consistently remained open to dialogue. He acknowledged the efforts of the Home Department in facilitating the agreement and said the development allows Mizoram to be described as a peace-

ful state. He also called for unity among communities, stating that there should be no divisions and urging people to work collectively to maintain peace and stability. Home Minister K. Sapdanga described the occasion as significant and welcomed the cadres into the mainstream. He said the agreement was the result of continued efforts toward peace and encouraged the former cadres to contribute to the state’s development. Speaker Lalbiakzama stated that achieving peace in the Hmar-inhabited areas has been a priority and expressed satisfaction over the outcome. Lalhmingthanga

Sanate, leader of the faction, said the group decided to join the peace process after discussions with the government. He referred to development initiatives in the region and stated that the agreement was acceptable to the group. During the programme, the cadres handed over their arms to senior police officials and took an oath to renounce violence. The event began with a prayer service, followed by a welcome address by Home Secretary Vanlalmawia. The programme concluded with a vote of thanks by MLA and Adviser to the Chief Minister Lalmuanpuia Punte.

The HPC was formed after sections of the Hmar community expressed dissatisfaction following the 1986 Peace Accord. A 1994 agreement led to the creation of the Sinlung Hills Development Council. The HPC (D) later emerged as a separate faction under Lalhmingthanga Sanate. Another faction had signed a peace agreement with the government in 2018. Talks with the Lalhmingthanga Sanate faction resumed in 2024 and concluded with the agreement signed earlier this month after multiple rounds of negotiations. With this development, no active remain in Mizoram.

Supreme Court Reserves Order on Pawan Khera’s Anticipatory Bail Plea



Guwahati, Apr 30: The Supreme Court of India on Thursday reserved its order on the anticipatory bail plea filed by Congress leader Pawan Khera in a case linked to allegations against Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma’s wife, Riniki Bhuyan Sharma. A bench of Justices J K Maheshwari and A S Chandurkar reserved its verdict after hearing arguments from both sides. Appearing for Khera, senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi argued that denying anticipatory bail would defeat the very purpose of pre-arrest protection. He said the allegations against Khera are matters for trial and

that arrest would amount to unnecessary humiliation, adding that several sections invoked are bailable while others do not require custodial interrogation. Opposing the plea, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, representing the Assam government, alleged that Khera had presented fake and doctored copies of passports belonging to the Chief Minister’s wife. He further claimed that Khera had been evading authorities while continuing to release videos, and dismissed the allegations regarding multiple citizenships as baseless. The case stems from allegations that Riniki Bhuyan Sharma possessed multiple

passports and undisclosed foreign properties. Khera has challenged an April 24 order of the Gauhati High Court, which denied him anticipatory bail. Following the allegations, Sharma filed criminal complaints against Khera and others at the Guwahati Crime Branch under various sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. Earlier, the Telangana High Court had granted Khera a seven-day transit anticipatory bail, but the Assam Police challenged it before the Supreme Court, which stayed the relief and directed him to approach the Gauhati High Court. The apex court’s final decision is now awaited.

Rio’s France Win Boosts Indian Equestrian Sport

Kohima, Apr 30: Nagaland’s equestrian athlete Kekhriesilie Rio achieved a historic milestone by winning the Grand Prix at the Haras de Liverdy Grand Prix in France while riding Presley OL. The victory in the prestigious international showjumping competition is being hailed as a major moment for Indian equestrian sports and a proud achievement for athletes from Northeast India on the global stage.

Abu Metha, Vice-President of the Athletics Federation of India, described the feat as a remarkable achievement for Indian showjumping. Sharing visuals from the event, he said Rio’s success highlights how young athletes can reach glob-



al excellence when given the right opportunities. He congratulated Rio and encouraged him to continue striving for greater success while bringing pride to Nagaland.

Rio’s journey in equestrian sport

has been marked by consistent performances. In 2014–15, he secured third place in the Individual category at the Junior National Equestrian Championship (Endurance) held in Dibrugarh. In 2018, he

went on to win the Junior National Equestrian Championship (Show Jumping) in Kolkata, earning the national title. He made his international breakthrough in 2019 by finishing second at the Asian Equestrian Federation Junior/Young Jumping Challenge. In 2020, Rio delivered another standout performance at the FEI World Show Jumping Challenge in Bengaluru, where he ranked No. 2 globally and No. 1 in Asia in Category A.

In 2021, he further strengthened his reputation with a podium finish at the National Equestrian Championship (Senior) in New Delhi in the Puissance jumping event, establishing himself as one of India’s leading equestrian talents.

Yumnam Khemchand Singh, the chief minister of Manipur, criticizes those who oppose peace

Imphal, Apr 30: Manipur chief minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh on Wednesday expressed suspicion of a conspiracy of anti-peace elements behind the recent bomb attack that killed two sleeping kids in Bishnupur’s Tronglaobi village. Singh also reiterated his assurance to nab those responsible for the tragic incident that not only shocked the entire community but triggered fresh tension. On April 7 last, an RPG attack in Tronglaobi village resulted in the deaths of two children – five-year-old Tomthin Oinam and his infant sister – and injured their mother grievously. The attack, suspected to be carried out by Kuki militants from nearby hills, caused widespread outrage, massive protests, and calls for justice. Amid widespread protest demanding for justice and accountability of the tragic incident that followed by death of three protesters in firing by the CRPF personnel, the chief minister has been calling for calm while assuring nabbing the perpetrators for the end of justice.

Addressing the inauguration of five infrastructure projects at Langthabal in Imphal West district today, Singh lamented that the unfortunate incident occurred despite his government’s sincere efforts to bring back peace and normalcy in the state. He said that since he assumed office as chief minister of the state two months and 20 days ago, he has been engaged with MLAs, officials and people from different communities to work together for fostering peace. Besides, he has been visiting hills and valley areas, including Jiribam, Senapati, Kangpokpi and Ukhrul districts to address people’s grievances. From the visits, the chief minister asserted, he came to realize that people across communities have a strong desire for restoration of peace. However, the unfortunate incidents that happened in the last few weeks derailed the peace process, he said, while reiterating his assurance to identify and book the culprits soon. Reiterating that peace is the



foremost option for development, the chief minister urged people to stand united towards achieving peace in the state and appealed to the public to maintain harmony and be cautious of disruptive elements to create division. Singh said developmental chief minister Losii Dikho commended the chief minister for his active outreach across the state, including visits to remote areas like Jiribam, Senapati and Ukhrul. He said that the chief minister

has taken a unique approach by personally meeting people from different communities and listening to their concerns. He added that even people living far from Imphal have appreciated these visits and expressed confidence in the leadership. He urged civil society groups and the public to work together to maintain peace and harmony. He said, “Hatred and division will only harm the state and delay progress,”

Nearly 8,500 people to be engaged in Assam for counting on May 4

Imphal, Apr 30: Around 8,500 officials will be engaged for counting of votes on May 4 for 126 Assam assembly constituencies that went to polls on April 9, the state’s Chief Electoral Officer Anurag Goel said on Wednesday. Addressing a press conference here, he said the Election Commission is fully geared up to conduct the counting process smoothly and in a transparent manner. “We will have 40 counting centres spread across the 35 districts of Assam. Most of the districts have a single centre comprising all the constituencies in their jurisdictions,” Goel said. Kokrajhar, Tinsukia and Jorhat will be having two counting centres each, while Nagaon will have three such facilities, he said. “The EC has deployed 126 counting observers, who are senior IAS officers and will come from outside the state to maintain the neutrality of the process. We will also have 2,348 micro-observers, who are central government employees,” Goel said. For the main counting work, a total of 5,981 people, mostly from the state government, will be engaged as counting officials, he said. A record 85.96 per cent of Assam’s 2.51 crore electorate exercised their franchise



across 126 seats on April 9. This marked the highest voter turnout in the state’s history, surpassing the previous high of 84.67 per cent recorded in 2016. Regarding the security arrangements, Goel said 25 companies of Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) have been deployed across the state in the innermost cordon to guard the strong rooms, and they will also be stationed in the counting centres. “In addition, we have 13 companies of state armed police stationed outside the strong rooms as the second cordon. We can say it with full confidence that the strong rooms have not been compromised,” he said, refuting allegations of security lapses in the EVM storage fa-

cilities by some opposition leaders. On the counting day, 800 more unarmed police personnel will be available for the movement of EVMs from strong room locations to the counting centres. “We will be having two additional companies of CAPF on static duty, while 93 companies of state armed police have already been deployed in the districts. We will also have the support of 85 Assault Groups said that different agencies have seized various items, including liquor and cash, worth Rs 114.43 crore across the state from March 15 to April 27. Voting for the Assam Legislative Assembly took place in a single phase on April 9 across 31,490 polling stations.

PM inaugurates 594-km Ganga Expressway

Guwahati, Apr 30: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday inaugurated the 594-km-long Ganga Expressway, a mega infrastructure project connecting Meerut to Prayagraj. The PM reached Hardoi district around noon and inaugurated the expressway with the touch of a button in presence of Governor Anandiben Patel, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, among others. The high-speed corridor is expected to significantly boost connectivity across Uttar Pradesh, while giving impetus to industrial investment, logistics, agricultural marketing and regional balance. Adityanath, in a post on X, said the state’s development journey would gain new momentum with the inauguration of the expressway from Hardoi. He described the six-lane play a key role in accelerating development and bridging distances.”

Thunderstorms damage over 4,000 houses

Agartala, Apr 30: Prolonged spells of heavy rain over two days, accompanied by thunderstorms and gusty winds, have caused widespread damage across Tripura, affecting thousands of villagers and forcing hundreds to take shelter in relief camps. Official estimates indicate that more than 4,000 houses have been damaged, while one person died and two others were injured. The deceased, Bajanti Reang from West Kathalcherra in Dhalai district, died after being struck by lightning on April 27. Her family has been provided an interim assistance of Rs 20,000. Relief and restoration work has intensified over the past 24 hours, with the administration monitoring the situation and dispatching aid to affected areas. Two relief camps are currently operational, sheltering 791 people. Bisramganj in Sepahijala district recorded the highest rainfall at 145.5 mm, while Agartala, Sonamura and Gandacherra also received substantial precipitation. The weather department has forecast light to moderate rain or thundershowers across most parts of the state over the next 24 hours, with warnings of heavy to very heavy rainfall ranging between 7 cm and 20 cm in several districts. Thunderstorms, lightning and gusty winds of up to 60 kmph are also likely, keeping authorities on alert. According to the State Emergency Operation Centre, a total of 4,191 houses have been damaged — 195 fully, 547 severely and 3,449 partially. Financial assistance amounting to Rs 66.445 lakh has been distributed among 1,243 affected families so far. Storms also damaged public infrastructure, including electric poles and school buildings. As many as 129 electric poles were uprooted, while 659 school buildings were affected, including 69 that were com-

pletely damaged. District-wise assessments show extensive losses. In North Tripura, Dharmanagar subdivision reported damage to 136 houses, Panisagar to 50, while Kancharpur also recorded significant losses. In Unakoti district, Kailashahar subdivision alone reported 518 damaged houses, with compensation already distributed to several families. Kumarghat subdivision has also received assistance for fully and severely damaged houses. Dhalai district reported damage across Ambassa, Kamalpur, Gandatwisa and Longtharai Valley subdivisions. Sepahijala district was among the worst affected, with Bishalgarh reporting 947 damaged houses, Sonamura 387 and Jampuijala 153. Relief camps have been opened in these areas to accommodate displaced villagers.

West Tripura and Khowai districts also reported damage, including in Teliamura and Khowai subdivisions, where a relief camp has been set up at Maharanipur High School. In Gomati district, subdivisions such as Karbook, Udaipur and Amarpur reported road blockages due to uprooted trees and damaged power infrastructure, along with injuries. In South Tripura, areas including Sabroom, Belonia and Santirbar also reported damage, with hundreds of houses affected. Despite the damage, river levels remain below danger marks. Authorities are monitoring rivers such as the Howrah, Gomati, Muhuri and Manu in view of continued rainfall.

Though rainfall eased on Tuesday morning, large parts of the state continue to grapple with the aftermath. Power supply remains disrupted in several areas, including locations near Agartala, where outages have lasted nearly 40 hours, triggering protests.

Two held for trafficking minor girls in Lakhimpur

North Lakhimpur, Apr 30: Two persons have been arrested by Lakhimpur Police for trafficking two minor girls from Biswanath district. The arrests were made on the early hours of Wednesday at Laluk-Ranga De-reserve road following the accident of the vehicle in which the girls were being transported. According to police, two minor girls from Dhuli in Biswanath district were picked up by a group of four men in a SUV with registration number AS01 GQ 7347 from Banderdewa on The vehicle later fell into a ditch near Ranga De-reserve, alerting local villagers. Two of the accused

were caught by the villagers, while the remaining two managed to escape. Police rescued the second girl from the spot and later reunited her with the other victim at Laluk Police Station. The arrested persons have been identified as Sahjahan Ali (26) of Juria and Mofdul Islam (27) of Lai Khuti, both Dimapur in Nagaland for work. The four accused took the two minor girls towards Laluk in Lakhimpur district along NH-15. One of the victims managed to escape from the vehicle at Harmutty, while the other was taken towards Arunachal Pradesh via the Kachajuli-Ranga De-reserve road.

Chhattisgarh Police team detained in Ghy over Alleged bribery case

Chhattisgarh, Apr 30: A team of four Chhattisgarh Police personnel, including an inspector, was detained by Guwahati Police for allegedly demanding and accepting bribes from three cybercrime accused arrested from Assam, officials said on Wednesday.

A case was registered against the four personnel of Raipur Police at Dispur police station, and they were picked up for questioning on Tuesday night, a senior official “The Raipur Police team reached Guwahati on Sunday in connection with a cybercrime in Chhattisgarh. They arrested one accused from Bihar and nabbed three others, who also hail from Bihar, from Guwahati on Monday,” he added.

The Chhattisgarh team, comprising an inspector, a head constable and two constables, allegedly released two of the accused after accepting bribes and kept the third in custody pending payment of the demanded money, the official said. “We received a complaint from the two released accused regarding the matter. Accordingly, we took action and carried out an operation. The entire team was picked up and brought to



Dispur police station last night,” he said. Police said an FIR was registered under bailable sections, after which the team was allowed to leave the police station on notice following preliminary interrogation. “We have served a notice on them and asked them to appear before us today again for further actions,” the senior official said. He also said the lone accused in the cybercrime case of Chhattisgarh has been released under a ‘PR bond’. According to sources, the team has already reached Dispur police station, and questioning is underway.

The final rebel organization in Mizoram will surrender 43 of its cadres today

Imphal, Apr 30: A total of 43 members of the Lalmhingthanga Sanate-led faction of the HPC(D) will lay down arms in Mizoram on Thursday, officials said. Chief Minister Lalduhoma and Home Minister K Sapdanga will attend the event at the Police Central Training Institute in Sesawng, around 40 km from Aizawl, they said on Wednesday. The ‘homecoming ceremony’ follows the peace accord signed between the Mizoram government and the Hmar People’s Convention (Democratic) on April 14, effectively marking the end of insurgency in the state. Though largely dormant in recent years, the Sanate-led HPC(D) faction was considered the last surviving ethnic insurgent outfit in Mizoram and was allegedly involved in sporadic criminal activities, including extortion in Hmar-dominated villages.

The agreement, signed at Sakawrdai in Aizawl district — headquarters of the Sinlung Hills Council (SHC) — focuses on the comprehensive development of the Hmar-majority SHC region. Key provisions include higher



budgetary allocations for the council, a special development package, infrastructure upgrades and improved connectivity. The HPC(D), in its charter of demands, sought transfer of SHC administration from the General Administration Department to the District Council and Minority Affairs Department, establishment of project and agriculture offices in Sakawrdai, increased annual budgetary support from 2027-28, and special development works. It also demanded official recognition of the Sikipui Ruoi festival and Hmar Martyrs’ Day on May 16 as holidays in the SHC jurisdiction,

which covers 31 villages in northern and northeastern Mizoram, bordering Assam and Manipur. Other demands included construction of internal roads, an Eklavya Model Residential School, and a Netaji Subash Chandra Bose Awasiya Vidyalaya hostel. The government of Mizoram shall make utmost efforts to honour and implement the charter of demands submitted by the HPC(D),” the agreement stated. The Sanate faction was the last of three Hmar insurgent groups in Mizoram since 1986, initially demanding an Autonomous District Council under the Sixth Schedule.

