

ADSU holds key executive meet in Dibrugarh, adopts resolutions and forms new committee

Dibrugarh, Jan 31: The All Dibrugarh Students’ Union (ADSU) held its Executive Committee Meeting along with an Agenda Selection Meeting at the Lalchand Kanai Auditorium of Hanumanbax Surajmal Kanai College in Dibrugarh. The meeting saw large participation from student representatives across the district, reflecting strong involvement and interest among the student community. The programme began at 11 am with the hoisting of the ADSU flag by union president Tanuj Haloi. This was followed by a tribute to martyrs led by general secretary Papu Saikia. The opening session was calm and respectful, setting a serious and focused mood for the discussions that followed. During the day-long meeting, members discussed several important issues related to students and society in Dibrugarh. The discussions mainly focused on education, student welfare, cultural activities, and civic problems faced by students and the general public. Members spoke in detail about the need to improve educational facilities, address student-related problems, and protect local culture and traditions. Participants also raised concerns about basic civic issues such as cleanliness, sanitation, and public amenities in the town. Many members stressed the

need for better coordination with local authorities so that student-related demands and public issues can be addressed in a timely and effective manner. The meeting, chaired by president Tanuj Haloi, concluded with the unanimous adoption of four resolutions. These resolutions focused on key issues affecting students and the town of Dibrugarh. Union leaders said the resolutions would guide ADSU’s activities in the coming months and help the organisation work in a planned and organised manner. Alongside the main meeting, the Agenda Selection Meeting led to the formation of a new ADSU committee. Senior members Rupjyoti Borthakur, Raja Gogoi, Manoj Burhagohain, Rituraj Mili, Tanuj Haloi, and Papu Saikia were appointed as advisors to the new committee. Their role will be to guide the leadership and ensure continuity in the union’s work. A new 60-member committee was constituted during the meeting. Priyapratim Sonowal was appointed as president, while Sandam Sonowal was named general secretary. The committee includes members from different educational institutions across the district and is expected to work towards implementing the adopted resolutions and addressing student concerns at the grassroots level.



The meeting was attended by Bulbul Dutta, organising secretary of the All Assam Students’ Union, AASU central executive member Sauravjyoti Barphukan, and district-level student leaders Labdhapratim Das, Bitupan Changmai, and Bitupan

Gogoi, general secretary of the Dibrugarh District Students’ Union. Their presence highlighted co-ordination among various student organisations. More than 700 students from schools, colleges, and primary students’ unions across Dibrugarh

took part in the meeting. The large turnout reflected ADSU’s strong grassroots support and its continued relevance in raising student issues and contributing to the educational and civic development of the district.

AR launches vocational carpentry and artisan training in Kamjong

Imphal, Jan 31: Assam Rifles inaugurated a Vocational Carpentry and Artisan Training Programme at Humine Thana Village, Kamjong District under Operation Sadbhavana. The month-long initiative is designed to foster skill development and create sustainable livelihood opportunities for local youth in this remote region. A total of 25 participants have enrolled in the programme, which seeks to empower unemployed and underprivileged youth by equipping them with market-relevant carpentry and artisan skills. Training is being delivered daily by skilled carpenters and experienced artisans, combining theoretical instruction with practical exposure to craftsmanship and creativity. The structured module emphasises technical competence, innovation and entrepreneurship, enabling participants to confidently pursue employment or establish independent ventures. Humine Thana, located in the interior of Kamjong District, has limited livelihood opportunities, making such training particularly impactful. By learning to produce furniture, household items and



artisan crafts, participants will be able to generate income through local markets and reduce dependence on seasonal labour. The programme also encourages self-reliance and helps curb migration in search of jobs, offering youth a chance to contribute meaningfully to their families and communities. Officials and troops of Assam Rifles highlighted

that Operation Sadbhavana continues to focus on welfare-driven initiatives across healthcare, education and skill development. The training reflects Assam Rifles’ commitment to strengthening bonds with local communities while contributing to empowerment, socio-economic development and nation-building.

AKRSU Announces Agitation Alleging Govt ‘Betrayal’ Over ST Status

Bongaigaon, Jan 31: The All Koch Rajbongshi Students’ Union (AKRSU) has accused the BJP-led Assam government of betraying the Koch Rajbongshi community in the name of granting Scheduled Tribe (ST) status and announced a series of protest programmes.

Addressing a press conference at the Greater Bongaigaon Press Club, AKRSU leaders expressed strong resentment against Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, alleging that the government had failed to fulfill its promises regarding tribal status. They described the chief minister as “misleading” the community.

AKRSU general secretary Baloram Barman announced that the organisation will hold a padayatra (foot march) in Bongaigaon and Chirang districts on February 9 as part of its protest against what it called government betrayal.

He further stated that on February 14, the day Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to visit Assam, AKRSU members will hoist black flags across districts as a mark of protest.

Alleging that the government has been engaging in divisive Hindu-Muslim politics instead of protecting the interests of indigenous communities, Barman said that despite frequently speaking about Hindu unity, the chief minister has shown no sincere initiative to resolve the long-pending demands of the Koch Rajbongshi people.

He also warned that ahead of the upcoming Assembly elections, AKRSU, along with Koch Rajbongshi organisations and like-minded groups, would launch a campaign titled “No ST, No Vote” against the BJP.

Several AKRSU leaders were present at the press conference.

JTC demands action against militants

Imphal, Jan 31: The Joint Tribes Council (JTC), Manipur, representing Naga communities including Zeme, Liangmai, Rongmei, and Inpui tribes, has urged the central and state governments to take immediate, stern action against Kuki militants. In a memorandum submitted to the Union Ministry of Home Affairs through the Governor of Manipur, the JTC said that KNF leader Tiger Kipgen (also known as Thangboi/Haogenthang Kipgen) issued life-threatening warnings on January 12, 2026, stating that Naga residents of Ireng (Puilong) village in Kangpokpi could be fired upon and their villages burned. The JTC warned that no Suspension of Operation (SoO) or illegal camps of Kuki militants would be allowed in the Naga foothills. constructions, aated.

Sarma Invokes Mahatma Gandhi Amid Row Over “Miya” Remarks; Congress Hits Back

■ Amid growing political tensions regarding his comments on “Miya Muslims,” Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma defended his stance against illegal immigration by invoking Mahatma Gandhi.

Guwahati, Jan 31: Amid an intensifying political and ideological confrontation over his remarks on “Miya Muslims,” Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday invoked Mahatma Gandhi while defending his government’s stance against illegal immigration. He said safeguarding Assam’s identity and constitutional rights should not be equated with hatred or communalism.

Responding to criticism from Mahatma Gandhi’s great-grandson, Tushar Gandhi, Sarma said that if Gandhi were alive today, he would have supported the Assamese people in what he described as their struggle against illegal infiltration. The Chief Minister argued that his-

tory records Gandhi’s role in protecting Assam’s territorial integrity during the time of Partition.

“If Babu were alive today, he would have stood with the Assamese people. History shows that his intervention helped ensure Assam did not become part of Pakistan. Opposing illegal infiltration is not hatred — it is about protecting the rights, identity and future of the Assamese people,” Sarma wrote in a post on X.

Rejecting Tushar Gandhi’s suggestion that he would have been removed from office in “Bapu’s India,” Sarma said democratic governments are changed only through elections, not through threats or attempts to undermine constitutional authority.

“Governments in a democracy are changed by the people through elections, not by intimidation or attempts to pull down an elected Chief Minister,” he added.