The first group, HPC led by Hmingchungnunga, signed a peace accord with the then Congress government in 1994, leading to the creation of the Sinlung Hills Development Council (SHDC). The second faction, HPC(D) led by late H Zosangbera, signed a separate accord in 2018 after talks began in 2016. The pact created the Sinlung Hills Council (SHC) with enhanced autonomy, replacing the SHDC. The 14-member SHC, headed by a Chief Executive Member, held its first election in November 2019, in which the Mizo National Front (MNF)-HPC alliance won 10 seats. Sanate had formed his faction after expressing dissatisfaction with the 1994 accord. Originally from Khawlian village in present-day Saitual district, Sanate operated with a small group of cadres from bases in Assam’s Cachar district. A leader of the group said the present Zoram People’s Movement (ZPM) government, led by Lalduhoma, had succeeded in bringing the outfit back to mainstream society after a series of backchannel talks.

Inter-State Drug Module Busted in Manipur

Imphal, Apr 30: Security forces in Manipur arrested two drug peddlers from Punjab and Uttar Pradesh and seized 51 kilograms of opium valued at over ₹3 crore, dismantling an inter-state trafficking module linked to Myanmar. The contraband was intercepted at Leingangpokpi village in Jiribam district along NH-37, with authorities recovering opium packed in carton boxes, mobile phones, and the truck used for transport. Officials identified the accused as Sukhvinder Singh and Sandeep Singh Tilno, and preliminary investigations revealed the consignment originated from Myanmar. This seizure marks the second major crackdown on



Myanmar-linked drug trafficking in Manipur within 24 hours. On Tuesday, the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), in coordination with Assam Rifles and

Manipur Police, arrested two traffickers and seized 4.267 kilograms of heroin valued at ₹8.5 crore in Churachandpur district. The heroin, concealed in 374

soap cases, was recovered during a joint operation near the Myanmar border, where vehicles and a motorcycle were intercepted. Authorities described both operations as significant breakthroughs against cross-border drug trafficking, stressing that Myanmar’s northern regions remain a major source of opium and heroin. With five districts in Manipur sharing a 398-km unfenced international border with Myanmar, officials warned the region remains highly vulnerable to smuggling networks. These back-to-back seizures underscore intensified efforts by Indian agencies to curb narcotics trafficking and safeguard border communities.

SC declines pleas on hate speeches; says existing laws address adequately

Imphal, Apr 30: The Supreme Court on Wednesday said the existing framework of criminal law adequately addresses the issue of hate speeches and no “legislative vacuum” exists warranting intervention. “The contention that the field of hate speech remains legislatively unoccupied, is misconceived,” a bench of justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta said. The top court delivered its verdict on a batch of petitions seeking action against those involved in hate speeches and also for mechanism to deal with such instances. The bench said it would be open to the Centre and the competent legislative authorities to consider in their wisdom whether any further legislative or policy measures were warrant-

ed in light of the evolving societal challenges or to bring about suitable amendments as suggested by the Law Commission’s 267th report of March 2017. “While we decline to issue directions of the nature sought, we deem it appropriate to observe that the issues relating to hate speeches and rumour-mongering bear directly upon the preservation of fraternity, dignity and Constitutional order,” Justice Nath said while pronouncing the verdict.

It said the constitutional scheme founded upon the doctrine of separation of powers does not permit the judiciary to create new offences or expand the contours of criminal liability through judicial directions.

Assam Records Over One Thousand Road Accident Deaths This Quarter



Guwahati, April 30: More than 1,000 people have died in road accidents across Assam during the first three months of 2026, according to official figures released by the Transport department on Tuesday. The state recorded 4,219 accidents and 1,008 fatalities between January and March, compared to 4,232 accidents and 1,035 deaths in the same period last year. Online-News Subscription Authorities noted that while the overall number of accidents remained nearly unchanged from 2025, nine districts Guwahati City, Kamrup, Nagaon, Lakhimpur, Sonitpur, Golaghat, Barpeta, Dhubri, and Hojai together accounted for almost half of the fatalities. The department emphasized that the figures highlight persistent road safety challenges in the state, with densely populated and high-traffic districts continuing to report the highest casualty rates. A high-level state review has revealed a sobering statistic for the start of 2026: Assam recorded

1,008 road accident fatalities between January and March. This figure translates to an average of 11 deaths every day, prompting Chief Secretary Dr. Ravi Kota to issue urgent directives to district administrations to curb the rising toll and improve road safety enforcement. During a state-level road safety review meeting held in Dispur on April 27, 2026, officials analyzed data from all 35 districts. The report highlighted that while the total number of accidents remained relatively stable compared to the previous year, the “severity” of these crashes remains a critical concern. While there was a marginal 2.6% decline in fatalities, the Chief Secretary noted that the crash volume has not significantly decreased. Assam’s severity index stands at 0.24, which, while better than the national average of 0.36, is significantly higher than safer states like Kerala (0.10) or Tamil Nadu (0.13). This suggests that when an accident occurs in Assam, it is disproportionately likely be fatal.

NEHU Faces Deepening Governance Crisis Amid VC’s Prolonged Absence

Aizawl, Apr 30: North-Eastern Hill University (NEHU) is grappling with a deepening governance crisis, as the NEHU Teachers’ Association (NEHUTA) has alleged administrative paralysis, lack of transparency, and the prolonged absence of Vice-Chancellor Prabha Shankar Shukla from the university headquarters.Addressing the media on Wednesday, NEHUTA president Lakhon Kma said the Vice-Chancellor has been away from campus for over 540 days, severely disrupting the university’s day-to-day functioning. He stated that despite being physically absent, the VC continues to interfere in routine matters, resulting in what he described as “policy paralysis” and a near standstill in administration.

One of the most pressing con-

cerns raised was the delay in confirming faculty members appointed in 2023. As per university rules, teachers should be confirmed after completing their probation period, subject to approval by the Executive Council (EC). However, despite two EC meetings—held on February 23 in Delhi and virtually on March 30—no confirmation orders have been issued.Kma also highlighted that the minutes of these meetings have not been circulated, creating confusion about decisions taken. He termed the delay “unjustified and deeply concerning,” adding that newly recruited teachers are working under uncertainty.Beyond faculty issues, he alleged that the university is facing “almost complete administrative paralysis,” with no clarity on decision-making author-

ity in the VC’s absence. Although statutory provisions require Pro Vice-Chancellors to take charge, this mechanism is reportedly not functioning effectively.Kma further alleged that the VC continues to draw a full salary despite being absent, creating a leadership vacuum that has impacted governance, planning, and institutional growth. He noted that academic activities—such as classes, admissions, examinations, and results—are continuing primarily due to the resilience of departments and faculty, rather than administrative support.On the financial front, NEHU reportedly received only about half of its required recurring funds last year, leading to mounting pressure. Delays in medical reimbursements, departmental expenses, and bill clearances have

become routine, with uncertainty over current financial allocations. Kma also questioned the functioning of the Executive Council, stating that the absence of circulated minutes has further eroded transparency.Concerns were also raised over delays in initiating the appointment process for the next Vice-Chancellor. Referring to a February 18 communication from the Ministry of Education, Kma said the university was required to recommend two names for a search committee, but no clarity has emerged so far. He expressed apprehension that the delay could be deliberate, possibly aimed at extending the current VC’s tenure—an idea strongly opposed by the teaching community. Highlighting NEHU’s declining academic standing, Kma noted that

the university has slipped from being among the top 15 institutions in India’s National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) to beyond the 200 mark, attributing the decline to prolonged poor leadership. He stressed the urgent need for a Vice-Chancellor who is academically competent, administratively experienced, and actively present on campus. Recalling the contributions of former Vice-Chancellors such as Mrinal Miri, Pramod Tandon, and A. N. Rai, Kma said their leadership once placed NEHU among the country’s leading institutions. With the current VC’s tenure set to end on July 25, the teaching community hopes that a leadership change will help steer the university out of its prolonged crisis.

Mizoram CM Lalduhoma Calls For Institutional Integrity, Youth Empowerment

Aizawl, Apr 30: Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma on Wednesday urged greater unity, institutional integrity, and youth empowerment as the Mizo Students’ Union (MSU) marked its 25th anniversary in Aizawl. Speaking at the celebration, Lalduhoma emphasised the pivotal role of NGOs in Mizoram’s social fabric, cautioning that personal interests among leaders could erode organisational credibility. He called on NGOs to remain steadfast in their founding

principles and act responsibly, particularly during periods of political divergence. The Chief Minister praised student organisations for their contribution to strengthening Mizo identity and fostering unity, stressing that dialogue should prevail over confrontation. While acknowledging NGOs’ role as pressure groups, he underscored that constructive engagement remains the most effective approach. Lalduhoma also announced that the state government plans

to introduce the public-private partnership (PPP) model, beginning with church-run schools, as part of efforts to improve education. He further urged NGOs to support government monitoring initiatives and ensure accountability in governance. Founded in 1981 under the leadership of R Vanlawma and reconstituted in 2001, the MSU currently operates 110 branches within and outside Mizoram. In a comprehensive address that marks a significant shift in

the state’s governance philosophy, Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma has issued a clarion call for a dual-pronged approach to state-building: the restoration of institutional integrity and the active empowerment of the youth. Speaking at a high-level assembly involving senior bureaucrats, community leaders, and student representatives, the Chief Minister outlined a vision where ethical governance serves as the bedrock for a prosperous and self-reliant

Mizoram. Lalduhoma, who assumed office with a mandate for “Zoram Thar” (New Mizoram), emphasized that the soul of a democracy lies in the health of its institutions. He noted that for too long, public trust has been eroded by bureaucratic lethargy and the perception of political favoritism. “Institutional integrity is not a luxury; it is a necessity for survival,” the Chief Minister stated. He argued that when government departments operate with transparency,

Digboi Ivory Chopping Case Uncovers Trafficking Links

Digboi, Apr 30: Forest officials of the Digboi Division have arrested two individuals in connection with an elephant ivory chopping case reported from Dhulijan under the Lakhpathar Forest Range in Tinsukia district, in what is being seen as a major breakthrough in a suspected wildlife trafficking network.

The accused have been identified as Saurav Moran (28) of Dhulijan and Pradip Gorh (22) of Ketetong under Margherita Police Station. Moran was reportedly the caretaker of the elephant from which the ivory was removed earlier on April 14.

Officials said the arrests followed a sustained operation based on digital and field intelligence. The accused were produced before the Margherita court.

Investigations revealed that the



crime was carried out in phases. On March 28, Moran allegedly contacted Gorh and arranged for a portion of the elephant’s tusk to be cut, paying him Rs 400 as labour charges. Later, on April 14, the same tusk was completely chopped off from the base, indicating a deliberate and repeated act.Forest officials involved in the probe stated that the accused

had recorded and photographed the tusk before cutting it using a sharp hexo blade. The digital and photographic evidence has played a crucial role in linking them to the crime.

Sources indicated that the case may have wider ramifications, with suspicion that the ivory could have already entered a larger smuggling network. The arrested

individuals are believed to have links to organised wildlife trafficking, and further investigation is underway to trace the chain. While the arrests mark progress, officials admitted that recovering the chopped ivory remains a challenge as several days have passed since the incident. Efforts are ongoing to trace the contraband and identify other persons involved.

The investigation is being closely monitored by the office of the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife), and more arrests are likely based on interrogation inputs.

Meanwhile, sources said the ownership of the elephant is still unclear. It is learnt that Pradip Gorh had earlier worked as a mahout of the same elephant, which was reportedly owned by the late Lakheswar Dwaniya of Ketetong.

BRO Holds Engineer’s Meet in Guwahati

Guwahati, Apr 30: A two-day Chief Engineers’ Works Conference of all Border Roads Organisation (BRO) projects of the Eastern Region concluded in Guwahati on Wednesday.

The conference, held under the chairmanship of Jitendra Prasad, Additional Director General Border Roads (East), witnessed the participation of all seven Chief Engineers of BRO Projects in the Eastern Region along with the Commandant, Engineer Base Workshop (EBW).

The primary objective of the conference was to deliberate on the roadmap for the current financial year and to formulate effective strategies for achieving the laid-down targets.

“Comprehensive discussions were held on enhancing operational efficiency, optimising resource utilisation and ensuring timely completion of infrastructure projects. Emphasis was also laid on adopting best practices to improve execution timelines and overall project delivery,” a statement issued by the PRO (Defence), Guwahati, said on Thursday. Addressing the gathering, the Additional DGBR (East) stressed the need to accelerate the pace of works while maintaining the highest standards of quality in all ongoing and future projects. He underscored that quality infrastructure is vital not only for operational effectiveness but also for sustaining public confidence and organisational credibility.The conference concluded with a clear focus on achieving higher targets and expediting the completion of strategically important road projects.

Bar licence suspended for serving alcohol beyond permitted hours in Guwahati

Guwahati, Apr 30: An inquiry into a deadly road mishap that killed three young women has exposed violation of rules by a plush bar in Guwahati, leading to suspension of its licence.According to an order issued by Kamrup (Metro) District Commissioner Swapneel Paul, the licence of Exoro Bar on GS Road at Bhangagarh has been suspended for violating excise rules and licence conditions, and the Superintendent of Excise has been asked to con-

duct an inquiry and submit a detail report within 15 days. The investigation carried out by the Guwahati Traffic Police into the fatal road accident at the Mathghoria area on April 26 has revealed that four persons involved in the accident visited the bar and had alcoholic drinks and food there before coming out of the premises at around 3 am. The bar has a late closing permission, allowing it to serve liquor on the premises till 12.30 am.

Arunachal Introduces Thermal Drones to Boost Wildlife Monitoring and Forest Surveillance

Itanagar, Apr 30: In a major push towards modernising forest surveillance, the Government of Arunachal Pradesh has introduced high-tech thermal drones to strengthen wildlife monitoring and rescue operations, along with launching a specialised training programme for frontline forest personnel.

The initiative, led by the Department of Forest, Environment and Climate Change Arunachal Pradesh, includes a week-long hands-on training programme conducted by experts from RNR Unmanned Aerial Systems. The training aims to equip field staff with advanced drone operation skills and real-time monitoring capabilities.

In the first phase, five thermal drones have been deployed across key wildlife locations, including Namdapha National Park and Tiger Reserve, Deomali Division, Mehao Wildlife Sanctuary, Nampong Division, and Itanagar Biological Park. These



drones are expected to significantly enhance surveillance in dense and inaccessible terrains, enabling authorities to track animal movements and detect illegal activities such as poaching, wildlife trafficking, and encroachment.

With this initiative, Arunachal Pradesh becomes the third state in India, after Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, to adopt thermal drone technology for wildlife monitoring.

Forest and Environment Minister Wangki Lowang described the move as the beginning of a “new era” in forest management. He said the government is steadily adopting modern and scientific tools to improve the management of forests and wildlife.

Highlighting rising instances of human-wildlife conflict, the minister noted that the technology would allow early detection and timely intervention, reducing risks to both humans and

animals.

Adviser to the minister Wanglin Lowangdong acknowledged the support of Rajiv Pemmasani and his team of master trainers from RNR Unmanned Aerial Systems, while appreciating the department’s efforts to adopt advanced conservation tools.

PCCF and CEO of State Authority CAMPA, N Tam, praised the Wildlife Wing for adopting drone technology, noting its usefulness in monitoring large forest areas, detecting forest fires early, and strengthening surveillance against illegal activities.

Additional PCCF Debendra Dalai highlighted the wide applications of drones, including habitat mapping, biodiversity monitoring, and detection of encroachments.

Officials said the training programme will focus on drone operation, data interpretation, and real-time application in wildlife rescue, anti-poaching drives, and habitat assessment.

India Achieves Record Tea Exports; Jorhat Auction Centre to Resume Soon

Jorhat, Apr 30: India exported 280 million kilograms of tea in the last financial year, marking the highest-ever export figure, according to Tea Board Deputy Chairman C Murugan.He also clarified that the Jorhat Tea Auction Centre has not been shut down and will resume operations soon.

Speaking on the overall tea industry scenario, Murugan said the outlook remains positive.

He noted that a significant portion of India’s tea exports last year went to countries such as Iran, Iraq, United Arab Emirates, and nations of the former Soviet Union. Russia continues to be a traditional importer of Indian tea, and the Tea Board maintains an office in Moscow to support trade.

Exports to Iran, however, have been impacted by the ongoing conflict in West Asia, prompting exporters to explore alternative markets. Murugan revealed that China has recently started importing Indian tea. While China is a major tea producer, it mainly produces green tea and is now importing ortho-



dox and CTC varieties from India.He also highlighted that Darjeeling tea continues to enjoy a premium status in the global market.