Tushar Gandhi had earlier criti-

cised Sarma’s comments on “Miya Muslims,” calling them contrary to Mahatma Gandhi’s ideals. He also accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of encouraging divisive politics.

The exchange comes amid broader criticism of Sarma’s recent remarks, in which he used the term “Miya” while referring to alleged illegal immigration from Bangladesh. The comments have drawn strong reactions from opposition parties and sections of civil society.

Defending his position, Sarma cited past observations of the Supreme Court to argue that concerns over demographic change in Assam are neither imagined nor politically motivated.

“Those attacking me should read what the Supreme Court itself has said about Assam. This is not my language, imagination, or political exaggeration,” he said.

Referring to the 2005 Sarbananda

Sonowal case, Sarma mentioned warnings about what he described as a “silent and invidious demographic invasion” of Assam, particularly in lower Assam, and its possible implications for national security and the geographical continuity of the Northeast.

The Congress, however, strongly objected. Assam MP Gaurav Gogoi accused the Chief Minister of misusing the Supreme Court’s name to justify what he termed divisive rhetoric.

“Dishonesty and shamelessness define Himanta Biswa Sarma’s politics. He is misusing the name of the Hon’ble Supreme Court. The language he quotes was neither authored nor adopted by the Court,” Gogoi said.

Calling the move “deliberate contempt,” Gogoi alleged that Sarma was presenting an executive report as if it were a judicial pronouncement to support his political narrative.

COCOMI demands SoO withdrawal, protect Manipur

Imphal, Jan 31: The Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI) organised a massive public rally in Imphal on Saturday. They followed it with a public meeting at THAU Ground, where participants passed strong resolutions on the ongoing ethnic conflict and the future of Manipur. The meeting, called “Manipur Kanba Khongchat” (Save Manipur Rally), focused on defending the territorial and administrative integrity of the state. Speakers and participants resolved that Manipur’s unity is non-negotiable. They emphasised that no one can divide the state. The meeting demanded that the Government of India withdraw the Suspension of Operations (SoO) agreement with Kuki/Zo insurgent groups, including the KNO and UPF. The SoO covered more than 25

groups and aimed to maintain peace and initiate political dialogue. However, organisers said the agreement has failed to deliver peace. The rally also urged the immediate halt of all unlawful activities by Kuki militants. Participants demanded that authorities take strict legal action against those terrorising civilians and destabilising communities. Organisers called on the government to stop labelling the Manipur crisis as mere “ethnic violence.” They warned that actions threatening civilian lives and destroying public property under this label must end immediately. The meeting stressed the urgent need to rehabilitate Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) within a fixed time frame. They said protecting IDPs and restoring their normal lives must remain the top priority.

27 Manipur wetlands proposed for conservation

Imphal, Jan 31: A State-level symposium for colleges on the theme of World Wetlands Day 2026 “Wetlands and Traditional Knowledge – Celebrating Cultural Heritage” was held at the Directorate of Environment and Climate Change, Porompat, Imphal East. The symposium was moderated by Dr. Kojam KK. Manibhishan Singh, Head of the Department of Environmental Sciences Dhanamanjuri University (DMU); while Dr. Konthoujam Khelchandra Singh, Associate Professor, Department of Environmental Sciences, Manipur University, Dr. W. Roshan Singh, Member Secretary, Manipur Pollution Control Board, and senior journalist Shri Irengbam Arun served as jury members. Speaking on the occasion, Tourangbam Brajakumar Singh, Director, Environment and Climate Change, stressed that preserving wetlands is essential for protecting nature. He said wetlands provide vital ecosystem ser-

vices and act as the “natural kidneys” of the environment by regulating the water cycle, supporting biodiversity, and sustaining local livelihoods through fisheries, agriculture, medicinal plants, and phumdi-based practices. He informed that Manipur has 134 wetlands in all 16 districts, of which 27 have been proposed for conservation. Utra Pat, Yaral Pat, and Waithou-Phumnou Pat have already been notified and placed in the public domain, while Jaimeng Wetland (Kangpokpi), Kachouphung/Achau Maki Wetland (Kamjong), Pumlun-Khoidum Pat (Kakching), Ikop-Kharung Pat (Thoubal), and Kakching Wetland are under consideration. The Director also highlighted major threats to wetlands, including encroachment, land reclamation, unplanned urbanization, tourism-related constructions, and inadequate drainage systems, leading to ecosystem degradation. He referred to the



Wetland (Conservation and Management) Rules of India, which emphasize the wise use of water, fish, aquatic plants, and other natural resources. He further announced that World Wetlands Day will be observed on February 2 at Yaral Pat, Imphal East, under the UN theme focusing on traditional knowledge and the need to document indigenous conservation practices. He expressed hope that blending traditional wisdom with the enthusiasm of young minds would strengthen wetland conservation efforts in the State.

Students from various colleges, including TS Paul Womens College, Manipur Institute of Technology, Kakching Khunou College, DM College of Science, DM College of Commerce, Kha Manipur College, Moirang College, Modern College, Standard College, and DM College of Arts, participated in the event. Participants highlighted the cultural and environmental importance of wetlands and emphasized the integration of traditional knowledge with modern scientific approaches for sustainable conservation.

Dimapur Railway Station sees poor connectivity despite heavy passenger load

Dimapur, Jan 31: Dimapur Railway Station, one of the oldest rail stations in the Northeast, continues to face serious connectivity and seat availability issues despite being among the top revenue-earning stations under the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR). Established in October 1903, the station has grown steadily over the decades and today handles nearly 10,000 passengers every day, including both incoming and outgoing travellers. However, passengers say that this growth has not been matched by improvement in services. The number of seats available for passengers boarding from Dimapur remains very limited, and train timings are widely seen as inconvenient.

Many regular travellers feel that the station’s importance has been overlooked, even as passenger numbers continue to rise. According to figures made available by the NFR, Dimapur Railway Station has a total quota of only 1,128 seats from all ten passenger trains that stop at the station. For a station that serves nearly 10,000 passengers

daily, this number is considered extremely low. As a result, passengers often struggle to get confirmed tickets, especially during peak travel days. Over the years, there have been repeated demands for more trains and additional seat quotas from Dimapur. However, instead of increasing services, several trains that were originally introduced for Dimapur have been shifted elsewhere. The Jan Shatabdi Express, introduced in 1996, was moved to Jorhat in 1998. Later, the BG Express and the Nagaland Express, introduced in 1998 and 2011 respectively, were shifted to Mariani and Ledo in 2020. The Nagaland Express, in particular, is remembered by many passengers as a very useful service. It used to depart Dimapur around 6 a.m. and reach Guwahati by late morning. This timing allowed passengers to complete official work, business meetings, or hospital visits and return to Dimapur the same day using evening trains. With the removal of this service, such same-day travel has become almost impossible.