Addressing competition, Murugan acknowledged that Indian tea faces challenges from Kenya and Sri Lanka, where production costs are significantly lower, allowing them to offer tea at more competitive prices.

On tea imports into India, he said some companies import tea for blending purposes, which is legally permitted.

Regarding production this year, Murugan said the plucking season has just begun, and the Tea Board

is optimistic about a good yield. Production in North Bengal has been strong, although a significant increase in output could lead to a decline in prices.Responding to concerns over the Jorhat Tea Auction Centre, Murugan reiterated that it has not been closed. He explained that operations were temporarily halted as the contract with the previous vendor ended and was not renewed.The Tea Board has floated new tenders to standardize operations across all seven tea auction centres in the country. A new vendor is expected to take charge from August, when the Jorhat centre will also resume functioning.

Mizoram govt launches app for real-time disaster reporting

Aizawl, Apr 30: The Mizoram government has launched a mobile application to facilitate quick communication and information sharing in the event of a disaster.The ‘Khuael’ app was unveiled by Disaster Management and Rehabilitation Minister Lalnilawma in Aizawl.The programme was organized jointly by the Disaster Management & Rehabilitation (DM&R) Department and Buanel Geo Solutions & Services.The platform aims to enable instant communication between the public, government agencies, and disaster management authorities. While delivering his speech at the launch, Lalnilawma stated that the Khuael App is designed to enable quick communication and information sharing between the public, DM&R Department, and the State & District Disaster Management Authorities (SDMA & DDMA) whenever disasters occur. It will also allow for proper and systematic recording of disaster-related data. The Minister also expressed appreciation for the joint effort of the DM&R Department and Buanel Geo Solutions & Services in developing the app, describing it as a significant milestone for Mizoram. He further highlighted that Mizoram is the first among the northeastern states of India to introduce such an advanced application. The Minister urged all citizens of Mizoram to download and actively use this simple yet highly useful app. Speaking at the event, Udit Prakash Rai, Commissioner & Secretary of DM&R, emphasized the usefulness of the Khuael App. He noted that the public will now be able to report disaster incidents directly and promptly to the DM&R Department and DDMA. At the same time, the authorities will be able to quickly disseminate important disaster-related information to the public through the app.

North East Chronicle

MAY 01 2026 VOL 02 NO. 68



The Ballot’s Silent Covenant

After a peaceful election, it is expected that party supporters will accept the results peacefully. An election is democracy’s most sacred ritual — a civic act of collective will translated peacefully into governance. When citizens line up to vote without fear, when polling stations operate without violence, and when results are tallied with transparency, democracy has done its job. The unspoken compact of that process, however, extends beyond the counting of votes. It demands that those who lose honour the verdict as resolutely as those who win celebrate it. History is littered with the wreckage of democracies undone not by fraud at the ballot box but by the refusal to accept its outcome. When party leaders contest legitimate results without evidence, or when supporters are incited to view defeat as theft, they corrode the very foundation that grants any future election its legitimacy. Peaceful acceptance is not a concession of defeat — it is an assertion of democratic faith. Dissent, of course, remains a democratic right. Questioning policy, organising opposition, and seeking redress through courts are the legitimate tools of those who disagree. What is never acceptable — and what distinguishes democracy from its counterfeits — is translating political disappointment into unrest, intimidation, or violence. The ballot was designed precisely so that such impulses could be channelled into ballots, not brawls. In the end, a peaceful election is only half the democratic bargain. The other half is the quiet dignity of a graceful defeat. Without it, no election — however free and fair — can truly be called a democratic victory.

More lanes or trains? Rethinking the Dhaka-Chattogram corridor

Every day, thousands of trucks carry containers, raw materials, and export goods along the Dhaka-Chattogram highway, alongside rising passenger traffic. This corridor also connects the capital with Chattogram Port, the gateway for most of Bangladesh’s international trade. As economic activity expands, pressure on the corridor and dependence on imported fuel also rise. This route is already one of the most fuel-intensive segments of the transport network. Despite expansion to four lanes, congestion persists. Proposals to widen the highway into a 10-lane corridor or elevated expressway reflect the scale of the problem. But expanding roads alone risks locking Bangladesh into a fossil fuel-dependent transport model. The real question is not how to accommodate more vehicles, but how to reduce reliance on them. That shift requires a decisive move toward rail. This reduces dependence on imported diesel while easing pressure on infrastructure and foreign exchange reserves. For Bangladesh, the long-discussed Dhaka-Chattogram chord line presents a practical opportunity to make this transition. By creating a more direct alignment between the two cities, the chord line would shorten travel distance, enable faster passenger services, and expand capacity for freight movement. This does not require ultra-high-speed systems like Japan’s Shinkansen. A modern medium-speed railway operating at 140–160



kilometres per hour would be sufficient. This could reduce passenger travel times to around two hours, but the greater impact would be on freight movement. Shifting even a portion of container movement from trucks to rail would reduce congestion, lower fuel consumption, and improve logistics reliability, thus creating a more balanced system where rail and road share the load. Nevertheless, this shift must be supported by a broader reconfiguration of inland logistics. Expanding inland container depot capacity closer to industrial clusters—particularly around Narayanganj—can significantly reduce long-haul trucking. Fast-tracking projects such as Dhirasram Inland Container Depot (ICD) or the proposed Pubail ICD would allow cargo to be consolidated and moved in bulk by rail, rather than dispersed across thousands of truck trips. Together with a chord line, these facilities could form the backbone of a more energy-efficient multimodal system. However, infrastructure alone will not deliver these benefits unless institutional constraints within the railway sector are addressed. One persistent challenge is the shortage of locomotives and trained loco-masters, which limits effective use of existing rail capacity. As long as freight depends on spare locomotives from passenger services, a reliable rail logistics system will remain difficult. There is, therefore, a strong case for revisiting the Railways Act, 1890, to allow regulated participation of private operators on designated

corridors. Opening railway tracks to private freight operators is a practical response to capacity constraints. It would enable additional locomotive investment, improve service reliability, and introduce operational flexibility. Without such reform, even well-planned infrastructure investments—including a Dhaka-Chattogram chord line—risk delivering only partial results. With it, Bangladesh could unlock the full potential of its rail network.

A practical way forward would be to translate this vision into a phased railway roadmap. Priority should be given to developing a Dhaka-Narayanganj-Chattogram chord line as a modern broad-gauge corridor, creating a more direct and high-capacity rail link between Dhaka and Chattogram. Meanwhile, institutional reform by opening access for private operators under a regulated framework should be put in place and railway-based inland logistics should be strengthened through the development of ICDs in strategic locations under public-private partnership models. Together, these steps would create an integrated rail-led system capable of shifting a substantial share of cargo away from roads, reducing fuel consumption, and strengthening long-term resilience. Recent discussions on the proposed Teknaf-Tetulia economic corridor highlight the need for a more integrated approach to transport planning in Bangladesh. The initiative

reflects a shift toward viewing corridors not merely as roads, but as systems linking logistics, industry, and regional connectivity, while emphasising sustainability. This reinforces a central point: how connectivity is designed, particularly in energy use and transport mode, will determine long-term sustainability. Linking Matarbari deep-sea port with the Mirsairai economic zone and extending rail-based ICD development toward the northwest, such as Nilphamari, could help translate this vision into a more balanced, rail-led national logistics corridor. Globally, countries facing similar challenges are already moving in this direction. China has expanded rail corridors linking ports with inland industrial regions. India is developing its Dedicated Freight Corridor to reduce logistics costs and energy use. Across Europe, rail plays a central role in reducing transport-related emissions. These are not just transport investments; they are energy strategies.

Bangladesh now faces a similar choice. Continuing to expand highways without strengthening rail will deepen long-term dependence on fossil fuels. In contrast, investing in rail, supported by institutional reform and inland logistics development, offers a pathway toward a more resilient and energy-efficient transport system. The choice we are facing is not between a 10-lane highway or an elevated expressway; it is between more lanes or less fuel.

over rooftop solar costs, import duties on accessories, and whether the policy mix is helping adoption fast enough. Apparel sector entrepreneurs argue that import taxes increase system costs just when rooftop solar could decrease both energy vulnerability and carbon emissions. At the same time, the government wants to protect and nurture local manufacturing. However, even if tariffs are perfectly balanced, Bangladesh will still struggle unless it produces enough competent workers for a growing solar ecosystem. The good news is that the REP 2025 already has a practical opening. It directs SREDA to support training and research, encourage renewable energy curriculum from the school level to university, and maintain a national database for designers, installers, maintenance professionals, suppliers, importers, manufacturers, and EPC companies. The database could become the backbone of certification, accountability, and labour market visibility. The conflicts around the world may calm down soon enough and shipping routes may regain normalcy too, resulting in spot LNG prices to stabilise. However, Bangladesh’s skills gap will persist unless the country treats it as seriously as it treats capacity targets. A panel on a rooftop cannot secure a factory, a school, or a grid if no one is there to install it properly, certify it credibly, or repair it when it breaks down. Bangladesh needs more solar, but it needs a workforce for it even more. Energy security will not come from solar panels alone but from the skilled hands that make them work.

Bangladesh’s solar ambition needs skilled hands to succeed

Bangladesh’s economy remains highly susceptible to price volatility in the international energy market. This vulnerability became fairly evident when the Russia-Ukraine war broke out in 2022 and more recently, when the Iran-US conflict began in March this year. The war in the Middle East has resulted in an abnormal hike in the price of liquefied natural gas (LNG), forcing the country to seek costlier spot cargoes. This event exposed how quickly a distant war can travel through the Strait of Hormuz into domestic power shortages, industrial anxiety, and fiscal pressure. Imported LNG accounts for more than 25 percent of Bangladesh’s national total gas consumption, and about 42 percent of total gas consumption goes to the power sector. And this is precisely why solar must be treated as an energy security strategy, not merely a climate aspiration.

The recent national energy policy of Bangladesh is the Renewable Energy Policy (REP) 2025 that sets a target to generate 20 percent of the country’s electricity from renewable sources by 2030 and 30 percent by 2041. The policy recognises the country’s dependence on natural gas and other fossil fuels and connects renewable expansion with local manufacturing capability, cost competitiveness, and human resource development. There is no lack of ambition when it comes to increasing renewable energy capacity. Current SREDA dashboards on renewables show that Bangladesh has about 1.74 gigawatt (GW) of installed renewable capacity, accounting for about 5.24

percent of total installed energy generation capacity, of which 1.45 GW is represented by solar, consisting of solar parks, rooftop net metering, and solar home systems (SHS). Apart from solar installations, there are initiatives in solar panel exports and foreign investment in solar. In June 2025, Radiant Alliance, a Bangladesh-based company, exported solar panels to the US market for the first time. In March 2025, Chinese solar manufacturer Longi revealed plans to invest in solar panel manufacturing in Bangladesh. The government has also pushed some big rollouts on solar expansion. In December 2025, the erstwhile interim government approved 12 new private solar plants with a combined capacity of 918 MW. As part of the National Rooftop Solar Program 2025, the government aims to install 3,000 MW equivalent of solar panels on state-owned buildings, alongside net metering reforms that now allow systems up to 100 percent of sanctioned load, compared to about 70 percent in the past.

The sanctioned load is the maximum amount of power that an electricity provider authorises a consumer to use at any given time. However, so far most of such scaling only exists on paper and we are left with an uncomfortable question: who will build, install, test, service, and maintain all this capacity? This is where the bottleneck begins. Bangladesh may be announcing a solar manufacturing and deployment push, but its training pipeline is not ready for it yet. A 2024 future-skills study on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Bangladesh found a serious shortage of skilled workers and a persistent mismatch between what graduates learn and what employers need. Around 60 percent of the study’s respondents said that their technical skills needed further improvement after graduation. The same study also claimed that the National Technical and Vocational Qualifications Framework (NTVQF) is not implemented fully and the student enrolment exceeds infrastructural



capacity. Furthermore, the students do not benefit from learning to operate old and obsolete machines when companies recruit for newer technologies. The graduates also ultimately struggle in the labour market due to a lack of coordination between training institutions and employers. This becomes problematic when it comes to readying a workforce to maintain the country’s solar infrastructure as the sector is heavily reliant on practical know-how than just theoretical knowledge.

The REP 2025 opens doors to production-based incentives, tax exemptions, and duty or VAT cuts on certain solar components. These measures can help local industries grow, but they do not run on policy alone. They run on technicians, supervisors, quality inspectors, electricians, operators, trainers, and after-sales service teams. Solar localisation without skills localisation is unlikely to achieve much. Meanwhile, implementation problems are already visible in reality. There are debates

what she once memorably described as her “big Dutch face” and the ability to build muscle. And, while the fact she is only four months older than me is, on one level, a bitter pill to swallow given

without ropes. It’s all a long way from the Italian Job remake. Theron, of course, has form in this area, going back to recent roles in action movies such as The Old Guard and Atomic Blonde, and there are earlier precedents for this kind of midlife turn of the wheel—although I would argue few female actors have landed them so successfully. Linda Hamilton was 35 in 1991 when she pulled off those chin-ups in the opening scene of Terminator 2. A few years later, Meryl Streep was in her mid-40s when, pursued by Kevin Bacon, she ploughed down the rapids in The River Wild, and of course she did some of the stunts herself. In 2021, Angelina Jolie had another crack at action-hero

Creaky knees be damned – Charlize Theron is showing us what’s possible at 50

If you are in your 50s, 40s or even late 30s and feel as though things are rapidly heading south, might I point you in the direction of Apex, the 95-minute action movie that launched last week on Netflix and is currently parked at No 1 on both sides of the Atlantic. You may think Apex, which has almost no dialogue, a paper-thin script and plot holes the size of the Australian outback in which it was filmed, is not for you, but you would be wrong. Next time you make a noise when you get up from the sofa, you can visualise Charlize Theron free-climbing a cliff face in peak middle age and remind yourself these things are still possible. What’s startling about this is that Theron, at

50, appears to have successfully outrun the Hollywood dead end that greets women on their 34th birthday. She could be unrecognisable from surgery while clinging to the reboot of some earlier role. She could be trapped in Yor-gos Lanthimos-style whimsy, because what could be more whimsical and grotesque than an ageing female actor? She could be playing someone’s mother – specifically, the mother of a male actor some five years her junior. Instead, Theron has been everywhere in the past fortnight, dominating the social-media feeds, crowding out the increasingly desperate-looking publicity push from the cast of The Devil Wears Prada 2, and shinning up a wall in Times

Square in New York to promote a film that is basically an instructional climbing video with a serial killer subplot. I mean, it works for me. And, while it probably doesn’t need saying that Apex isn’t Citizen Kane, it is a thoroughly enjoyable hour and a half (the length that, by law, all films should be) and an antidote to the current news cycle. Theron plays Sasha, a serious climber who, after a tragic accident on a mountain in Norway, goes on a solo camping trip to Australia where she enjoys the typical backpacker experience: being chased through the bush by a psychotic killer (Taron Egerton) brandishing a crossbow, from whom she must escape by whitewater rafting and climbing a cliff

status in Marvel’s Eternals, and Kate Beckinsale has gone through that Liam Neeson period, during which she seemed always to be flying perpendicular on the sides of buses. With the exception of Hamilton, none of these roles worked in my view because the actors appeared too delicate and poised, too nervous of upsetting red carpet standards, which is to say too glaringly incapable of, say, genuinely kicking down a door or digging a hole in the road. (Looking at those posters of Beckinsale always made me feel tired and wonder if she had ever considered sitting down for a moment for a cup of tea.) Theron is a different beast altogether and has been ever since Mad

Max: Fury Road, the 2015 movie in which she appeared shaven-headed and built like an outhouse, an appearance of toughness that just doesn’t work if you’re an actor who has taken too many GLP-1s. While promoting Apex, Theron has been at pains to point out that she had a stunt double for the kayaking scenes, but she did most of the climbing herself, and it’s a whole look, one she doubled down on at the Apex premiere in New York last week by wearing what a friend points out was a men’s suit by Dior. For those of us who are into that sort of thing, it was certainly noted and appreciated. Of course, Theron has certain genetic advantages when it comes to being an action hero, not least

what she once memorably described as her “big Dutch face” and the ability to build muscle. And, while the fact she is only four months older than me is, on one level, a bitter pill to swallow given



how out of breath I am after two flights of stairs, on the other hand it gives me hope: if I can get to the gym more than twice every three weeks, who knows what may still be possible?

Q4, analysts predict double-digit gains for three financial stocks with a “buy” recommendation



Mumbai: Strong March quarter earnings are reinforcing confidence in select housing finance and lending companies, with brokerages pointing to a combination of margin expansion, steady loan growth and controlled credit costs as key triggers for ‘Buy’ calls. Reports released after Q4FY26 show that companies such as Mahindra & Mahindra Financial Services, Larsen & Toubro Finance and Shriram Finance deliver stable to improved profitability even as parts of the rural and microfinance segments remain under watch. Analysts are backing companies that show consistency in execution, diversified portfolios and improving return ratios, with target prices implying upside of up to 20%.Margin expansion and steady credit trends support ‘Buy’ calls Nuvama retains a ‘Buy’ rating on L&T Finance with a target price of Rs 350, indicating an upside of about 20% from the current price of Rs 292The brokerage says net interest margins improve to 8.78% in Q4FY26 from 8.58% in Q3FY26, driven by lower cost of funds and better yields. Credit cost declines to 2.64% from 2.83% sequentially, reflecting improving asset quality. Loan growth remains strong with the book expanding 25% year on year, while disbursements record sharp growth across segments.The March quarter shows improving operating performance across lending companies, with

margins expanding and cost ratios improving. Credit costs decline or remain within guided ranges, supported by better collections and underwriting. While growth in assets under management varies across players, brokerages say diversification into retail and higher yielding segments is supporting earnings. JM Financial Ltd. upgrades Mahindra and Mahindra Financial Services to assets at around 3.4%. The company builds a prudential overlay of about Rs 217 crore during the quarter, strengthening buffers while underlying stress remains contained.“Operating performance remained strong with MMFS delivering PPOP growth of 42% year on year driven by improved cost efficiency and margin expansion,”

JM Financial says. “Strong loan and disbursement growth; beat on NIM,” Nuvama adds. “Steady margins and cost discipline to support earnings trajectory,” Axis says.The brokerage notes that asset quality remains broadly stable, with gross non performing assets at 4.58% versus 4.54% in the previous quarter, while credit costs remain contained despite marginal pressure in some segments

Net interest income grows 21.3% year on year to Rs 6,751 crore, while margins remain stable at 8.61%. Cost discipline improves with the cost to income ratio easing to 26.0% from 30.5% year on year, supporting profitability.

HUL shares slip 3% despite 20% growth in Q4 PAT; ₹22 dividend declared

New Delhi: HUL share price today: Shares of FMCG major Hindustan Unilever Ltd (HUL) slipped over 3 per cent in today’s trade after the company reported its Q4FY26 results, with profit after tax (PAT) surging 20 per cent year-on-year (Y-o-Y).

As of 11 AM, HUL shares were down 2.9 per cent at ₹2,247 on the National Stock Exchange (NSE) with 2.5 million equities changing hands. HUL Q4 results FY2026 For the entire fiscal year 2026 (FY26), the company reported a profit of ₹15,059 crore (including gains from divestment in Nutritionalab Pvt Ltd in the fourth quarter), while total income rose 4.6 per cent to

₹65,219 crore. Priya Nair, CEO and MD, HUL, in a statement said that FY2026 witnessed an improved demand environment driven by supportive macro-economic policies. During the year, HUL took decisive actions to accelerate growth, including sharpening the portfolio, scaling investments, strengthening frontline demand generation capabilities, and simplifying the organisation to drive speed, focus, and execution.According to an exchange filing, the Horlicks maker’s consolidated PAT stood at ₹2,992 crore in the March quarter. The company had earned a net profit of ₹2,464 in the corresponding quarter a year ago. The firm’s

revenue from operations stood at ₹16,172 crore in the reporting quarter as against ₹16,172 crore a year ago. This translates into an increase of 8.13 per cent Y-o-Y. This was “driven by 6 per cent Underlying Volume Growth,” HUL said in its earnings statement.

HUL’s Ebitda stood at ₹3,841 crore in the quarter uner review, which grew 6 per cent Y-o-Y, while Ebitda margin stood at 23.7 per cent.HUL’s total expenses came in at ₹16,615 crore, up 7.2 per cent from the same quarter in the last fiscal. Its total income, which includes other income, was up 5.01 per cent to ₹16,580 crore.

RIL shares in focus: Jio IPO timeline & retail surge two big catalysts ahead

New Delhi: The Reliance Industries (RIL) share price will stay in focus today. The oil-to-chemicals to new energy conglomerate declared its Q4 results. Its consolidated net profit declined 12.6% year-on-year (YoY) to Rs 16,971 crore in Q4FY26, compared with Rs 19,407 crore reported in Q4FY25. Sequentially, the net profit fell 9% from Rs 18,645 crore.

Jio, retail to drive growth at RIL, say brokerages; O2C to see moderate growthThe company’s consolidated revenue came in at Rs 2.94 lakh crore, up 12.6% YoY, as against Rs 2.61 lakh crore, while it stood at Rs 2.65 lakh crore, QoQ.The company’s consolidated EBITDA was Rs 44,141 crore, compared to Rs 43,832 crore, 0.7% YoY. It was at Rs 46,018 crore in Q3FY26.The consolidated EBITDA margin narrowed to 15% from 16.8% in Q4FY25 and 17.4%, QoQ.Due to the higher feedstock prices caused by the disruption in global energy markets, the

Mukesh Ambani-led firm reported a double-digit drop in net profit YoY. The earnings for the fourth quarter of FY26 reflect the dangerous impact of the continuing West Asia conflict on Indian companies’ operations and earnings For the whole of FY26, RIL’s consolidated net profit surged by 16% to Rs 80,775 crore, and net sales rose 9.6% to Rs 10.57 lakh crore over the last year. This is the first instance of any Indian firm reporting an annual revenue of more than Rs 10 lakh crore. However, India’s most valuable company, with a market capitalisation of nearly Rs 18 trillion, witnessed its steepest earnings fall in the last 13 quarters. RIL’s consolidated net profit had previously declined 14.9% YoY in the third quarter of FY23. If you want to read in detail about the earnings of Reliance Industries, you can read on this link. RIL – Retail Business

Reliance Retail Ventures’ net revenue grew 11% YoY, and was higher at 14% YoY on a comparable basis

(adjusted for FMCG demerger from December 2025).

Quick commerce (QC) offering, JioMart, has scaled up rapidly, with the number of daily average orders rising 29% QoQ (4x YoY) as hyperlocal deliveries scaled up to electronics and fashion & lifestyle categories, with a 2-hour delivery promise. “I am happy to note that we are advancing steadily towards the listing of Jio Platforms. This will mark a defining milestone in its journey as it continues to scale new heights and contribute to India’s digital future,” said Mukesh Ambani. Reliance Jio reported 12.6% YoY revenue growth in the March quarter. Reliance Jio reported a revenue of Rs 38,259 crore in Q4 FY26, up from Rs 33,986 crore in Q4 FY25. The vertical’s profit also grew 13% YOY to Rs 33,986 crore. Motilal Oswal on Reliance Industries

The domestic brokerage house has slashed the target price on Reliance Industries to Rs 1,655 from

Rs 1,715, still implying an upside of over 25% from the current market price. However, it maintained its ‘Buy’ rating on the stock.

“While the energy business weakness drives the near-term earnings downgrade, sustained mid-to-high teen growth in Reliance Retail and a tariff hike, along with the impending Jio Platforms IPO, remain the key triggers for RIL’s stock price,” said the brokerage. RIL reported a subdued Q4, with consolidated EBITDA declining 4% QoQ, primarily driven by weaker profitability in the Energy business due to the disruptions caused by the West Asia conflict. However, the company’s consumer-facing businesses remained resilient.On the other hand, Reliance Retail’s revenue growth picked up to 11% YoY, though EBITDA growth was modest at 3% YoY, as margins contracted 60 basis points YoY due to the ramp-up of low-margin hyper-local deliveries.

IEX, YES Bank shares among FIIs bought in Q4 but Eternal, ITC, Aditya Birla Fashion saw outflows

Mumbai: Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) have shuffled their portfolios in the March quarter (Q4FY26), picking up stakes in counters like Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) and Polycab India Ltd, while trimming stakes in index heavyweights such as Tata Consultancy Services Ltd (TCS), Infosys Ltd, and ITC Ltd. According to HDFC Institutional Equities’ latest shareholding tracker, data revealed that foreign money chased select sectors and some heavyweight names. In the banking space, YES Bank Ltd, among select stocks, saw its FII holding rise to 46.4 per cent in the March quarter from 45.7 per cent in the December quarter (Q3FY26). BPCL witnessed overseas investors raising their stake to 19.6 per cent from 18.5 per cent QoQ. Similarly, in Polycab India, FIIs raised their stake significantly to 18.2 per cent from 14.8 per cent in the previous quarter. Hitachi Energy Ltd saw foreign shareholders climb to 11.7 per cent in Q4FY26 from 10.7 percent



in Q3FY26. Meanwhile, for the Indian Energy Exchange Ltd (IEX), FIIs upped their holdings to 14.2 per cent from 11.4 per cent. On the flip side, FIIs trimmed their exposure to several key names. Kotak Mahindra Bank Ltd saw its FII shareholding

dip to 26.4 per cent in the March quarter from 29.4 per cent in December. In the FMCG pack, ITC witnessed foreign investors paring their stake to 34.8 per cent from 36.1 per cent in the previous quarter. Top-tier IT majors also saw ownership di-

lution from foreign funds. FII holding in Infosys fell to 28.5 per cent from 30.3 per cent QoQ, while in TCS, it dropped to 9.7 per cent from 10.4 per cent. Aditya Birla Fashion & Retail Ltd, FII stake reduction to 15.5 per cent from 18.4 per cent. Eternal Ltd also saw a cut, with foreign investors bringing down their holding to 32.6 per cent from 36.2 per cent. “Proportion of FIIs holdings have increased YoY in commodities , telecom, infra and chemicals but declined in BFSI, FMCG, new age, realty and IT. QoQ increase in holdings were observed in commodities and power,” HDFC Institutional Equities said. According to HDFC’s research report, the “Absolute portfolio value of DII category has surpassed that of FIIs in Q4FY25, and the same trend is gaining strength every quarter post the crossover”. By the end of Q4FY26, the portfolio value of DII holdings stood at Rs 72 lakh crore and FII holdings, which were valued at Rs 62 lakh crore, the research report showed.

Trent bonus shares, dividend: Tata stock up 30% in a month

New Delhi: Trent bonus issue record date: Tata Group stock Trent Ltd has been on a roll in April as the retail chain major has gained more than 30 per cent the last one month. The company has also announced the record date for the issue of its bonus shares and dividend, which were announced along with the quarterly results. Shares of Trent have risen more than 30 per cent in the last one month from Rs 3,295 levels to top Rs 4,300-mark on Wednesday. The total market capitalization of the company stood above Rs 1.55 lakh crore. However, the stock is still down 32 per cent from its 52-week high at Rs 6,259, hit in June 2025.

Corporate actions in Trent: dividend and bonus issueTrent had announced a dividend of Rs 6 per share, or 600 per cent (for each share with a face value of Re 1), along with its earnings a week ago, on April 22. Besides this, the Tata group firm also announced a bonus issue in 1:2 ratio for the eligible shareholders of the company. Trent also announced to raise Rs 2,500 crore via rights issue for expansion plans. The board of directors have fixed the record date as June 10, 2026 (Wednesday) for payment of dividend, subject to approval of shareholders at the AGM, which is scheduled to be held on June 23, 2026. If the dividend on equity shares is approved at the bonus equity shares in the proportion of 1:2. It means that one equity share as bonus share for every two \$2 billion Airtel Money IPO in the offing? What we know so far

existing fully paid up equity shares held by the members of the Company, subject to statutory and regulatory approvals, said the company in a separate exchange filing. Retail expansion to sustain with fundraising on cards: Management is confident of long-term structural growth and will continue to invest in retail expansion and brands. Incremental investments will be made to expand the hyper market brand - Star Bazaar and new brands such as Burn Toast in the coming years, said ICICIDirect Research with a ‘buy’ rating and a target price of Rs 5,075.Trent reported a net profit at Rs 455 crore in the March 2026 quarter, rising 30 per cent on year-on-year (YoY) basis. Its revenue from operations increased 20 per cent YoY to Rs 4,937 crore and operating profit stood at Rs 668 crore, up 43 per cent on a yearly comparison. Operating margins improved Q4FY26, it opened 23 Westside and 109 Zudio stores (including 2 stores in the UAE) and consolidated 1 Westside store and expanded its presence to 47 new cities.

OnEMI Technology IPO to open Check price band

New Delhi: while investors will offload over 44 lakh shares aggregating to Rs 75.92 crore. This brings the total issue size at Rs 925.92 crore. The share allotment is expected to be finalized just a day after bidding closure, i.e. For Big non-institutional investors the lot size stands at 68, valued at Rs 10,11,636. According to the company’s DRHP, it will utilize

the majority of its fresh proceeds towards funding the growth of its subsidiary. Of the total fresh float, Rs 750 crore will be deployed to meet the capital requirements of its subsidiary, OnEMI Tech will open its IPO for public bidding on Thursday, April 30, and bid for three days with the May 1 in observance of Maharashtra Day so no bidding will take place on that day.

58% gains in 30 days: Why this defence heavyweight is up 15%

Mumbai: The share price of Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE) grabbed market attention today, April 29, after the company reported a strong set of quarterly numbers. In the trading session today, the share price of this defence public sector undertaking (PSU) rallied sharply, rising as much as 15%.

The stock opened higher at Rs 3,100 and quickly extended gains to hit an intraday high of Rs 3,339.

The key reason behind today’s surge in the share price comes after the company announced its Q4FY26 results after market hours in the previous session.

Let’s take a look at the key reason why the share price of this defence sector stock is rallying today –Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers rallies after Q4 earnings

The surge in GRSE shares was largely driven by better-than-expected financial performance in Q4FY26. As per the regulatory filing by the company, the net profit, also known as profit after tax (PAT), rose 24% year-on-year to Rs 303.19 crore, compared to Rs 244.24 crore in the same period last year. Revenue growth also



saw momentum. The company posted a 29% jump in revenue from core operations. This stood at Rs 2,119.21 crore for the quarter, up from Rs 1,642.03 crore a year ago.

Looking at the operating level, performance was firm. Earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortisation (EBITDA) rose sharply, and margins improved to 16.8% from 13.4% in the same quarter last year.

GRSE: Cost control adds to profit-

abilityOne of the key highlights in the results was a decline in input costs. The company’s expenses on inputs fell 22% year-on-year to Rs 811.50 crore. In addition to this, the earnings per share (EPS), increased to Rs 26.47 compared to Rs 21.32 a year ago.GRSE Dividend announcement

Alongside the headline numbers, this defence sector company also announced a final dividend for shareholders.