NE/EAST

Nagaland: BAN begins with first monthly fellowship



Kohima, Jan 31: The Business Association of Naga (BAN) marked a spiritually significant beginning to the new year by holding its first monthly fellowship of 2026, setting a tone of faith, integrity and collective responsibility for the business community. The fellowship was organised with the purpose of placing God at the centre of business life and seeking divine wisdom as members step into a year filled with both opportunities and challenges. The programme opened with a session of praise and worship led by BAN executive member Alobo Naga, creating an atmosphere of reflection and unity. The fellowship was led by pastor, Warehouse Church, Jack Pucho, who delivered a message to the BAN family. Emphasising the importance of wisdom and understanding in both life and business, he shared from Proverbs 24:3, “By wisdom a house is built, and through understanding it is established.” He encouraged members to build their enterprises on foundations of faith, wisdom and integrity. One of the most impactful moments of the fellowship was the sharing of personal and collective prayer points, during which members openly expressed their concerns, business challenges and hopes for the future. United in prayer, BAN members sought divine guidance and strength for the year ahead. BAN leaders reiterated the association’s commitment to building a value-based business culture where faith and integrity go hand in hand with enterprise and development. They highlighted that businesses have a role beyond economic growth, serving also as agents of positive social transformation. Through regular monthly fellowships, BAN aims to nurture spiritual strength among entrepreneurs, promote ethical business practices and create a strong, supportive network grounded in mutual trust and shared values. The key outcome of the first BAN Monthly Business Fellowship was a collective commitment to run businesses as a mission. This aligns BAN with the global Business as Mission (BAM) movement, where business is intentionally used to glorify God, serve people and transform communities.

AIUDF slips, Congress gains ground, BJP hunts for a winner in Barak Valley showdown
Hailakandi heats up:

Guwahati, Jan 31: As Assam gears up for the 2026 Assembly elections, Hailakandi in the Barak Valley is no longer the predictable seat it once was. What had long been considered a safe bastion of minority-backed politics is fast turning into a volatile electoral battleground, with shifting loyalties, internal party churn and a crowded field of hopefuls across parties. No party has declared its candidate yet, but the signals on the ground suggest a high-stakes contest is brewing. The All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF), which dominated the constituency in recent years, is on the defensive. The Congress senses a chance to reclaim lost ground, while the BJP, buoyed by demographic changes, is searching for a candidate who can finally crack the seat. Hailakandi (Assembly constituency No. 121) has traditionally favoured the Congress and later the AIUDF, largely due to consolidated minority support. In the 2021 Assembly polls, AIUDF’s Zakir Hussain Laskar won comfortably, polling over 55 per cent of the vote and defeating the BJP’s Milan Das by a wide margin. Adding another layer of intrigue is Rahul Roy’s dilemma. Sections of the BJP are reportedly keen on him as a candidate, while others fear that fielding a Congress-identified face without full organisational backing could backfire badly. Roy, for his part, is believed to be weighing his options carefully. As things stand, Hailakandi appears headed for a triangular contest. AIUDF is struggling to protect its traditional base, Congress is re-emerging as a serious challenger amid changing voter loyalties, and the BJP is attempting to capitalise

on delimitation-driven shifts despite its historically weak footing in the constituency. With candidates yet to be finalised and strategies still evolving, Hailakandi’s political outcome remains wide open. What is clear, however, is that the once-safe seat is set for one of its most closely watched and fiercely fought elections in years.

That political comfort, however, has eroded. The recent delimitation exercise has subtly altered the constituency’s voter profile, increasing the relative share of Hindu voters and making electoral arithmetic far more competitive. More damaging for AIUDF has been the suspension of its sitting MLA Zakir Hussain Laskar for six years in late 2024 — a move that has weakened the party’s organisational hold in the area. Post-2024 Lok Sabha trends and early surveys indicate a steady drift of minority voters away from AIUDF, many of them gravitating back towards the Congress. Projections suggest the party may struggle to retain more than a handful of seats across Assam in 2026, raising serious doubts over its ability to defend Hailakandi. So far, AIUDF has remained silent on its candidate, adding to the uncertainty. Sensing the shift, the Congress has moved decisively. Party president Gaurav Gogoi has firmly ruled out any alliance with AIUDF, making it clear that Congress will contest independently in over 100 constituencies. His repeated statements over the past two months underscore the party’s strategy to consolidate minority and secular votes under its own banner. Within Congress circles, Rahul Roy — son of veteran leader and former minister Gautam



Roy — is widely discussed as a potential candidate. However, Roy has not yet formally joined the party or applied for a ticket. With the deadline for ticket applications extended till January 28, the door remains open for late developments. Another aspirant is Naiwritaa Joy Shukla, granddaughter of former Karimganj MP Lalit Mohan Suklabaidya, who has sought a Congress ticket from both Silchar and Hailakandi. The BJP, meanwhile, sees an opening but is grappling with a lack of consensus. Several aspirants are in the fray. District BJP president Kalyan Goswami is one, though he faces pressure from the high command following past corruption allegations and his 2024 resignation as chairman of the Hailakandi Municipal Board after a no-confidence motion. Saikat Dattachoudhury, the party’s organ-

ising secretary from Ramakrishna Nagar, is another contender, credited internally with strengthening the BJP’s grassroots network. Former ABVP leader Milan Das, who has contested earlier elections, is also eyeing a comeback, though his frequent political switches and alleged role during delimitation may work against him.

Other names doing the rounds include Sekhar Dey, former OSD to ex-Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal; tea tribe leaders Biswajit Koiri and BJP state vice-president Moon Swarnakar; and Ajoy Kumar Dutta, former member of the Assam State Commission for Protection of Child Rights, who is said to enjoy the backing of a section of senior party leaders and has influence among women and child welfare groups.

Meghalaya Police destroys seized narcotics worth over Rs 9 crore

Shillong, Jan 31: In a major push against drug trafficking and substance abuse, Meghalaya Police on Thursday destroyed seized narcotic drugs valued at more than Rs 9 crore, officials said. The contraband had been seized in 58 cases registered under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act across seven districts of the state. The scientific disposal was carried out at Lumshnong in East Jaintia Hills district by the District Drug Disposal Committee comprising representatives from seven districts — East Khasi Hills, West Khasi Hills, South West Khasi Hills, Eastern West Khasi Hills, East Jaintia Hills, West Jaintia Hills and North Garo Hills, officials said. According to police, the destroyed drugs included 183.28 grams of heroin valued at Rs 34.83 lakh, 8,721 kg of yaba tablets worth Rs 1.48 crore, 296.79 kg of ganja valued at Rs 6.97 crore, 2,793 bottles of codeine-based cough syrup worth Rs 27.93 lakh and 534 R-7 tablets valued at Rs 2.13 lakh. “The seized drugs were destroyed strictly in accordance with the law and prescribed environmental safety guidelines,” the Superintendent of Police of the Anti Narcotics Task Force (ANTF) said. The action was carried out under the



Drug Reduction, Elimination and Action Mission (DREAM), Meghalaya, launched by Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma in 2023. “Under the leadership of the chief minister, DREAM has evolved into a people’s movement by combining enforcement with rehabilitation, awareness and community participation,” the SP added.

He said the disposal drive was aimed not only at eliminating harmful substances but also at sending a strong message against drug abuse and trafficking. “Every gram destroyed represents a life protected, a family saved, and a future secured. This is a collective resolve to make society free from drugs and addiction,” the SP said.