Iraqi leaders must strike a balance as the dispute with Iran reveals significant divisions

Iraq: Of all the nations drawn into the US-Israeli assault on Iran, Iraq is the one where the battle has revealed some of the deepest divisions. Iraq still has the psychological and physical wounds from the previous time the Americans attempted to use force to change the region.Cutting across state institutions, the armed forces, and Shia Islamist parties, the war is splitting those who see the attacks on Iran as a means of ending Tehran’s long-standing influence over Iraqi politics from the self-declared loyalists of the Islamic republic. The fact that the battle began during a fragile political vacuum in Iraq following the resignation of caretaker leader Mohammed Shia al-Sudani, whose coalition secured the majority of seats in November’s parliamentary elections, has increased tensions.Parts of the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, an umbrella organization of armed groups supported by Iran, promised to drag the United States into a protracted war of attrition that would “leave no American presence in the region generally, especially in Iraq” just hours after Iran’s supreme leader Ali Khamenei was killed at the beginning of the conflict. Numerous drone and missile attacks on targets in Iraq and neighboring countries, including the US base in Erbil and the city’s international airport, Camp Victoria close to Baghdad’s international airport, and US oil company compounds in Basra and northern Iraq, have been attributed to the group. As a result, the country was forced to halt production in large oilfields.In retaliation, unclaimed airstrikes that have been widely attributed to US and Israeli forces have targeted positions throughout the nation, including in Jurf al-Sakhar, south of Baghdad, a stronghold for Kataib Hezbollah, one of the main pro-Iranian factions, as well as bases for other resistance forces in the country’s north and south, killing numerous fighters and six commanders. In Mosul, videos purported to show attack helicopters firing on checkpoints, while Iraqi army units were struck by as yet unknown forces in the western desert, killing one soldier and wounding three. In another sign that Iraq is being dragged further into the war, the US embassy in Baghdad’s green zone has been attacked repeatedly and it warned on Thursday that pro-Iran armed groups in Iraq might attack other parts of the city in the coming days. Kataib Hezbollah is also suspected to have been responsible for the abduction of a US reporter, Shelly Kittleson, late on Tuesday.The frequency of attacks had declined in recent days after Kataib Hezbollah declared a pause. But the group did not announce an extension on Wednesday night when the pause expired.The Iraqi government had sought to pursue an “Iraq first” policy, largely staying out of the post-7 October wars convulsing the region and trying to project an image of security services in control.As the



conflict expands, Iraqi leaders have been trying to continue their balancing act, on one hand denouncing the killing of Khamenei and sending official condolences, while on the other rejecting attempts by Tehran to drag Iraq into the conflict, calling on security forces to go after those who threatened “diplomatic missions and oilfields”, and even going as far as firing a number of military and intelligence officers.But this balancing act is complicated by the fact that pro-Iran groups are also members of the PMU (Popular Mobilisation Units), a sprawling institution that is in theory part of the official army and under the authority of the commander-in-chief, but in reality operates according to its own agenda. These factions claim resistance legitimacy when attacking US targets, then denounce the strikes on their PMU brigade bases as attacks on Iraqi sovereignty. This contradiction exposes the weakness of the state, and the absurdity is not lost on Iraqis, with a joke circulating that while the US and Israel were attacking Iran, and Iran was attacking Israel and the Gulf countries, only Iraq was being bombed by everyone: Israel, the US, Iran, and Iraqis themselves.Though Washington and Baghdad have claimed to “intensify co-operation” to prevent attacks and ensure Iraqi territory is not used to launch assaults against US facilities, the US has blamed the Iraqi government for failing to prevent “terrorist attacks in or from Iraqi territory”. “Iran-aligned terrorist militia groups may claim to be associated with the Iraqi government,” the US embassy said.The Pentagon has said helicopters have carried out strikes against pro-Iran armed groups in Iraq during the war. Washington has strongly denied claims it has targeted Iraqi security forces.Furthermore, a looming financial disaster hangs over Iraq as a consequence of the crisis over the strait of Hormuz and the loss of oil revenue, which accounts for more than 90% of the country’s budget. Even before the latest escalation, US pressure and the threat of sanctions had forced some members of the pro-Iran Shia alliance in Iraq’s parliament, known as the Coordination Framework, to distance themselves from the more militant factions, fearing US economic and financial sanctions that could restrict the Iraqi state’s access to dollars – which in

turn would cripple its ability to pay salaries and threaten their balancing act, on one hand denouncing the killing of Khamenei and sending official condolences, while on the other rejecting attempts by Tehran to drag Iraq into the conflict, calling on security forces to go after those who threatened “diplomatic missions and oilfields”, and even going as far as firing a number of military and intelligence officers. But this balancing act is complicated by the fact that pro-Iran groups are also members of the PMU (Popular Mobilisation Units), a sprawling institution that is in theory part of the official army and under the authority of the commander-in-chief, but in reality operates according to its own agenda. These factions claim resistance legitimacy when attacking US targets, then denounce the strikes on their PMU brigade bases as attacks on Iraqi sovereignty. This contradiction exposes the weakness of the state, and the absurdity is not lost on Iraqis, with a joke circulating that while the US and Israel were attacking Iran, and Iran was attacking Israel and the Gulf countries, only Iraq was being bombed by everyone: Israel, the US, Iran, and Iraqis themselves. Though Washington and Baghdad have claimed to “intensify co-operation” to prevent attacks and ensure Iraqi territory is not used to launch assaults against US facilities, the US has blamed the Iraqi government for failing to prevent “terrorist attacks in or from Iraqi territory”. “Iran-aligned terrorist militia groups may claim to be associated with the Iraqi government,” the US embassy said. The Pentagon has said helicopters have carried out strikes against pro-Iran armed groups in Iraq during the war. Washington has strongly denied claims it has targeted Iraqi security forces. Furthermore, a looming financial disaster hangs over Iraq as a consequence of the crisis over the strait of Hormuz and the loss of oil revenue, which accounts for more than 90% of the country’s budget. Even before the latest escalation, US pressure and the threat of sanctions had forced some members of the pro-Iran Shia alliance in Iraq’s parliament, known as the Coordination Framework, to distance themselves from the more militant factions, fearing US economic and financial sanctions that could restrict the Iraqi state’s access to dollars – which in

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Put an end to euphemisms Trump is speaking viciously and openly about Iran

Washington: Donald Trump declared on March 23 that “we just keep bombing our little hearts out” if things in Iran didn’t go his way. “You never know with Iran because we negotiate with them and then we always have to blow them up,” the US president said to reporters on Air Force One a week later.Pete Hegseth reported “death and destruction from the sky all day long” on March 4 while wriggling with ecstasy. What became of the nuanced art of political euphemism? The United States did not rename its Department of War to “defense” until after World War II, while the United Kingdom had a secretary at war long before it had a minister of defense. When Trump and Hegseth said that “department of war” would be its new moniker, people laughed, but it may be charitably interpreted as a masculine reluctance to hold back. After all, not all of the US military’s numerous overseas operations since 1945 have been solely defensive. Operation Just Cause was the name given to the US invasion of Panama in 1989, while Operation Iraqi Freedom, as everyone knows with nostalgia, was the name given to the most recent Gulf War. Operation Epic Fury, the current war’s name, certainly seems more like a teenage boy’s conception of Armageddon from a comic book. However, even the term “operation” is a euphemism—these are not medical exercises—and Trump refuses to refer to his conflict as a war since doing so would raise awkward concerns regarding Congress’s approval. Instead, Trump describes it as “our lovely ‘stay’ in Iran” or a “excursion.” Vladimir Putin would support his four-year conflict with Ukraine, which he refers to as a “special military operation.” The opposite of a euphemism is a dysphemism: a name for something that makes it sound maximally horrible. Politicians normally use dysphemisms for their opponents: people might be labelled “terrorists” or “fascists”, already engaged in “genocide” or threatening to nuke London within 15 minutes. The Trump administration, however, revels in the use of dysphemism for its own actions. “This was never meant to be a fair fight, and it is not a fair fight,” Hegseth said on 4 March. “We are punching them while they’re down, which is exactly how it should be.”

The following week, Trump posted on Truth Social: “Watch what happens to these deranged scumbags [ie, Iranians] today. They’ve been killing innocent people all over the world for 47 years, and now I, as the 47th President of the United States of America, am killing them.



What a great honor it is to do so!” The crudity, here, is the point. Sociolinguists say that the use of dysphemism violates social norms and taboos, and Trump is nothing if not the taboo-buster-in-chief. Do I endorse war crimes, by threatening to bomb Iran’s desalination plants? Very well then, I endorse war crimes. Who cares? Hegseth, meanwhile, announced a policy of giving “no quarter” to the enemy, ie refusing to take prisoners, which is itself another war crime. The “secretary of war”, especially, is addicted to virtue signalling, as long as the virtue being signalled is martial.His favourite term is “lethality”; he loves telling the armed forces how “lethal” they are. “We are not defenders any more,” he announced gleefully.

“We are warriors: trained to kill the enemy and break their will.” (It might seem excessive to break their will after killing them, but why settle for half measures?) He seemed to experience a sadistic pleasure in announcing the sinking of an Iranian warship by a US torpedo, enjoying the idea of the doomed crew’s “quiet death”.This sort of unabashed viciousness is part of the appeal of the Maga administration for its fans, and might seem like a refreshing return to plain speaking. But you can, of course, speak plainly while lying. (“The great enemy of clear language is insincerity,” claimed George Orwell. Well, who is more insincere than Trump?) And Trump and Hegseth’s vivid wallowings in industrial ultraviolence

are in reality no more honest than regular political dissembling. After all, if your focus is on destruction as a virtue in itself, does it really matter what you blow up and who you kill? The goal, as Hegseth described it, is to “unleash” American “lethality”, not to “shackle” it, as though the US armed forces are a dangerous dog that deserves to roam free across the globe, pursuing its own savage instincts wherever it turns.But while this maniacal, no-bullshit posturing, this chest-beating fiesta of blood and guts, takes centre stage, the real bullshit – of geopolitical miscalculation and cynical profiteering – seems to be simply swept under the carpet.

The Financial Times reports that a broker acting for Hegseth sought to invest in US military companies before the war. Trump told the same paper: “My favourite thing is to take the oil in Iran.”.The current landing page of the White House’s website, by contrast, celebrates Trump’s accomplishments so far in terms of the finest obfuscation: “Abroad, a doctrine of peace through strength has secured alliances, ended eight wars, and positioned America as an indispensable force for global stability.” Peace through strength, is it? As the party in Nineteen Eighty-Four insisted: “War is peace”.What do Trump and Hegseth really want? One answer is: to enrich Trump and Hegseth. But if their real aim all along was simply to troll the shade of Orwell, they are doing an absolutely lethal job.

To what extent is the United States protected from the Gulf oil supply crisis

Iran: About a fifth of the world’s oil supplies normally pass through the Strait of Hormuz, which was virtually closed a month ago due to the US and Israel’s war on Iran. Fears of a prolonged disruption to global supplies have caused prices to soar. Donald Trump claims that this is not an issue facing his nation. Earlier this week, the Trump advised nations, including the UK, to “get your own oil.” He said the United States has “plenty.” In a prime-time speech on Wednesday, the president asserted that the United States is “totally independent” of the Middle East. “We don’t require their oil.” “We are [the] world’s top producer of gas and oil under my leadership, without even talking about the millions of barrels we’re getting from Venezuela,” he declared. Following a historic increase in domestic oil production brought on by the fracking boom, Trump and his friends celebrate the US as an energy “superpower.” It has been producing more oil than the entire nation uses for years.However, the oil market is essentially global.Unlike natural gas – another crucial energy source – for which prices can vary drastically in different parts of the world, the oil market is far more interconnected. The European Dutch title transfer facility (TTF) price is currently trading at \$16, while the US benchmark

price for gas, known as the Henry hub, is currently less than \$3 per million British thermal units (MMBtu). An increase in prices in Europe doesn’t always translate across the Atlantic.Gas is more difficult to transport than oil, according to Clark Williams-Derry, an economist with the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis. “A drum cannot simply be filled with gas and then relocated.”Rarely are significant changes in oil prices limited to one area. The worldwide benchmark, Brent crude, has increased by over half from the beginning of the conflict to more than \$100 per barrel, and it increased significantly following Trump’s most recent speech. “Think of it like a giant swimming pool,” said Williams-Derry. “There are waves or ripples, but the whole swimming pool rises or falls. The fundamental level is set by the global market.”“Under current policy, being a net exporter doesn’t do anything to cushion the US from global price trends,” he added.The US does export more oil than it imports. But it still imports millions of barrels per day, and relied on Gulf nations for almost a tenth of those imports last year. Many US refineries are geared up to process heavier crude than the lighter, sweeter stuff primarily produced domestically in the US. The energy supply disruption sparked by the war on Iran goes far beyond oil.

Global fertilizer costs have risen sharply, prompting US farmers to reconsider their planned crops, as the strait of Hormuz remains paralyzed. A small but significant share of US fertilizer imports come from the Middle East.Qatar typically supplies about a third of the world’s helium, which plays a key role in the manufacturing of semiconductors. But the country halted output last month – a potentially worrying move for chipmakers and the many industries that rely on them.But for now, oil remains the most visible indicator of the turmoil. Simply being a net exporter “doesn’t differentially protect American households” from higher prices, said Neale Mahoney, Trione director of the Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research.“Because of the oil [price] increasing, it is going to be beneficial to certain sectors of the US economy – the energy production sectors – and certain states within the US: Texas, New Mexico, North Dakota, big energy-producing states,” he added. “While it doesn’t protect the US consumer, and US consumers will be feeling the squeeze, there are winners as well as losers in the US.”But the rally of big oil stocks this year will do little to cheer most drivers filling up at gas stations across the US. Average nationwide fuel prices breached \$4 per gallon for the first time since 2022

In light of the war in Iran, Starmer’s cost of living advisor advises him to prolong the fuel duty cut

London : The government’s cost of living champion has stated that a fuel duty reduction should be extended to account for the increase in gas prices.Given the Middle East turmoil, Keir Starmer was persuaded by Richard Walker, executive chair of the grocery chain Iceland, not to hike the fee in September.Since the US and Israel attacked Iran at the end of February, the strait of Hormuz, a vital trade

route between the Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, has been blockaded.The blockade of the strait, which transports a fifth of the world’s oil, has caused prices to skyrocket, straining the global economy. The government will evaluate any increase in fuel duty after it is frozen until September. Other nations, like Australia, have already taken action to protect drivers from skyrocketing prices.“The

5p fuel duty cut that you allude to is an interesting one,” said Lord Walker, a Labour peer who received the cost of living brief from Starmer in February, on BBC Radio 4’s Today programme on Friday. That will run out in September. Given our current situation, I believe we should be considering and discussing expanding or enlarging it.It’s interesting to note that the Australian government has reduced

their fuel tax by 14p per litre. This cut is 5p, after all. In March 2022, the previous Conservative administration reduced fuel duty by 5p per litre.In her November budget, Chancellor Rachel Reeves stated that this would be prolonged until August, after which rates will progressively rise over a five-year period. In light of the conflict, Starmer has stated that the September increase would be kept “under review.”

NASA rover uncovers rock with 7 new organic molecules on Mars — the ‘most diverse collection’ ever seen



The new analysis, published April 21 in the journal Nature Communications, shows that the rock sample included 21 carbon-containing molecules, including seven never seen before on the Red Planet. The newly found molecules included nitrogen heterocycle (a predecessor to RNA and DNA) as well as benzothio-
phene, which may have been key to bringing life-friendly chemistry to solar system planets aboard meteorites, the authors wrote.The sample was nicknamed “Mary Anning 3,” after the English paleontologist famous for discovering the first fossil ichthyosaur and plesiosaur. Much like the aquatic fossil environments Anning sought out, the Martian organics were found in an area of Mars that was teeming with lakes and streams before the planet dried out billions of years ago. “This oasis surged and dried up multiple times in the planet’s ancient past, eventually enriching the area with clay minerals, which are especially good at preserving organic compounds,” JPL officials wrote. Last year, Curiosity also found the largest-ever organic molecules on Mars. These were “long-chain” hydrocarbons, including decane, undecane and dodecane. These organic finds in 2020 and 2025 used an instrument on Curiosity called Sample Analysis at Mars (SAM). Curiosity first drills rocks using

its robotic arm. Then, it turns the rocks into powder samples and lets the powder fall into SAM. The instrument contains a high-temperature oven that heats up the powder, allowing the compositions of the gases inside the rover to be measured.SAM also contains small cups of solvent that can perform “wet chemistry.” The Mary Anning 3 sample was the first to use tetramethylammonium hydroxide (TMAH) — a substance that breaks apart organic molecules, of which Curiosity only carries two cups — because the sample was considered of the highest value. Curiosity’s findings were verified on Earth using a space rock that’s well known to science, the Murchison meteorite, which is 4 billion years old and includes organic molecules.“A Murchison sample exposed to TMAH was found to break much larger molecules into some of the ones seen in Mary Anning 3, including benzothiophene,” JPL officials wrote. “That result verifies that the Martian molecules found in Mary Anning 3 could have been generated from the breakdown of even more complex compounds relevant to life.”Curiosity, which has been on Mars since 2012, recently used its last TMAH cup on “weblike boxwork ridges, which were formed by ancient groundwater,” according to JPL. The results will be written up in a future study.

Astronomers just mapped one of the largest structures in the universe, long hidden behind the Milky Way’s ‘Zone of Avoidance’

Their findings revealed that the structure is around 300 million light-years across — about 3,000 times wider than the Milky Way — and contains an enormous amount of matter equivalent to about 30 quadrillion suns, the researchers wrote in a statement. The new map also shows that most of this mass is distributed into two cores that are moving toward each other. The team was “delighted” to confirm that the supercluster is “a coherent large-scale structure comparable in size and mass to some of the largest and well-known superclusters in the local universe,” study co-author Renee Kraan-Korteweg, an astronomer at the University of Cape Town who specializes in the Zone of Avoidance, told Live Science in an email.