Mizo National Front leader Lalsawmzuala wins confidence vote as Lai Council CEM

Shillong, Jan 31: C Lalsawmzuala, the newly appointed Chief Executive Member (CEM) of Mizoram’s Lai Autonomous District Council (LADC), on Thursday won a vote of confidence in the House, formally establishing his majority and ending weeks of political uncertainty following the fractured council elections, an official said. Following this, the MNF and Congress reached a post-poll understanding, formed the ULP and staked claim to form the executive body before the Governor on January 9. The LADC, one of three Autonomous District Councils in Mizoram, was constituted in 1972 under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution for the Lai tribal people. It has 25 elected members and four nominated members. The floor test brought stability after the December polls delivered a hung council. Lalsawmzuala, a Mizo National Front (MNF) leader who was sworn in as CEM on Tuesday, secured the House’s backing during the session. The United Legislature Party (ULP) — a coalition between the MNF and the Congress — demonstrated its strength in the confidence motion, with 15 members voting in favour of Lalsawmzuala and nine voting against, the official said. Thanking members for reposing their trust in him, Lalsawmzuala called for cooperation across party lines to ensure stable governance. The MNF, which contested 20 seats, emerged as the single largest party with eight members, followed by the Congress with seven seats from 14 contests. The Zoram People’s Movement (ZPM), which fielded candidates in all 25 constituencies, won six seats, while the BJP, which contested 10 seats, secured two. Two Independents, including former CEM V. Zirsanga, were also elected. The post-poll period saw multiple realignments. An initial pre-poll agreement between the MNF and Congress collapsed after the Congress alleged breaches by the



MNF. This was followed by an attempted alliance between the ZPM and Congress to form an executive committee, which also failed to materialise. Subsequently, the ZPM and MNF came together to form the Lairam Legislature Party (LLP) on December 14 and staked claim to form the executive committee. However, the MNF later withdrew from the LLP, citing unresolved political differences.

CTAN seeks re-examination of Forest Guard Test over alleged irregularities

Kohima, Jan 31: The Combined Technical Association of Nagaland (CTAN) has called for a fresh Forest Guard written examination, citing alleged irregularities in the recruitment test held on July 12 last year. In a formal representation submitted to the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Department of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, CTAN alleged that the examination was conducted in violation of established recruitment procedures, raising serious concerns over fairness and transparency. Use of OMR sheets and the absence of any reference to negative marking in both the official notification and the question paper. CTAN further alleged that candidates were not allowed to retain their question papers, even though an answer key was released later, making it impossible for ex-



aminees to verify their responses. It was also alleged that correction pens were permitted in certain examination centres but barred in others, resulting in unequal conditions for candidates. Additionally, CTAN

claimed that aspirants were charged Rs. 300 each under the pretext of issuing Medical Fitness Certificates. Through its Convenor Meshenlo Kath and Co-Convenor Kaqheto Kughutu, CTAN urged the depart-

ment to order a re-examination to ensure accountability and protect the credibility of the recruitment process, stating that such a step was necessary to uphold fairness, transparency and justice.

Mass poisoning of migratory birds in Majuli sparks conservation

Guwahati, Jan 31: In the heart of Assam’s cultural cradle, Majuli, the world’s largest river island, thousands of migratory birds, travelers along the Central Asian Flyway, arrived this winter from the Siberian tundras, Mongolian steppes, and northern Eurasian regions to forage in its wetlands and fields. This seasonal migration, documented in ecological records and local folklore for centuries, has been a regular feature of the region. On Republic Day, January 26, 2026, over 50 greylag geese were found dead across farmlands in Dakshinpat Kumar Gaon, Sumoimari, Komargao, Rawanagaon, and Kamargao. Officials suspect deliberate poisoning using pesticides and toxic baits. Forest officials, responding to alerts from villagers, recovered poisoned evidence and detained 17 individuals, including four women. A key accused from Barpeta district has also been arrested. Eight surviving birds received care at Ratanpur Veterinary Hospital; six of them later died. “These birds arrive earlier each year, seeking refuge and sustenance before their long return journey,” a senior forest official said. “While the nation celebrated freedom, someone chose to poi-

son these innocent guests in our fields.” The Central Asian Flyway spans 30 countries and hosts over 600 migratory species. These birds have visited Assam’s wetlands for generations, documented in early 20th-century surveys and indigenous narratives. Majuli’s beels and chaporis serve as important wintering grounds that support biodiversity and local ecosystems. However, recurring poisonings have been reported for over a decade, with 9–10 incidents recorded annually since at least 2021. Investigations suggest links to poaching for meat or illicit trade, often involving banned substances such as Furan. Similar events, including mass vulture deaths in 2022, indicate a persistent problem despite the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972. Authorities conduct patrols, issue habitat notifications, perform rescues and post-mortems, and follow India’s National Action Plan for Migratory Birds, which emphasizes monitoring, habitat restoration, and awareness campaigns. International commitments under the Convention on Migratory Species also support these efforts.

Shija Hospitals conferred AHPI Award for excellence in hospital operations

Imphal, Jan 31: Shija Hospitals & Research Institute Pvt. Ltd. has been conferred with the Association of Healthcare Providers India (AHPI) Award for Excellence in Healthcare at the AHPI Global Conclave 2026, under the category of Excellence in Hospital Operations (Non-Clinical). The award ceremony was held at Taj Lands End, Mumbai. The conclave brought together representatives and leadership from major private hospitals and healthcare leaders across the country.

The award was received on behalf of Shija Hospitals & Research Institute Pvt. Ltd. by Anisha Khundongbam, Deputy Director – Finance and Operations, and Shamurailatpam Dejrani Devi, Assistant Manager – Operations.

This prestigious recognition reflects Shija Hospitals’ sustained commitment to robust governance, regulatory compliance, patient safety, operational efficiency, and environmentally responsible hospital management. The assessment highlighted clearly defined governance structures with assigned roles and responsibilities, full compliance with applicable legal and statutory requirements, and a well-articulated scope of services that is displayed bilingually and effectively communicated to staff and patients.

The evaluation also covered structured and efficient registration and admission processes across outpatient, inpatient, and emergency services, along with well-defined internal and external transfer and referral policies. Strong emphasis was placed on safety and risk management through a comprehensive, documented pa-



tient safety program addressing environmental and fire safety, non-clinical risks, and regular electrical safety audits. Facility management systems were assessed for ensuring a safe and secure environment, including engineering services, utilities, medical equipment maintenance, medical gas systems, IT infrastructure, and preparedness for fire and non-fire emergencies. Environmental stewardship initiatives—such as the use of eco-friendly materials, naturally lit and clean spaces, water conservation through rainwater harvesting and wastewater treatment, and energy optimization via renewable and energy-efficient systems—were also commended. The assessment further reviewed dietary services, housekeeping practices, waste management protocols, and information management systems, with emphasis on hygiene, safety, data security, accurate records, and effective communication with patients and families.

This recognition reinforces Shija Hospitals’ focus on excellence in non-clinical operations as a core pillar of quality healthcare delivery.

Death Threats to Buddhist MP Candidates in CHT Raise Concerns Over Free and Fair Elections

New Delhi, Jan 31: The Rights and Risks Analysis Group (RRAG) has called on international election observers from the European Union, the Commonwealth, and Japan to intervene with the Government of Bangladesh over alleged threats to indigenous Buddhist parliamentary candidates in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) during the ongoing 13th Parliamentary elections.

According to RRAG, two independent Buddhist candidates — Mr Pahel Chakma from Rangamati constituency and Mr Dharma Jyoti Chakma from Khagrachari constituency — along with key members of their campaign teams, have allegedly received death threats from the Parbatto Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti (PCJSS). RRAG described the PCJSS as an armed group headed by Mr Jyotirindra Bodhipriyo Larma (Santu Larma), who also serves as Chairman of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional Council.

RRAG further alleged that since 29 January 2026, the Bangladesh Army has deployed around 75 armed PCJSS cadres in the Dudukchara area under Logang Union in Khagrachari district.

These cadres are accused of intimidating indigenous voters and pressuring them to

support candidates from national political parties, including the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), Jamaat-e-Islami, and the National Citizens Party.