The Vela Supercluster now ranks as more massive than Lani  kea, the supercluster that contains Earth and the rest of our galaxy, and is “a close second” to the Shapley Supercluster, which is widely considered the largest supercluster of galaxies, Kraan-Korteweg said. (Other structures, such as the Hercules-Corona Borealis Great Wall and the recently discovered “Quipu,” are even larger, but they are considered a step above a supercluster — essentially, clusters of superclusters.) The researchers also gave the supercluster a new nickname: Vela-Banzi, which means “revealing widely” in the Xhosa language used by Indigenous people in South Africa, where most of the telescopes used in the study are based. The Zone of Avoidance has



long frustrated astronomers who want to know what lies behind the thick disk of stars, gas and dust of the Milky Way, which covers up to 20% of the visible night sky. “The millions/billions of stars forming the disk are so dense [and so] close to the galactic plane that we cannot easily see through it,” Kraan-Korteweg wrote. “Moreover, where we have stars, we also have lots of minuscule dust particles, and like the stars, this dust layer gets thicker and thicker as you approach the

plane.” To get around this, the researchers combined 65,000 existing galaxy distance measurements with around 8,000 new redshift observations of other galaxies. (Redshift measures how fast something is moving away from Earth by calculating how much its light has been stretched by the expansion of the universe.) Of these observations, the most important were around 2,000 redshift measurements captured by South Africa’s MeerKAT telescope, which de-

fects radio waves shining from the giant clouds of hydrogen gas that permeate most galaxies. This allowed the team to take direct measurements of galaxy movements within Vela that had never been seen in visible light. The researchers think it may be possible to create more accurate maps of the Vela Supercluster with more powerful radio telescopes in the future. However, not all galaxies contain large amounts of hydrogen that we can see, so parts of the structure will likely always

“remain partly shrouded to us,” Kraan-Korteweg said. A better understanding of the largest structures in the universe will help astronomers confirm their models of cosmology. However, to do this, they need to know both the size and the speed of these objects, which is why the new findings are so exciting.“To understand the one, we need to know the other,” Kraan-Korteweg said. “And if we have both, we will be [able] to check if we can reconcile these observations with the models of the universe.”

Prenatal surgery for spina bifida may get a boost from stem cells

For the first time, doctors have used stem cells to try and repair the spinal cords of human fetuses in the womb.The new technique attempts to heal nerve damage caused by spina bifida, a disabling birth defect. In this condition, the bony tissue of a fetus’s spine doesn’t knit together properly around the spinal cord. That can cause a kaleidoscope of medical issues, including lifelong paralysis and bladder and bowel problems. Traditional fetal surgery to patch up the spine can limit the scope of these problems — but it does not repair nerve damage that has already occurred. Adding living stem cells to the procedure might. At least, that’s the goal of fetal surgeon Diana Farmer’s team. So far, the approach appears to be safe, the researchers reported earlier this year in theLancet. In six fetal patients with severe spina bifida, applying a stem cell–loaded patch to their exposed spinal cords did not cause infection, tumor growth or interfere with healing. That’s important because “no one knew what stem cells would do inside a fetus,” says Farmer, of the University of California, Davis.For now, the vital question — whether the technique mends fetal spinal cords — remains unanswered. That’s because researchers are still performing follow-up assessments of the patients, who are now toddlers. At this stage, it’s too early to say how well the surgery worked, and Farmer is careful not to speculate. “If we could get every kid to not be in a wheelchair,” she says, “that would be fantastic.” But the team won’t know for a few years. Until then, Farmer says, she doesn’t want to give people false hope.In some ways, this study represents “a seismic shift” in the field, says Ramen Chmait, director of Los Angeles Fetal Surgery at the University of Southern California,

who was not involved with the work. If the technique pans out, he says, it “could be a huge, important step in modern-day medicine.”Maternal fetal medicine specialist Magdalena Sanz Cortes echoes the sentiment in a commentary that accompanied Farmer’s study. “We eagerly await follow-up results and definitive studies that might show benefit,” writes Sanz Cortes, of Baylor College of Medicine in Houston. “Such results would herald a new era in fetal surgery.”First, doctors will need to better understand the procedure’s risks and benefits. At this point, Chmait says, Farmer’s team has taken the “first step of a marathon.” In the United States, roughly 1 in every 2,800 babies are born with spina bifida. This abnormality leaves the delicate spinal cord exposed in the womb. Without the bony protection of the vertebrae, the spinal cord can bulge through the back, making it especially vulnerable to injury. Like a chemical that burns, amniotic fluid washing over the open spinal cord can degrade it. And as the baby grows, it rubs against the walls of the uterus, damaging unprotected nerve cells. Beyond paralysis and other serious problems, this damage can cause fluid to build up in the brain. Some babies require a shunt surgically implanted in the days or weeks after birth for drainage. That can be lifesaving, but it’s also lifelong — a permanent implant that can malfunction or spur infection. One way to avoid the shunt, and potentially some of the nerve damage accrued during pregnancy, is to surgically close the hole in the fetus’s spine in the womb. That was the conclusion of a landmark clinical trial 15 years ago that compared surgery done before and after birth. Prenatal surgery cut the need for shunts in half and doubled the chance of being able



to walk without leg braces or other devices, Farmer’s team reported in the New England Journal of Medicine. In utero repair is now the standard of care for severe spina bifida. But as well as it works, “there’s a lot of room for improvement,” Chmait says. Although kids who underwent prenatal surgery saw some gains in leg movement, most were still unable to walk.“That’s why we went back to the lab,” Farmer says. Farmer didn’t just want to close the spinal defect — she sought to fix the damage that had already been done. She thought stem cells might be the key. Scientists had already known that stem cells could renew themselves and repair tissues.Farmer hoped to tap into the cells’ regenerative powers to restore dying nerve cells. She

brought the question to UC Davis bioengineer Aijun Wang’s lab. “How can we design a stem cell product to help neurons survive better?” he remembers her asking.That kicked off a scientific odyssey that would span more than a decade and take the researchers from experiments in sheep and bulldogs, to finally, humans. Their work started with placental stem cells grown in a nutrient bath that Wang’s team engineered. The liquid prompts the cells to release a molecular concoction to protect neurons and stimulate their growth.The researchers tested the stem cells in fetal sheep with a hole in their spine like those in babies with spina bifida. During the in utero repair surgery, doctors add hundreds of thousands of stem cells to a thin, flexible patch that looks

like plastic wrap, Farmer says. Then, they use the patch to seal up the hole in the spine. The cells don’t stay forever. “We want them to get in there, do their job, deliver their magic stem cell juice, and repair that spinal cord,” Farmer says. And that’s what the cells appeared to do. Sheep given the stem cell–impregnated patch tended to score better on tests of their ability to walk, stand and move their hind legs compared with those given the cell-free patch, the team reported in the Journal of Pediatric Surgery in 2021. The technique also helped restore most animals’ bladder and bowel function, Farmer and colleagues reported in a later study.Other experiments in bulldogs born with spina bifida and treated after birth illustrate the stem cell

patch’s promise, says Chmait. The dogs, Darla and Spanky, were able to walk, run and play just months after surgery, which he calls “remarkable.” Often, dogs with the condition cannot control their hind legs. Farmer’s team is looking into how well such a postnatal approach might work. Could their technique one day help an adult who’s undergone a spinal cord injury, for instance? “We’re asking that question ourselves,” she says. Her team has started to investigate the idea in mice. Altogether, the team’s work in sheep and bulldogs has led to “significant, dramatic improvement,” says KuoJen Tsao, a pediatric surgeon at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston. And that has set the stage for the current trial in humans, which he

calls exciting but “very, very preliminary.”Farmer recognizes there’s much to do. “We’re not yet at a cure,” she says. Farmer is laser focused on one looming question. “How can we get the maximal improvement in spinal cord function?” she asks. “We will not give up.”Scientists are waiting to see how well the stem cell patch worked.Now, Farmer’s team is expanding the trial to include 35 more patients, who researchers will monitor through age 6. They’ll track long-term safety data and evaluate efficacy — if kids see improvements in movement and have some over control their bladder and bowels. If the therapy works as well as it did in sheep, Farmer says, “we would be ecstatic.” Chmait notes that the team’s surgical approach requires opening the mother’s uterus with an incision that’s larger than the ones used in most utero repair surgeries performed today, which may carry more risk for the mother. Farmer’s team used the technique so they could directly compare their data with that from the previous in utero repair trial, she says.Chmait doesn’t currently work with stem cells himself, but if the trial’s outcomes look good, he says he’s ready to learn. Tsao agrees. He’s already thinking ahead to technical and logistical issues that may arise, like how to make the surgery available to anybody who needs it. Stem cell work can be a complicated process, he says, and not every facility is capable of producing the cell-imbued patch.Tsao recognizes it will probably take years, and many more patients treated, before doctors have to address questions like that. But starting with a small group of patients, establishing safety and accumulating evidence over time is the norm for even potentially game-changing advances like this.

Yami Gautam emphasized that a move towards high-quality storytelling was reflected in Dhurandhar’s success



Mumbai: The two-part movie Dhurandhar, directed by Aditya Dhar, broke box office records and won accolades from fans, performers, and other directors. Actor Yami Gautam, Aditya’s wife, dis-

cussed how the film’s popularity has forced the industry to prioritize excellent screenplays in a recent interview with Grazia. She also disclosed whether their individual viewpoints had evolved in

the wake of the movie’s successful run. Yami discussed the industry’s changing growth curve and the significance of the movie’s success using Dhurandhar as an example. “This is why I said it was always a director’s medium—it was always script and all those basic things that make a film, a film,” she stated. The return of the fundamentals is a significant change. I don’t think Dhurandhar’s success merely tells us that a movie is doing well and setting new box office records. While we were figuring things out and playing about, we were having trouble getting people into theaters. However, crowds of moviegoers let you know that they are prepared, want you to make fantastic movies, will see them,

and will definitely return again and time again. Yami responded, “Nothing has changed us as people,” when asked if the popularity of the movie had altered her and Aditya’s personal viewpoints. That also stems from Aditya’s personality, which is incredibly modest and unaffected. I’ve witnessed him go through a variety of stages, including highs, lows, and vulnerable times, but it wasn’t as though we vented our annoyance or let it out during those times. We both have a great deal of gratitude for God, and we value spirituality and believe in the Almighty. Good individuals have good things happen to them. Your destiny may be postponed, but it will never be rejected. December of last year saw the release of the first part

of the two-part movie Dhurandhar, which starred Ranveer Singh, Akshaye Khanna, Arjun Rampal, R Madhavan, Sanjay Dutt, and Rakesh Bedi. Despite receiving mixed reviews, it went on to become a box office success, bringing in over ₹1,300 crore globally and raising hopes for the sequel. Fans’ expectations were met by the second installment, Dhurandhar: The Revenge, which was released in March 2026. In just two weeks, it exceeded its predecessor’s lifetime collection. As of right now, the movie has earned ₹1,782 crore globally and ₹1,113 crore net in India, making it the first Bollywood movie to surpass ₹1,000 crore domestically. Yami Gautam also had a brief appearance in the movie.

Kritika Kamra Discusses Her Experience on the Casting Couch



Mumbai: Actor Kritika Kamra recently discussed the difficulties she has encountered in the entertainment business, bringing attention to topics like the casting couch and prejudice against TV actors. The performer thought back on her early life and the challenges of working in Bollywood. Kritika recently talked about the casting couch, one of the most awkward topics in the business, in an interview with News18 Showsha. “I had heard about things like the casting couch,” she recalled from her early years. In the newspapers, my parents had read about it. I also came into contact with it, but I was unharmed. It was really a matter of chance and luck.”It wasn’t because I was too smart,” she continued. I wasn’t since I was quite young when I first started.” She also discussed the strongly ingrained hierarchy in the business, namely how television actors are viewed in relation to movie actors. “I’ve experienced this hierarchy,” Kritika shared her viewpoint.

I was enjoying my work on TV, and I didn’t see any distinction between it and movies. “Everyone who was on screen was an actor for me because I came from a small town,” she continued. This unspoken hierarchy, which is somewhat akin to feudalism, was unknown to me. Additionally, I had no idea how one is viewed based on

their personalities and on-screen persona.” Kritika emphasized that despite these difficulties, her decisions as an actor have continued to be driven by a distinct sense of purpose. “I’m a feminist,” she said, reiterating her dedication to creating strong, autonomous female characters. I say that with pride. The way female characters are portrayed on TV matters to me. “Even on TV, I avoided kitchen dramas or shows where certain regressive themes were glorified,” she continued. I made an effort to accomplish the more forward-thinking things. “It was something I had decided on very early in life,” she remarked, emphasizing her picky approach to roles.

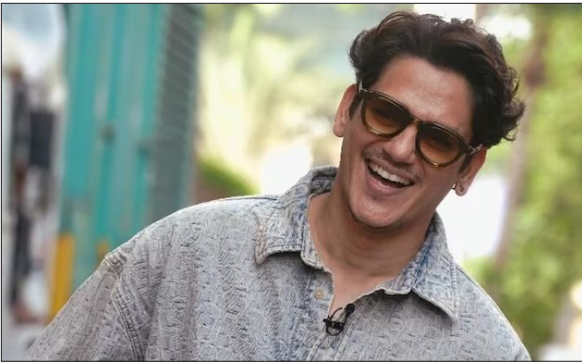
Even when I work on movies and web series, I am aware of it.” “Even in my first film, ‘Mitron’, I wasn’t a damsel in distress,” she continued, reflecting on her movie debut. I had agency and was a heroine. However, after that, I usually had offers for a few movies in which I had two scenes and a song. I declined those. To be in a major movie, I don’t want to do almost anything.” In terms of her career, Kritika most recently starred with Vijay Varma and Sai Tamhankar in Nagraj Manjule’s Matka King.

In terms of her personal life, she wed sports analyst Gaurav Kapur in a small, legally recognized ceremony in Mumbai.

Vijay Varma on Bollywood’s emergence of violent heroes

Mumbai: The success of recent movies like Animal (2023) and the Dhurandhar franchise has demonstrated that having a dark hero as the main character has become the industry standard and the new formula for success. The audience is also enjoying it. Filmmaker Karan Johar recently revealed that Bollywood has grown “obsessed” with the tendency of hypermasculinity and alpha guys. “Hame-sha se hi ‘hero’ types hero bahut Kam the Bollywood mein,” says actor Vijay Varma, who portrayed a grey character in his most recent series Matka King.

Even if you watch Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge (1995) today, it’s never been entirely white. “This is a completely common misconception, especially when it comes to discourse on films,” the actor continues. Morally dubious protagonists have always existed. With the exception of a few performances by the legendary Mr. Rajesh Khanna, most likely in movies like Bawarchi (1972), the heroes are typically persons who are dealing with personal challenges, lack, insecurities, or other issues; otherwise, the plot wouldn’t function. According to Vijay Varma, who has played the anti-hero in



films like Darlings (2022), he identifies better with such ambiguous characters. Great enemies have always existed in literature, art, and film. An excellent illustration of that is Mr. Amitabh Bachchan from Deewaar (1975). Since I haven’t seen many antagonists and anti-heroes in our movies in the past, I identify more with them than with pure protagonists,” he says. Vijay acknowledges the impact movies may have on society, but he also believes that negative stories shouldn’t always be glorified.

For example, his show Matka King tells the tale of a man who works as a professional bettor. Although the government has been actively opposing internet gambling and betting in recent years, the show does not promote this activity. In fact, we invite a discussion since I am absolutely positive. Both

Nagaraj (Manjule, director) sir and Abhay Koranne (creator) are really talented and pay close attention to what they say. “They have a responsibility and their films are very socially alive,” he says. “If you talk about something that happened in the past, that doesn’t mean that you want that to happen again,” he continues. Sometimes shining a light on past events is crucial because it demonstrates that opposition to gaming has existed since the 1960s.

There is a lot of opposition for this character as well. People still do it today. When I say “yes, I do it,” I’m not being honest. Back then, it was the same. Because individuals consume what is available in society, the crackdown on this was important both then and now. Anything that is accessible to them piques their attention.

Katrina Kaif responds to Vicky Kaushal’s sly beauty brand advertisement

Mumbai: Fans were given a unique glimpse into the personal dynamic of Bollywood duo Vicky Kaushal and Katrina Kaif. After jokingly pursuing a makeup brand agreement to promote his wife’s beauty line, Vicky recently had social media in disarray. Katrina added a lovely note to match his enthusiasm. Joking about Vicky’s life as a new father, Katrina reposted Vicky’s story on her own Instagram account late on Wednesday. “Best for sleep-deprived dads,” was her clever response. Vicky has previously advertised her goods. Vicky sweetly tells a plush toy deer, “Buddy, I think I just found the most hydrating lipstick,” in a video that Katrina shared in 2024. “It’s not kay to be so good,” he continued. “But it’s Kay to be you,” Katrina continued as the camera shifted to her. Following a brief period of covert dating, Vicky and Katrina made it official on December 9, 2021, when they were married in a small but lavish ceremony at Six Senses Fort Barwara in Rajasthan. On November 7, 2025, the couple received their first child, a son



named Vihaan, four years after getting married. “Our bundle of joy has arrived,” they wrote on Instagram to share the happy news. We welcome our baby boy with the utmost love and thankfulness. Vicky Kaushal recently told Etimes, “The mother is being the superhero,” in reference to Katrina parenting their child. She has been a warrior both during her pregnancy and as a mother. I adore her and am so very proud of her. Katrina last appeared in the movie Merry Christmas in 2024. Vijay Sethupathi played the lead in the film, which was directed by Sriram Raghavan.