RRAG stated that Mr Pahel Chakma filed a General Diary entry with the police on 17 January 2026, but authorities have allegedly refused to register a First Information Report (FIR). In another incident cited by the group, a forged withdrawal letter was reportedly submitted on 20 January 2026 to the Deputy Commissioner of Khagrachari district in the name of Mr Dharma Jyoti Chakma. RRAG claimed no action was taken over the alleged forgery. As both candidates refused to withdraw from the race, RRAG says they have continued to face death threats.

In a statement, Mr Suhas Chakma, Director of RRAG, alleged that although the PCJSS laid down arms following the 1997 CHT Accord, it has been allowed to retain an armed wing.

He argued that because its president, Santu Larma, holds the rank and privileges of a state minister as Chairman of the CHT Regional Council while the group allegedly maintains an armed structure, the PCJSS effectively functions as a government-backed armed group.

Mr Chakma also referred to past incidents, including the reported arrest of 13 alleged PCJSS cadres in Agartala, Tripura, in June 2025, and cited a Guwahati High Court judgment (5 September 2024) in a National Investigation Agency case that reportedly described PCJSS as a terrorist organisation while examining an earlier arms seizure case.

RRAG alleged that although the PCJSS is not contesting the elections, it has been threatening independent indigenous candidates to ensure the victory of major national parties.

The group claimed this reflects a broader understanding between national political actors and sections of the security establishment that undermines the prospects of free and fair elections for indigenous peoples in the CHT.

RRAG has urged international observers to deploy election monitors in Khagrachari and Rangamati districts, ensure protection for the two candidates and other vulnerable contestants, press Bangladeshi authorities to address the reported threats, and ensure that any armed cadres linked to PCJSS are confined to government barracks in accordance with human rights standards.

Tripura hosts regional AI awareness workshop ahead of India-AI Impact Summit 2026

Agartala, Jan 31: Agartala witnessed a regional-level awareness programme on artificial intelligence as the Directorate of Information Technology, Government of Tripura, organised an AI-focused workshop. The event was held as part of the preparatory activities leading up to the India-AI Impact Summit 2026, which is expected to bring together policymakers, experts and stakeholders from across India and abroad. The workshop was organised at Pragya Bhavan and formed an important part of the pre-summit outreach initiatives. The main aim of the programme was to introduce and familiarise officials, professionals and other stakeholders with the growing

role of artificial intelligence in governance and public service delivery. Officials said the session focused on helping participants understand how AI can be used in day-to-day administration and policy planning. Discussions highlighted how emerging technologies are gradually becoming an integral part of government functioning, especially in areas that directly affect citizens. The workshop also aligned with the Centre’s wider digital transformation agenda, which places increasing importance on technology-driven solutions. In recent years, artificial intelligence has been identified as a key tool to improve efficiency, transparency and decision-making in public

administration. Speakers at the programme explained that AI-based systems can help governments respond faster, manage large volumes of data and deliver services more effectively. Participants were informed that artificial intelligence is already reshaping several important sectors. These include governance, agriculture, healthcare, education and smart administration. In governance, AI is being explored for better data analysis and grievance redressal systems. In agriculture, it is helping with crop monitoring and weather-related advisories. In healthcare and education, AI tools are supporting diagnostics, learning platforms and resource planning.

India has been steadily strengthening its AI framework at the national level. Key initiatives include the IndiaAI Mission, which is being implemented under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology. The mission aims to build a strong ecosystem for artificial intelligence by supporting research, innovation, infrastructure and skill development. Another major policy initiative guiding India’s AI journey is the National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence, prepared by NITI Aayog. The strategy focuses on using AI as a tool for inclusive and sustainable growth, ensuring that technological benefits reach all sections of society.

Mizoram CM inaugurates arecanut processing unit in Kolasib

Aizawl, Jan 31: Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma inaugurated a Arecanut (Kuhva) Processing Unit established by SSB Agro in Buhchangphai on Friday. The event was attended by Agriculture Minister P.C. Vanlalruata as Guest of Honour, along with Deputy Speaker Pu Lalfamkima and MLA Pu Lalmuapnia Punte. In his address, the Chief Minister highlighted Mizoram’s arecanut cultivation spanning 30,000 hectares, with an estimated 200,000 quintals produced in 2024-25. He described it as a stable livelihood and noted government support through schemes like the Handholding Scheme and CM Special

Package. The Chief Minister praised the government’s crackdown on illegal arecanut trade, which has boosted farmer prices, and stressed the value of local processing. He announced upcoming government units in Chemphai and Zamuang, set to operate next year. Commending SSB Agro’s high-capacity facility (processing 3,000 nuts per hour), he welcomed its procurement tie-up with MAMCOS, predicting benefits for many farmers. Agriculture Minister Vanlalruata echoed the importance of processing for value addition and market stability, revealing plans for similar units for ginger, turmeric, and chilli.

Lada-Sarli highway land reverification completed

East Kameng, Jan 31: The land reverification process for the Lada-Sarli Frontier Highway has been completed even as a social activist from East Kameng district raised serious concerns over alleged irregularities in land compensation and incomplete verification of one project package. Social activist Sol Dodum, who has been pursuing the issue of an alleged land compensation scam linked to the highway project, had earlier demanded reverification of land records. He expressed dissatisfaction with the process and questioned why Package 1 of the project was not reverified along with the other packages. Dodum alleged that the state government had mishandled the land compensation amount provided by the central government. He claimed that the compensation actually received by project-affected people was much lower than the amount sanctioned by the Centre. According to him, compensation rates for land, bamboo, trees and other assets were shown as high on paper but were not implemented during the actual transfer of money to beneficiaries.

Thousands turn up for ‘Save Manipur’ rally

Imphal, Jan 31: Thousands of people from different walks of life took part in “Save Manipur” rally organised by the Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI) on Saturday reaffirming collective stand on protecting the territorial integrity of the state. The rally started from Tiddim Ground, KwaKeithel and culminated at Thau Ground, Thangmeiband covering a distance of 5 km.

They raised slogans and held placards that read “No compromise to Manipur’s territorial and administrative integrity,” “No attempts should

be made to divide Manipur,” and “Resettle the IDPs to their home”. The protesters also included non-Manipuris, Meitei Pangals and from Naga community, along with Meiteis. “We are participating in this rally to reiterate our stand that Manipur’s territorial and administrative integrity must not be broken at any cost. We cannot compromise on this,” said Bidyaluxmi Oinam. Another demonstrator, Khagembam Surjit, said, “The land of Manipur was built by our forefathers, and not by illegal immigrants from Myanmar.” The protesters also demanded the



Government of India to address security concerns and restore normalcy, while reiterating calls for safeguard-

ing the state’s unity and sovereignty. Security has been tightened across the capital in view of the rally.