Although the movie didn’t do well at the box office, it was praised when it was released on OTT. The actor has not yet disclosed her upcoming project. In contrast, Vicky’s most recent appearance was in the highly successful film Chhaava. Right now, he’s working hard on Love & War. Ranbir Kapoor and Alia Bhatt play the key characters in the film, which is directed by Sanjay Leela Bhansali. The movie was first scheduled for release in 2025 and was formally announced in January 2024. Since then, it has been rescheduled for January 21, 2027.

The Great Indian Kapil Show’s surprise reunion of Samay Raina and Ranveer Allahbadia



Mumbai: For the first time since the India’s Got Latent incident, comedian Samay Raina and Ranveer Allahbadia are scheduled to reunite. The pair will appear on comedian-actor Kapil Sharma’s program, The Great Indian Kapil Show, in honor of World Laughter Day. Fans are already enthusiastic about the partnership after seeing the new promo. Netflix posted a video of Samay announcing his presence on the show on Instagram on Thursday. “Friends, I am finally coming to my favorite show, The Great Indian Kapil Show, but I haven’t been told who will be the guest with me,” Samay states in the video. A devastated Samay yells, “No way bro,” as Ranveer joins him, clearly thrilled, just as he says this. On the occasion of World Laughter Day, Netflix announced a special episode of “The Great Indian Kapil Show” featuring an unexpected collaboration between comedian

Kapil Sharma, YouTuber Samay Raina, and internet personality Ranveer Allahbadia. The episode is scheduled to air on May 2 at 8 PM. Kapil Sharma expressed his gratitude for the audience’s support, stating that it drives them to provide fresh and entertaining content. He emphasized that the special episode aims to be natural, fun, and full of laughter, with the addition of Samay and Ranveer enhancing the festivities. The show’s intention is for viewers to join in the laughter and enjoy the day together. When Ranveer Allahbadia, Ashish Chanchlani, and Apoorva Mukhija appeared on India’s Got Latent in February of last year, his comments regarding parents and sex provoked a lot of criticism on social media. Ranveer, Samay, Apoorva, and Ashish were the subjects of numerous FIRs. Ranveer was prohibited from continuing his podcasts, and Samay was compelled to remove every episode of the show from YouTube. The Indian Supreme Court did, however, permit Ranveer to start podcasting again in March. Samay disclosed in his most recent stand-up special that he was anxious during the incident and held Ranveer responsible for his terrible mental state. A second season of India’s Got Latent was also confirmed by him.

Shah Rukh Khan’s old video is gaining popularity on social media



Mumbai: Superstar Shah Rukh Khan, one of Bollywood’s most adored figures, is once again the center of attention on social media due to a throwback video from 2017. In the video, he displays a heartwarming act of kindness towards a homeless man who had been waiting outside a venue in Mumbai for several hours. As the actor exits the venue, the fan approaches him, expressing his patience and requesting food. Shah Rukh pauses, shows concern by placing his hand on the fan’s head, and instructs his bodyguard, Ravi, to arrange

food for him. The moment was captured and shared online, inciting admiration from fans who emphasized his empathy, especially considering his humble beginnings. The video has received widespread acclaim, with users praising his character and kindness. In addition to his charitable actions, the summary also highlights Shah Rukh’s successful return to cinema, featuring roles in the recent blockbuster films Pathaan, Jawan, and Dunki. Pathaan and Jawan achieved remarkable box office success, grossing ₹1055 crore and ₹1160 crore worldwide, respectively, while Dunki earned ₹454 crore. He is married to Gauri Khan and has three children: Aryan, Suhana, and AbRam. Currently, Shah Rukh is working on a film titled King, co-starring his daughter Suhana and other well-known actors, with a planned release for Christmas this year.

Sonali Kulkarni is trapped in traffic for five hours on her way to Pune

Mumbai: Actor Sonali Kulkarni was caught in a frightening traffic nightmare on Wednesday while traveling from Mumbai to Pune. It was a night of turmoil and anxiety. The star called the situation “extremely scary” because she was stuck at a halt for more than five hours. Sonali raised awareness to the circumstances and the situation’s extreme unpredictability by sharing her experience on social media. In order to discuss the experience and demonstrate how she was caught in traffic, she uploaded a video to Instagram. The actor also revealed that when she requested the traffic control personnel for help, they only told her to be patient. “Hello, I am here on Mankhurd bridge,” Sonali stated in the video. We have been stranded here for precisely five hours. I’m heading to Pune. The traffic in front of and behind me is



visible. The traffic control personnel told us to be patient when we called them. They don’t know when the jam will be fixed because it’s so bad. We are unable to cross. We are unable to go back, therefore we are totally stranded. Offer up prayers for us. Police, please provide us with an update if you have any information or are able to come from the other side. We’re not even close to being hungry. I’m sure there must be others who have experienced far worse circumstances than we have, but spending five hours in one spot is frightening,” she continued. Social media users echoed her worries and brought attention to the growing traffic threat in the comments section. “From BCK to Vashi Bridge, I was detained for seven hours. One visitor stated, “There was not a single traffic person available throughout the route.”

“I was stuck for three hours too today,” said someone else. “This is absolutely terrible,” someone wrote. “Exactly the situation of the city,” said one commenter. While the public is concerned about her speaking in English rather than Marathi, they are experiencing serious infrastructure problems. We shall be concerned about the terminology used when someone screams for aid in danger tomorrow. Sonali’s roles in Hindi and Marathi films have helped her gain recognition.

At the age of eighteen, she debuted in the Hindi film Cheluvu (1992). She has contributed to a variety of projects throughout the years, including Mission Kashmir, Pyaar Tune Kya Kiya, Dil Chahta Hai, Taxi Number 9211, Singham, Chaitra, Pension and Love, and Sitara.

IndiGo launches the first direct flights from Chennai to Réunion Island for an Indian airline

New Delhi, Apr 30: As the only Indian airline to provide nonstop connectivity to Réunion Island, a French overseas territory in the Indian Ocean, IndiGo said on Thursday that it has started direct flights between Chennai, Tamil Nadu, and the island starting on April 29. Airbus A320 aircraft will be used for the service, which will run three times a week. IndiGo's route itinerary states that its flights to the island will use callsign 6E 1871 and leave Chennai on Wednesdays, Fridays, and Sundays at 12:20 pm, arriving at Réunion Island at 5:10 pm. On the same days, flight 6E 1872, the return service, will depart at 6:10 p.m. and arrive in Chennai at 2:10 a.m. Over one-third of the island's population, or over 3,00,000 people, are of Indian descent, hence there is a high demand for transit between the two areas. In addition, India provides access to East Asia and acts as a hub for travel related to business, health, wellness, and religion. The island is well-known for its nearby beaches, waterfalls, thick jungles,



and volcanic peaks. The island's walls, cirques, and pitons are among the many areas that have been named UNESCO World Heritage Sites. African, European, Indian, and Asian elements are all mixed together in its culture. With an emphasis on sustainable tourism and expanding MICE facilities, Réunion Island is becoming a popular destination for business travelers in addition to leisure travelers. "We are happy to start direct flights to Réunion Island, a French overseas territory in the Indian Ocean region, renowned for its striking landscapes, pristine beaches, and lush rainforests," stated Vinay Malhotra, Head of Global

Sales at IndiGo. From hiking and canyoning in UNESCO-listed national parks to paragliding over rocky beaches, whale watching, and snorkeling in breathtaking coral reef lagoons, this destination is an exciting addition to our growing network, he said. "IndiGo is now the only Indian airline to provide direct connectivity between India and the island, which is also home to a sizable Indian diaspora, thanks to the launch of this special route. "This new direct service improves choice and convenience for customers, whether they are traveling, trading, or visiting family and friends," he continued. Along with pre-booking meals and drinks, including alcoholic alternatives, travelers can purchase tickets via the IndiGo website, mobile app, or authorized travel partners. Additionally, there are add-ons like Up-Front and Flexi that provide flexible cancellations, free refreshments, and priority seating. Travelers are encouraged by the airline to confirm visa requirements prior to making a reservation.

AIIMS challenges the SC's approval of the 15-year-old's pregnancy termination



New Delhi, Apr 30: The All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) has challenged the Supreme Court of India's previous ruling allowing a 15-year-old girl to end her 30-week pregnancy in a curative motion. AIIMS informed the court that it might not be in the minor's best interest to proceed with the termination, claiming that if the pregnancy is terminated at such an advanced point, the young mother may experience permanent health and psychological issues. After hearing the case, the Supreme Court requested that AIIMS advise the girl's parents on the psychological and physical

ramifications. The court also emphasized that the individual in question should make the final decision, highlighting the significance of informed consent in such delicate situations.

Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi's bench stated that this is a case of child rape and that if termination is prohibited, the victim will suffer from trauma and a permanent scar. The top court ruled that procedure should be carried out if the mother is not permanently disabled. It stated that the decision must be made by the individual in question and requested that AIIMS advise the survivor's parents on the matter. Adoptable children are available. We have a lot of sympathies in this country. The streets are littered with mafias and abandoned children. We must examine them. This 15-year-old child is unintentionally pregnant. "This petition is for healing. A person cannot be forced into an unwanted pregnancy. Let's say she is a

child. She ought to be studying right now. However, our goal is for her to become a mother. The bench said, "Imagine the suffering and humiliation the child has endured in this." In her appearance on behalf of AIIMS, Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati brought up the curative plea and stated that pregnancy abortion is not feasible. It will be a live baby with serious abnormalities. A minor mother will not be able to procreate and will have health problems for the rest of her life. A minor mother will experience health problems for the rest of her life. Adoption is a possibility for this youngster. Thirty weeks have passed. Now, it's a feasible existence," she remarked. The top court stated that the survivor and her parents must make the decision on termination, and AIIMS may assist them in doing so. A bench consisting of Justices B V Nagarathna and Ujjal Bhuyan permitted the girl to medically end her 30-week pregnancy on April 24.

Cong leader Pawan Khera's request for anticipatory release is reserved by the Supreme Court



New Delhi, Apr 30: The Assam government informed the Supreme Court that Congress leader Pawan Khera utilized forged documents to allege that the wife of Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma possessed multiple passports. During the proceedings, while the court reserved its judgment on Khera's anticipatory bail plea,

the state contended that Khera should undergo custodial interrogation to clarify whether he fabricated the documents himself or acquired them from external sources, as well as to investigate potential involvement of foreign entities aimed at disrupting the upcoming assembly elections in the state.

Solicitor General Tushar

Mehta, representing the Assam government, addressed the bench of Justices J K Maheshwari and Atul Chandurkar and highlighted that Khera, during a press conference, displayed what he claimed were images of Sarma's wife's passports from three different countries, asserting that these images have been confirmed as forged. Moreover, Mehta pointed to the existence of fraudulent documents linked to a company registered in the United States that Khera had presented. He argued that Khera's actions demonstrated an intent to evade investigation, with his public remarks and videos indicating a refusal to cooperate with the Assam Police. Conversely, Senior Advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi, representing Khera, contended that there was insufficient justification for the arrest, positing that Sarma

was politically motivated in targeting Khera, evidenced by the Chief Minister's public statements reflecting malice and personal animosity. In response, Mehta emphasized the need for custodial interrogation by the police to uncover the origins of the forged documents, determine individuals responsible for the forgeries, and investigate alterations made to photographs, names, and QR codes, while probing the likelihood of foreign interference in local electoral processes. He characterized the situation as transcending mere defamation, asserting that it carries serious ramifications with broader national significance. Mehta opposed Khera's petition, which challenged the April 24 Gauhati High Court's order denying him anticipatory bail, which was prompted by a complaint filed by Sarma's wife.

SRH's 244 chase against MI is summed up by Pat Cummins, who expresses sympathy for bowlers



New Delhi: Pat Cummins, the captain of Sunrisers Hyderabad, was open about the direction T20 cricket is taking, stating that even totals of about 250 no longer feel secure. Bowlers now have a more difficult game as clubs in the IPL often chase 200+ marks with ease. Although batters have always benefited from the format, this season has taken it to a new level as players have shown little reluctance to attack bowlers from the first ball. On Wednesday, SRH easily defeated a prominent Mumbai Indians bowling at-

tack by chasing down a 244-run mark. When asked if he felt sorry for bowlers during this run-heavy IPL phase, Cummins responded with a combination of realism and humor, emphasizing that execution can still make all the difference. Yes, I do have a lot. How much time do we have? (smiling) I believe I mentioned last time that bowlers don't have much in these high-scoring games. However, Cummins stated in the press conference following the game that "you do feel like, even at the end there, if you nail

one really good yorker, it can still be the difference in the match." Additionally, he emphasized the importance of good bowlers and cited Eshan Malinga as a prime example of how they continue to influence outcomes despite the odds. "So, bowlers—and really talented bowlers, like Eshan (Malinga) on our team—are a major factor in our success as well. I believe he also has the purple cap. You can still make a big difference. Right now, everything is going great, so don't give up," he remarked. Even though Mumbai Indians star pacer Jasprit Bumrah had a rough day, giving up 54 runs in his four overs and going wicketless, Sunrisers Hyderabad managed to knock down the mark with eight deliveries remaining. The SRH encouraged his hitters to keep playing with the same positive attitude and commended them for their brave approach. "Openers Abhishek Sharma and Travis Head have a wide variety of shots when the pitch is excellent. 'I'm glad I'm not bowling to them,'" he remarked, describing the young players on the team as having a "super aggressive." They are fearless," he continued.

Delhi E-Rickshaw Rides Will Increase in Price, With a Minimum Fare of Rs 20



New Delhi, Apr 30: Delhi's e-rickshaw passengers will soon have to pay more. Citing growing inflation and a prolonged period of price stability, the federation of electric cars in the nation's capital has voted to

raise the minimum fare to Rs 20. The federation's chairman, Anuj Sharma, stated that although e-rickshaws have been in operation in Delhi since 2010, their prices have not changed despite the fact that auto-rickshaw

and taxi costs have increased thrice in the same time frame. According to him, they have made the decision to raise the fares starting next month. Following a joint meeting between Delhi Transport Minister Pankaj Kumar Singh and e-rickshaw drivers, dealers, and manufacturers on Wednesday, the announcement was made. Approximately 1.5 lakh unregistered e-rickshaws operate in Delhi, offering last-mile connectivity in numerous locations, while over 2 lakh e-rickshaws are officially registered in the city. E-rickshaw drivers typically charged Rs 10 for the first two kilometers and Rs 5 for the remaining kilometers. In the meantime, the Delhi Transport Department recalled its 2022 circular allowing businesses to register several electric rickshaws and carts under their own

names. The government hopes to encourage self-employment and lessen the exploitation of economically disadvantaged groups by avoiding the concentration of ownership in the hands of a small number of businesses, according to Pankaj Singh. According to him, the decision's main benefits include increased support for independent employment models, decreased risk of monopolistic control over the e-rickshaw industry, and more economic prospects for owner-drivers. We are bolstering self-employment and safeguarding the foundation of Delhi's last-mile connectivity by returning the vehicle would be to the individual driver," he stated. According to him, the updated ruling guarantees that more Delhi residents will benefit from e-rickshaw registration.

After MI's sixth IPL 2026 defeat, Hardik Pandya received a dire forecast



New Delhi: IPL champion Hardik Pandya is a captain. In Indian cricket, very few people are able to claim such title. However, Pandya's comeback to the Mumbai Indians has not been very fruitful. MI supporters jeered Pandya in his debut season for taking Rohit Sharma's place as captain. The five-time champions MI qualified for the IPL 2025 playoffs but were unable to advance to the championship match. They have dropped six of their eight IPL 2026 games. The Pandya-led team now faces a must-win scenario in their IPL 2025 playoff race, and even that might not be sufficient to advance. In a Cricbuzz conversation, Mpumelelo "Pom-mie" Mbangwa stated that Hardik Pandya's captaincy

needed to be reviewed.

A question on "which current retained players should MI release ahead of the next IPL mega auction" was addressed by former cricket player Simon Doull during the same conversation. I would like to know who will be your captain for the upcoming season. Who will be captain the following season if they make any changes? Release Hardik Pandya if he won't be the one. Only because I'm not sure how he will function in a setting where he and his team have performed poorly for three years, and then he loses his position," Doull remarked.

Doull responded, "It might free him up, it might not," when asked if Pandya could regain his form with the additional pressure of captaincy. Either way, it could make him feel like he's failed. Hardik has been among the top all-around players in the game when healthy. My only concern is whether he is prepared to play a supporting role, put in a lot of effort, and simply be Hardik the great player once more if he becomes captain. Pandya, a top-tier

all-rounder in white-ball world cricket, hasn't yet been able to reach peak form in IPL 2026. He has amassed 128 runs with a strike rate of 152.38 in seven games. In seven games, he has claimed four wickets with the ball. Following a six-wicket loss to Sunrisers Hyderabad in an IPL encounter on Wednesday, Pandya acknowledged that his bowling resources are limited but emphasized the need to find answers under duress.

He also acknowledged that the Mumbai Indians are not living up to their own high standards this season. Mumbai Indians scored 243 for 5 but lost to Sunrisers Hyderabad, who successfully chased the target with eight balls remaining. Jasprit Bumrah had a poor performance, giving up 54 runs without taking a wicket. This defeat left Mumbai with four points from eight matches, while Sunrisers rose to third place with 12 points from nine games. Pandya expressed the need for strategic changes and acknowledged the overall team's failure to meet expectations.

Air India will begin hub-and-spoke international From Varanasi, trials In June

New Delhi, Apr 30: According to reports, Air India is anticipated to begin model-based testing in June. The civil aviation ministry has released the standard operating procedure for operationalizing the hub and spoke aviation model to guarantee seamless domestic to international connectivity for passengers. Passengers traveling from spoke airports to overseas destinations via a hub or larger airport will have seamless connectivity thanks to the Hub and Spoke (H&S) architecture. According to one of the sources, Air India is anticipated to begin experimental H&S flights from Varanasi airport on June 1. Travelers will fly to Delhi from Varanasi, followed by a second journey to London. The action is a part of an attempt to establish India, one of the fastest domestic civil aviation markets in the world, as a global aviation hub.

Passengers will benefit from more seamless domestic-to-international (D-I) and international-to-domestic (I-D) operations under the concept, including baggage transfers and immigration procedures. Following stakeholder consultations, the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for managing H&S flights was created. The SOP, dated April 27, stated that travelers will be cleared by immigration and customs at the first port of departure and the last port of arrival, with airside luggage transfer at the hub airport. According to the SOP, Indian nationals traveling on the "I" leg of the H&S flights will not be able to check in online or receive e-boarding cards. In order to facilitate easy identification and segregation of domestic and international traffic, passengers on H&S flights

will get two boarding permits with "I" and "D" markers. Airlines must, among other things, designate specific nodal officers at H&S airports and notify immigration authorities of the information. According to the SOP, a nodal officer's main duty would be to keep passengers apart and verify their identities. The SOP outlines the operational framework, coordination procedures, and roles of the several entities involved. The government claims that the H&S model will improve passenger experience, speed up turnaround times, boost network connectivity across domestic and foreign industries, and enable smooth passenger transfers. Air India announced on Wednesday that it was getting ready to introduce international connectivity from Varanasi under the H&S concept. The concept represents a fundamental change in the nation's aviation land-

scape from a mostly end destination market to a global transit ecosystem, according to a statement from the airline, which is developing ambitious development ambitions. By decentralizing passenger processing, including customs and immigration, across spoke locations, it will assist airlines maximize aircraft utilization and help reduce traffic at major airports, according to the statement. According to Campbell Wilson, CEO and MD of Air India, the approach will guarantee the best use of airport facilities built throughout the nation in addition to improving connectivity. The H&S model will also facilitate smooth connectivity between Tier II and III airports—developed through the regional air connectivity plan UDAN—and international destinations, according to a statement made by the civil aviation ministry last week.

After a chlorine gas leak at a closed Pune water plant, 24 people were hospitalized

Pune, Apr 30: According to fire officials, a chlorine gas leak at Kondhwa in Pune after midnight on Thursday resulted in the hospitalization of at least 22 civilians and two firefighters. They claimed that the leak started at around one in the morning from a chlorine-filled abandoned tank at a closed water purification facility godown in the Gangadham region. Residents in the area complained of dyspnea after the gas release and subsequent spread. Fire crews were sent out as soon as they received the call. According to a fire

official, "the leaking tank was patched using safety equipment, and several citizens were evacuated." According to him, 22 citizens and two firefighters had dyspnea during the procedure and were sent to the hospital. A former operator of the site's water purification facility claimed to have disassembled it, but the chlorine tank seems to have been neglected and developed a leak.

The two firefighters and all impacted people are safe and being monitored at Sassoon General Hospital, according to the official.

Indian Taekwondo Athletes Told to Cover Their Own Expenses for the Asian Championship Tournament

New Delhi: Even as the Indian government has bagged the hosting rights for the 2030 Commonwealth Games, is in contention for the hosting rights for the 2036 Olympics and is interested in hosting the Asian Games, the country's athletes continue to face hurdles. India's taekwondo athletes have been asked by the national federation (India Taekwondo), which is authorised to select and send team entries, to fund their expenses for representing the country at the Asian Championships.

The athletes have been asked to deposit a little over Rs 2 lakh for expenses to be incurred on boarding and lodging. Taekwondo athlete Etisha Das, who will represent India at the Asian Championships in the 73kg category, had to resort to the crowd funding method, "appealing to family, friends, and the public for support." My name is Etisha Das and I am an international taekwondo athlete and national taekwondo team member for the last four years. I have



recently qualified for the Asian Championships which is going to be held in Mongolia (Ulaanbaatar) from 21st to 24th May. Since our sport is not getting support from the government we have to pay all the expenses for these championships by ourselves," she said in her post. "We have to submit around two lakh to the federation within two days. It is a short notice but I am looking for someone out there who can possibly help

me make this championships a success, help me bear the expenses for this championships. I will be very grateful and hopefully I will bring a medal for India and more glory to our nation," she added. India Taekwondo's treasurer Rajat Aditya Dixit was unavailable for comments. Speaking to The Tribune, Etisha, who is a trainee at the National Centre of Excellence in Lucknow, said the federation seeking money was a routine

affair and all players are expected to foot the expenses. "The Asian Championships would be my eighth tournament and we have paid every time," she said on Wednesday. "My father who retired from Verka has been funding my expenses all this while. We do not get direct support from the government as our federation is not recognised and we do not have sponsors as well. What options do we have?" she said.

Arsenal and Atletico Madrid Draw One All in Tense Champions League Semifinal Opener

Madrid: Atletico Madrid and Arsenal played a 1-1 stalemate in the first leg of their UEFA Champions League semifinal in Madrid on Wednesday night. Now, the second leg between these two sides on May 6 in London will decide who will make it to the final against either Bayern Munich or the defending champions, Paris Saint-Germain, with PSG coming out on top 5-4 in a thrilling first leg.

A string of half-chances were witnessed in the tightly contested first half before a penalty was converted into a goal by Viktor Gyokeres in the 44th minute, bringing some life into the contest just before the halftime, as per UCL's official website. Piero Hincapie, Martin Odegaard, and Noni Madueke had made scoring attempts for the Gunners, and Julian Alvarez also stung the palms of David Raya courtesy of some magical footwork in the 14th minute, but it was Viktor who drew the first blood with a powerful kick after being brought down by David Hancko. But 12 minutes after the break, the scores were level. Alvarez, Ademola Lookman, and Antoine Griezmann looked absolutely threatening, but it was a penalty conversion from Argentinian star Alvarez after a handball from Ben White that brought



Back some hope into the hosts' camp. Diego Simeone-managed side saw some fantastic football played in the second half, but the opportunities did not get converted into goals on a scoresheet, with Griezmann striking the crossbar and Lookman giving Raya some serious headache. The scoreline stayed unchanged, taking the decider to London. Following the match, Simeone said, as quoted by UEFA CL's official website, "The first half was evenly matched. Maybe they had more possession, but they did not create many chances. They have a very strong squad--when the substitutes came on, they were better than the starters. Even so, we were better than

Them in the second half." Griezmann opined that his side fared better in the second half, saying: "We played better in the second half. We also played with more intensity.

That is the way to go, and that is what we will do in the second leg--it will be a great game." Mikel Arteta, the Arsenal coach, said while speaking to TNT Sports, as quoted by UEFA CL's official website, that the team had a lot of positives, especially considering Atletico's strong home record. We had a lot of positives, a lot of very good things that we did. This team [Atleti]--the history and the record that they have at home is incredible.

Muttiah Muralitharan's Simple Advice: "As a spinner, you have to turn the ball" Legend Reveals the Ultimate Secret to Success



Colombo: In a candid assessment of modern cricket, Sri Lankan icon Muttiah Muralitharan highlighted a growing crisis in the art of spin bowling, particularly within the Indian Premier League (IPL). Following Sunrisers Hyderabad's victory over Mumbai Indians, the legendary off-spinner observed that contemporary spinners have largely abandoned the primary objective of their craft: turn-

ing the ball. The Skill Gap: Muscle Memory and Youth Muralitharan argued that the decline of genuine spin is a systemic issue rooted in early development. Unlike his generation, which focused on "beating the bat" through turn, modern youngsters prioritize containment and speed to suit shorter formats. Muscle Memory: "They try to bowl quicker and vary deliveries rather than spinning

it," Muralitharan noted. He emphasized that if a bowler doesn't learn to rip the ball by age 10 or 12, it is nearly impossible to develop that "muscle memory" once they reach the professional level at 18 or 19.

The IPL Environment: The high-stakes nature of the IPL makes it an unsuitable place for remedial learning. According to Muralitharan, bowlers arrive as finished products, leav-

ing little room for coaches to overhaul fundamental techniques. Spinners vs. "Throwdown Specialists" Muralitharan offered a stinging comparison of the current batting-bowling dynamic.

Without significant turn, he claims that facing a spinner in the IPL has become akin to practicing against a throwdown specialist. "If you don't spin the ball, batsmen just get into the line and smack it. But if you spin, their eyes open. They are forced to think, 'Oh, it's spinning and I'm missing it.'" The Impact of the "Entertainment" Business When asked if he or Shane Warne could have curbed the modern scoring rates, Murali was pragmatic. While he believes they wouldn't have been as expensive, he acknowledged that the game has evolved into a "big business" focused on entertainment--after being fouled by David Hancko to give.

Julian Alvarez Surpasses Lionel Messi as Fastest Argentine to Reach 25 UCL Goals

Madrid: In a historic night at the Metropolitano, Julian Alvarez etched his name into the record books, eclipsing Lionel Messi to become the fastest Argentine to reach 25 UEFA Champions League goals. The milestone arrived during a gritty 1-1 draw between Atletico Madrid and Arsenal, leaving the quarter-final tie perfectly balanced ahead of the return leg in London.

A New Argentine Standard Alvarez reached the 25-goal landmark in just 41 appearances, narrowly beating Messi's previous national record of 42 matches. This feat places him ahead of legendary compatriots like Sergio Agüero, who required 48 games to hit the same total. While the all-time charts are still dominated by the likes of Cristiano Ronaldo (141) and Messi (129), Alvarez's rapid ascent signals a changing of the guard for Argentine football on the European stage. Tension in Madrid The clash was a tactical chess match that came to life just before the interval. While Arsenal's Martin Odegaard and Noni Madueke looked threatening early on, and Alvarez forced a sharp save from David Raya in the 14th minute, it was the Gunners who struck first. In the 44th minute, Viktor Gyökeres drew blood, converting a powerful penalty after being fouled by David Hancko to give the visi-



tors a halftime lead. However, Diego Simeone's side emerged for the second half with renewed intensity. The trio of Alvarez, Antoine Griezmann, and Ademola Lookman began to dismantle the Arsenal defense. The breakthrough came 12 minutes after the restart when a Ben White handball gifted Atletico a lifeline. Alvarez stepped up, showing immense composure to slot the penalty home and secure his record-breaking goal.

The Road to the Final Atletico pushed for a winner late in the game, with Griezmann agonizingly striking the crossbar and Lookman constantly testing Raya's reflexes. Despite the pressure, the Gunners held

firm, ensuring the scoreline remained unchanged. The focus now shifts to May 6 at the Emirates Stadium. The winner of this decider will face either Bayern Munich or Paris Saint-Germain in the final. With PSG currently holding a 5-4 edge in their respective thriller, the path to European glory remains wide open. For Alvarez, the night was a personal triumph, but for Atletico, the mission remains incomplete until they secure their spot in the London finale. Colorful Madan Mitra Remains Reserved and Confident on Polling Day Tension in Madrid The clash was a tactical chess match that came to life just before the interval.

Riyan Parag Faces IPL Fine While Match Referee May Be Punished for Oversight



New Delhi: Rajasthan Royals captain Riyan Parag is likely to escape serious action from the Indian Premier League (IPL) organisers after being caught vaping in the dressing room during Tuesday's match against Punjab Kings in Mullanpur. Sources have informed India Today that Parag will be fined 25 per cent of his match fee for a breach of the IPL Code of Conduct, classified as a Level 1 offence. He is set to be penalised for bringing the game into disrepute. The incident was reported to the match referee by the umpires after visuals emerged of the

captain vaping during Rajasthan's run-chase. A Level 1 offence is the lowest category of breach, typically covering on-field outbursts, excessive celebrations, or minor dissent. Such infractions usually result in a fine of up to 50 per cent of the match fee and one demerit point. The controversy erupted during the 16th over of Rajasthan's pursuit of 223, a match they eventually won by six wickets. Despite the victory, the spotlight shifted to Parag's conduct as the footage quickly went viral on social media. The incident sparked immediate outrage online, with fans and observers call-

ing on the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) to take a firmer stand. Many highlighted that as a senior professional and team leader, Parag's actions set a poor example for younger players in the squad, including 15-year-old batting sensation Vaibhav Sooryavanshi. Critics also pointed out that vaping is prohibited in India under the Prohibition of Electronic Cigarettes Act (PECA) 2019, which bans the production, sale, and use of such devices. Social media users have urged the BCCI to enforce stricter disciplinary measures, arguing that a mere fine fails to Jaipur.

Cristiano Ronaldo Nails His 970th Career Goal As Al Nassr Moves Closer to Saudi League Title

Riyadh: Cristiano Ronaldo nailed the 970th goal of his professional football career as Al Nassr outclassed Al Ahli 2-0 in their Saudi Pro League fixture on Wednesday. After a goalless first half of the match, the game came alive in the 76th minute when Cristiano opened the scoring for his side, with Kingsley Coman sealing the win with a 90th-minute strike. With this win, Al Nassr remains in a strong position to secure the Saudi Pro League title, sitting at the first spot in the points table with 26 wins, a draw and just three losses, giving them 79 points. Their distant rivals are Al Hilal, with 21 wins and eight draws, giving them 71 points. Cristiano was named the 'Player of the Match' for his performance, and his side will next face Al Qadsiah on May 3, in their 31st round match.

Following the match, Cristiano took to social media to celebrate the win. Taking to X, he posted, "YALLA!! WE ARE AL NASSR!!" Al Nassr is currently on a 20-match win streak across competition, having started the streak way back in January against Al Shabab with a 3-2 win. Recently, Al Nassr had secured a place in the final of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Champions League Two, with Kingsley scoring a hat-trick to dismantle Al Ahli 5-1 in the semifinal. On May 16, Al Nassr will fight



for the AFC Champions League Two title against Gamba Osaka at Riyadh. The Mizoram club took their points tally to 11, and will be on top of the relegation stage, while Namdhari FC remain bottom of the table with seven points. Aizawl started the game on the front foot, making use of their familiarity with the artificial turf to maintain possession and progress the ball forward, especially down the left flank. Lalanzova and Lalrempuia provided the pace and width. Namdhari, on the

other hand, took time to adjust, but slowly made their way into the game. Namdhari created the first clear-cut chance of the game in the 15th minute when Seilenthang Lotjem picked out Rohit inside the box with a cross, but his glancing header was well saved by goalkeeper Vanlalhriatpuia.

The goalkeeper commanded his area confidently, dealing effectively with Namdhari's set-pieces and long balls, which remained their main attacking threat throughout the first half.

The breakthrough came two minutes before half-time through an own goal. Bhopinder Singh whipped a dangerous cross across the six-yard box, and centre-back Timur Talipov, attempting to clear the danger, could only deflect the ball into his own net with the goalkeeper rooted to the spot. Aizawl started the second half aggressively and came close to equalising with their first real opportunity. Lalanzova floated a looping cross from the right towards the back post.