Arunachal scientists flag climate risks to Himalayan dams at National Conference

● *Scientists from the Centre for Earth Sciences and Himalayan Studies (CESHS) presented significant findings on climate-related risks to dams and hydropower projects in the Himalayan region at an international conference in New Delhi.*

Kohima, Jan 31: Scientists from the Centre for Earth Sciences and Himalayan Studies (CESHS), Government of Arunachal Pradesh, presented important research on climate-related risks facing dams and hydropower projects in the Himalayan region at an international conference held in New Delhi on January 29 and 30. The research was presented at the International Conference on Cli-

mate-Resilient Dams and Hydropower Infrastructure, which brought together experts, engineers, policymakers and scientists from across India and abroad to discuss growing climate threats to large infrastructure projects. CESHS scientists Dr. Laxmi Linggi and Dr. P. C. Vanlalnunchhane focused their presentation on the dangers posed by glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs) and other climate-driven hazards in the Eastern Himalaya. They said the region is highly fragile and faces increasing risks due to rising temperatures, melting glaciers, and extreme weather events. Their research paper, titled “Implications of Cascading Hazards and GLOF Risks on Infrastructure in the Eastern

Himalaya”, explained how sudden releases of water from glacial lakes can cause severe damage to dams, hydropower stations, roads and downstream settlements. The scientists stressed that many existing projects were not designed keeping such rapidly changing climate conditions in mind. The researchers highlighted the urgent need for stronger monitoring systems in high-altitude areas, especially around glacial lakes. They also called for the installation of reliable early warning systems so that authorities and communities can respond quickly in case of a flood or related disaster. In addition, the CESHS team recommended risk-informed planning for future dams and hydropower projects.



They said decisions on infrastructure development must be based on scientific assessments of climate hazards rather than past weather patterns alone. The scientists also spoke about the importance of adopting an integrated source-to-sink approach. This includes studying glaciers and snow systems, analysing extreme rainfall events, and using hazard modelling to understand

how risks travel from mountain sources to downstream areas. They invited collaboration from national and international experts working on GLOF and flood risk management, saying joint research and data sharing would help develop stronger and more proactive disaster prevention strategies. The conference saw participation from institutions such as Indian Institute of Technology Delhi, India Meteorological Department, Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, the Central Water Commission, the National Disaster Management Authority, and the National Dam Safety Authority. Representatives from hydropower companies such as NHPC and NTPC also took part.

NIA court takes cognisance of charge sheet in Jiribam abduction and killing case

Imphal, Jan 31: The Special Court of the National Investigation Agency, Manipur Number 1 took cognisance of the charge sheet filed in connection with the abduction and killing of six members of the Meitei community in Jiribam district. The case relates to the death of three women and three children, including an eight-month-old infant, in an incident that had shocked Manipur and triggered widespread public outrage. The court took cognisance of the charge sheet against three accused—Thanglienlal Hmar alias Boya (40), Lalrosang Hmar alias Rosang (24), and Khopuimoi Hmar alias Puia (33). Thanglienlal Hmar and Lalrosang Hmar are residents of Moinathol village in Dikshoh Grant, Cachar district of Assam, while Khopuimoi Hmar is from Keisel Punji

in Borobekra area of Jiribam district. All three accused are currently lodged at the Temporary Jail in Jiribam and were produced before the court through video conferencing. After hearing submissions from the Special Public Prosecutor of the NIA and the defence counsel, and after examining the materials placed on record, the court took cognisance of offences under various sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), the Arms Act, and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA). The NIA had submitted the charge sheet along with the required prosecution sanction under the UAPA on January 23, 2026. The court also directed the investigating agency to provide copies of all relevant charge sheet documents to the accused on or before February 10, 2026, in line with

legal procedure to ensure a fair trial. The case dates back to November 11, 2024, when six members of the Meitei community were abducted from Jakuradhor Karong village in Jiribam district. The victims were identified as Yurembam Rani Devi (60), Telem Thoibi Devi (31), Laishram Heitonbi (25), Telem Thajamanbi (8), Laishram Chingkhinganba (2), and Laishram Langamba, an eight-month-old infant. Following the recovery of the bodies, large-scale protests erupted across the Imphal Valley. Angry demonstrators took to the streets, and in several places, residences of Ministers and Members of the Legislative Assembly were targeted. The situation prompted heightened security measures, as the incident added to the already tense atmosphere in the state.

Muslim law board urges SC to take cognizance of Assam CM’s anti-Muslim remarks

Guwahati, Jan 31: The All India Muslim Personal Law Board has strongly condemned the recent “anti-Muslim and deeply divisive statements” made by Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma.

The Board has urged the Supreme Court of India to take immediate suo motu cognisance of this grave matter.

In a statement, the Board’s spokesperson, Dr. S. Q. R. Ilyas, said that hate speech and open incitement against Muslims are fast becoming normalized in the political discourse of the ruling party.

“What was once limited to fringe voices is now being echoed by those occupying the highest constitutional offices.

The Chief Ministers of Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, and now Assam have repeatedly made inflammatory and unconstitutional remarks targeting Muslims. The Assam Chief Minister, while addressing a government function in Tinsukia, reportedly called for the harassment of the ‘Miyan’ community so that they are forced to leave Assam. He is also reported to have said that causing hardship to this community was his responsibility,” the statement said.

Additionally, he publicly encouraged people to file Form No. 7 to remove 4-5 lakh Muslims from the voter rolls and called for their economic boycott, it added.

Dr. Ilyas said it is shocking

and unacceptable that a Chief Minister, who has sworn to uphold the Constitution, is seen openly advocating discrimination, harassment, and disenfranchisement of a particular community. He said that such statements strike at the very foundation of constitutional governance, the rule of law, and the principle of equality before law. If constitutional authorities fail to resist such unlawful pressure, the credibility of free and fair elections itself will be in jeopardy, he stated. The Board has also appealed to the President of India to take appropriate constitutional action against the Assam Chief Minister for these dangerous and unconstitutional

remarks, and the Chief Justice of India has been urged to intervene without delay.

“Failure to act firmly and swiftly may embolden further hate speech and create conditions of social unrest and lawlessness,” the statement maintained.

The Board called upon all secular political parties, civil society groups, and justice-loving citizens to take serious note of this open call for discrimination and stand united in defense of constitutional values.

At the same time, the Board appealed to the Muslims of Assam to remain calm and respond to these provocations strictly through constitutional and legal means.

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Editorial

Fast deals, flimsy scrutiny

In its final days, Bangladesh’s interim government has embarked on a rapid push for long-term, high-value commitments, effectively tying the hands of the elected administration that will succeed it. Foremost among them is a prospective deal with UAE-based DP World to manage cargo operations at the New Mooring Container Terminal in Chattogram Port, the country’s most strategically important port asset. This follows the November decision to grant Denmark’s APM Terminals a 33-year concession to build and operate the \$550 million Laldia Container Terminal. Simultaneously, Switzerland’s Medlog SA is poised to run Pangaon River Port under a 22-year contract. While Medlog’s appointment followed an open tender, the Laldia and DP World negotiations did not. That lack of competitive bids is fuelling backlash as the interim government’s mandate nears its end. Installed to oversee a smooth transition to elected rule, the interim authority now faces mounting criticism that it is exploiting its status to make opaque, long-term policy decisions with lasting consequences. Alongside the port deals, the government is fast-tracking a major procurement of 14 Boeing aircraft for Biman Bangladesh Airlines and pushing through promotions of 118 senior bureaucrats. In parallel, a state-appointed commission proposed a public-sector pay hike of as much as 142 percent. Economists warn that the wage increase alone could destabilise already fragile public finances. Together, these obligations will force elected leaders to bear financial and political burdens they had no role in designing. As the clock ticks down to the election on February 12, the flurry of dealmaking is not merely a lapse in fiscal prudence or macroeconomic management; it is a “fundamental breach of principle,” according to Debapriya Bhattacharya, a distinguished fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue. “It is, in principle, not morally correct,” Bhattacharya said, suggesting that a transitional administration should not be tethering the nation’s future to multi-billion-dollar obligations in its final hours. “Whether by design or by default, they are making it immensely difficult for the incoming government to manage the economy, especially given the current disruptive global developments,” he said, adding, “It surprises me that those who intend to come to power are not taking these developments, which will make their lives difficult, seriously enough.” By committing the state to massive expenditures, the interim government is creating what Bhattacharya calls a “difficult benchmark” for the incoming administration.Prof Anu Muhammad, an eminent economist, said the deals with foreign entities lack public transparency, and the methods reek of those of the previous regime.He noted that last-minute scramble and ignoring opinions of political parties and the public reminded one of the last autocratic regime. “The interim government assumed power with the promise of reforming and stabilising the democratic system following the mass uprising. Yet, we see that the government itself is not adhering to reforms,” he said. “Instead, it is perpetuating undemocratic processes that will plunge the people into a deep, long-term crisis,” said Anu Muhammad. “Once this government is dissolved, there will be no accountability of these advisers and special assistants. They will move on. So, who do we hold accountable?” he said. The interim government has moved into a sensitive arena: defence manufacturing policy, a sector intertwined with national security, foreign relations, and long-term industrial planning. At a meeting of the Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority (BEZA), chaired by Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus on January 26, the government decided to earmark around 850 acres in Mirsarai, Chattogram, for a proposed Defence Industrial Zone. After the meeting, BEZA Executive Chairman Ashik Chowdhury said the land is currently vacant and was previously designated for the Indian Economic Zone cancelled last year.Officials say the Defence Industrial Zone is intended to strengthen domestic military production capacity and position Bangladesh for the growing global defence manufacturing market. But critics argue the project illustrates the interim government’s broader pattern: taking long-term strategic decisions without electoral legitimacy. BEZA clarified the zone is not meant to replicate Bangladesh Ordnance Factories through state-run plants, but rather pursue technology transfer, joint ventures and supplier arrangements with foreign partners, with private sector participation. Criticism intensified after the Ninth National Pay Commission, led by former finance secretary Zakir Ahmed Khan, proposed a civil service pay increase so steep that it could double the government’s recurring wage bill if implemented.The rationale for the pay hike is not entirely groundless. Civil servants have not seen a pay revision in a decade and inflation has eroded purchasing power. But implementing the proposed structure would require an additional Tk 1.06 lakh crore per year, on top of the Tk 1.31 lakh crore the state already spends on salaries and pensions for 14 lakh employees and nine lakh pensioners. For a treasury strained by debt and missed revenue targets, economists call the proposal a fiscal landmine -- especially if it becomes a political inducement rather than a disciplined reform. Yunus’s government won a high-stakes diplomatic reprieve with Washington. Facing a protectionist Trump administration threatening tariffs of 37 garment exports, his team negotiated it down to 20 percent. For a country dependent on garments for the majority of export earnings, it probably averted a disaster.But economists argue the relief came with a price. In late 2025, Biman Bangladesh Airlines was directed to purchase 14 Boeing aircraft in a multi-billion-dollar deal backed by a sovereign guarantee. What’s more, the deal is proceeding without a comparative analysis between Boeing and Airbus.Governance concerns grew further after a sudden reshuffle of Biman’s board weeks before the election.

1.6 crore people face acute food insecurity in Bangladesh

The national analysis on acute food insecurity and acute malnutrition was shared at a workshop convened by the Ministry of Food, together with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Unicef, World Food Programme (WFP), Action Against Hunger and Save the Children at the Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in Dhaka today. In 2024, the same analysis revealed 2.35 crore people in Bangladesh were facing high levels of food insecurity.

The analysis was conducted in April 2025, using the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), a globally recognised tool that helps governments and humanitarian actors understand the severity and geographic spread of food insecurity and malnutrition. Conducted in April 2025, using the IPC methodology, the analysis reveals that between May and December 2025, an estimated 16 million people across 36 districts of Bangladesh and in the Rohingya camps -- 17 percent of the 96 million people analyzed -- are projected to face crisis or worse levels of food insecurity.

“Among them, 361,000 people are expected to be in emergency conditions, requiring urgent humanitarian assistance to meet their basic food needs,” WFP said in a statement.In 2025, the highest incidence of acute food insecurity was observed in Cox’s Bazar, where both Rohingya refugees, particularly in Ukhiya and Teknaf, and surrounding local populations are experiencing high levels of food insecurity.

Beyond these refugee-hosting areas, several other districts across Bangladesh are also at high risk, including Sunamganj, Barguna, Bandarban, Noakhali, and Satkhira, where around 25 percent of people are experiencing high levels of food insecurity.

Among the Rohingya refugees in Cox’s

Bazar and Bhasan Char, around 445,692 people, representing 40 percent of the analysed refugee population, are projected to face high levels of food insecurity or even worse conditions. Key drivers of food insecurity include climatic shocks such as the widespread flooding in 2024, which severely disrupted livelihoods and slowed recovery; economic shocks, including persistent inflation and market volatility that weakened purchasing power, especially for low-income groups; and humanitarian funding cuts combined with increased needs among the Rohingya population.

The analysis highlighted a worrying nutrition crisis.Among children aged 6–59 months, 1.6 million are suffering or expected to suffer from acute malnutrition throughout 2025.This includes nearly 144,000 cases of Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM), a life-threatening condition that requires immediate intervention, and about 1.4 million cases of Moderate Acute

Malnutrition (MAM). “Furthermore, nearly 117,000 pregnant and breastfeeding women are expected to suffer from acute malnutrition in the same period,” the report added.Food Secretary Masudul Hasan said the latest analysis provides a sobering picture of the current state of food security and nutrition in Bangladesh, which requires urgent action.

“Today’s workshop is a vital step in ensuring that these findings are not just reviewed but translated into coordinated action,” he said, expressing the government’s commitment to protect the most vulnerable people.Key recommendations of the analysis include delivering life-saving humanitarian assistance to populations in emergency conditions; expanding shock-responsive social safety nets for vulnerable groups; providing emergency agricultural and livestock support; supporting livelihood restoration, especially in flood-affected areas, among others.

Between compassion and capital: Shashi Doctor’s moral world

Manik Bandopadhyay’s novels are about the human psyche, relationships, and societal conflicts where ‘villagers love to be afraid’. Shashi is seen at the beginning of one such rural story in colonial Bengal – The Puppets’ Tale’. On the way back to the village by boat, he sees the body of Haru, who was killed by lightning, leaning against the trunk of a banyan tree, surrounded by a jungle and wetland full of snakes, on the bank of a canal. The boatman, Govardhan, fears ghosts, but Shashi is ‘a Kolkata-trained doctor’; hence, he ignores the objections from Govardhan; rather, he says, ‘If it’s a ghost, then I will tie it up and bring it to you and break its spirit; take the boat back’.This is how “Shashi Doctor” appears in the first scene of Manik’s novel, the protagonist throughout the story. Manik Bandopadhyay, a prolific writer in Bengali (or Bangla) literature, penned The Puppets’ Tale in 1935, nearly a century ago. This is one of the most widely read Bengali novels that tells us the story of a village at a time when colonial Bengal was experiencing conspicuous socio-cultural conflicts such as tradition versus logic, European rationalism versus age-old rituals, urban versus rural life, modern medicine versus conventional therapeutic approaches, and so forth. My intention is not to criticise the literary merit of this novel, nor is that my job. Rather, I want to dissect and detach Shashi Doctor’s ballet of life from the entire story of The Puppets’ Tale – to gain insights into the life of a physician who settled in a rural countryside of colonial Bengal after ‘passing from medical college and becoming a doctor’.In the second chapter, Manik introduces the main character of his novel by stating, ‘Shashi’s character has two distinct parts. On one side, he does not lack imagination, passion, and a sense of humour; on the other, he also has enough affection for domestic acumen and wealth. His imaginative side is hidden and silent. Only those close to him see his deep, empathetic understanding of beauty and flaws in life.’Can anyone entwine themselves into the tapestry of Shashi’s life and form such a deep bond with him? Manik certainly does, or how else can he describe the character of Shashi Doctor in such an efficient way? Readers might also get familiar with Shashi – with the ‘intelligence, restraint, and accountable nature’ of

Shashi Doctor – as described by Manik. Even so, no characters in the novel share such closeness with Shashi. But why? Shahaduz Zaman, a prolific writer and medical anthropologist, has explored the intricacies of healthcare delivery systems in Bangladesh through his ethnographic studies. His work highlighted that doctors often lack social proximity to individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds in Bangladesh. The highly educated physicians, entrenched in their positions of power, fail to bridge the gap with impoverished patients. This distance arises from their establishment as a dominant professional group, leading to a treatment dynamic where lower-class patients are seen through the lens of upper-class authority?Shashi’s case unfolds the same dynamic. Manik states that Shashi, endowed with ‘common worldly wisdom’ and a nuanced understanding of wealth, is both feared and obsequiously admired by everyone in the village. People’s actions often align with Shashi’s thoughts. Yet, no one is so close to him. The social distance with patients stems not only from Shashi’s medical expertise but also from his family’s social status and class. Shashi’s father, Gopal, is a notable figure. ‘People claim that Gopal Das’s business is to put a knife to the throat. He buys and sells property and lends money – that means he’s both a broker and a moneylender.’With ill-gotten gains from people, Gopal sends his only son, Shashi, to study medicine in Kolkata, the capital of colonial Bengal. Shashi realises the harsh truth that he ‘studied medicine with the money of his father’s thievery and embezzlement’. Driven by a desire to atone for these sins, he seeks redemption by bringing smiles to the faces of the ordinary people of his village. Shashi takes care of Jamini Kabiraj’s wife, “Sen Didi”, during her smallpox, ultimately curing her. He tirelessly works day and night to construct a hospital with the property left by the deceased priest Yadav. In this way, Shashi earns a cherished place among the villagers. However, amidst the crowd, he discovers a profound solitude. He is respected and revered by everyone, sought after for his judgments and opinions on everything, both good and bad, yet he remains alone. During and after the British colonial period, doctors in the Indian subcontinent often grappled with loneliness.

Today, medical education, centred around medical colleges and hospitals, demands students’ time with classes, hospital wards, outpatients, clinical rotations, and studies. Brief moments of reprieve allow them to converse among themselves, but once they enter the profession, they become deeply engrossed in their fields. The journey into studying medicine subtly creates class divisions, weakening pre-existing friendships. Professional life rarely offers a chance to mend these bonds to a large extent. Early departures and late returns home, coupled with spending additional hours in the pursuit of higher degrees and professional excellence, widen the chasm with family members. As a result, modern-day doctors like Shashi bear this persistent solitude and isolation. In some ways, doctors, too, bear a portion of the blame for such isolation. Dick Teresi’s The Undead poignantly notes that many doctors, having spent their early years buried in textbooks and their later years consumed by demanding careers, miss out on the essence of human bonding and connections.

Their lives, divided into relentless study and the pursuit of medical mastery, leave little room for family ties. A recent example is a doctor whose marriage crumbled due to neglecting his family and rarely spending time with his children, even on weekends, which serves as a stark reminder of this tragic reality³. Shashi’s thoughts are confined to ‘old prejudices of good and evil’. Modern medical training fails to liberate him from this archaic mindset. He forbids Govardhan from touching Haru’s corpse, deeming it sinful by societal standards. His reverence for the priest Yadav mirrors the ‘unwavering convictions of the rural psyche’. Similarly, due to societal disapproval, he hesitates to pursue an extramarital affair with his friend Paran’s wife, Kusum. When Kusum leaves for her father’s home permanently, Shashi sees it as a blessing. He contemplates that ‘the wife of the house has upheld her purity and chastity; virtue and faith have been preserved.’ Shashi, a wealthy doctor from Gaodiya, is quite considerate of his wealth. Shashi used to receive charges for the treatment of Bhuto, the son of Basudev Barujja. When Basudev was leaving the village with his family, Shashi insisted on collecting the money he was owed. Despite Basudev’s plea

for more time, he quarrelled and secured the due payments. Even after toiling endlessly, he earned only a modest sum and mused that ‘had he been in Kolkata, he could have become a millionaire by now.’ Shashi recognises his greed for money, which leads him to see himself as a ‘businessman’ and fuels a fire of self-criticism. Yet, when he doesn’t receive his dues after working hard, his mood sours. Colonialism, or more specifically, the colonial political and economic system, emerged alongside the growth of capital. From its inception, the colonial education system emphasised financial gain from social services. We can see that many doctors trained under this system, including Shashi, are driven by ambitions of fame and fortune, both locally and globally. They mostly prioritise monetary rewards over patient care. This phenomenon often results in troubling situations where critically ill patients are denied treatment due to unpaid hospital bills. Some doctors even refuse to enter the operating room until their fees are settled. Of course, there are exceptions to this trend. Still, we must admit that the colonial education system has left a deep imprint on how we perceive relationships within the medical field. Historically, it emphasised materialism and shaped individual thinking according to colonial values. Consequently, the doctor–patient relationship has often transformed into a provider–consumer dynamic, viewing patients more as consumers than humans. While it is undeniable that doctors need to earn a living, which justifies the financial aspect of their work, this should not overshadow the essence of their vocation. The bond between doctors and patients ought to be grounded in ethical values and humanity, not merely driven by monetary considerations. ‘Shashi, who deeply cherishes life’, loves to live. He takes on the responsibility of everyone living in the village out of that genuine love. Priest Yadav transfers all his property to Shashi to build a village hospital. Shashi then dedicates himself to establishing this hospital with Yadav’s funds, aiming to provide healthcare for the needy and helpless villagers. He decorates the entire hospital, weaving new dreams around it. Feeling a profound sense of responsibility, he decides to stay in the village, driven by a new urge to serve those suffering from ‘cholera, small

pox, kala-azar, typhoid, and many other ailments.’A Kolkata-trained doctor, Shashi, uses his creativity to adorn the ‘Shashi Doctor’s Hospital’ in Gaodiya.Even so, Shashi carries a lingering regret: the regret that he has not grasped or enjoyed life to the fullest. ‘When will he sort out his own life, when will he focus on his own work?’ This sense of incompleteness haunts him, leading to an existential crisis. Throughout the entire story, we witness this crisis in Shashi’s mind, who received colonial academic training at Kolkata Medical College. Despite his attachment to city life, Shashi returns to his village but consistently shows a longing for city life. He cannot shake the allure of a ‘vibrant, cultured, and gleaming city life filled with education, civilisation, and nobility’. His attachment to the city, with its books and friends in Kolkata, tugs at him relentlessly. Therefore, he often considers leaving everything behind and relocating to the city to truly savour his own life. Yet, an equally compelling urge pulls him to serve the villagers, prioritising their needs over his own identity and existence. Torn between the luxury of city life and the love and affection of village people, Gaodiya’s ‘Daktar Babu’ wrestles with indecision. Each time he resolves to move to the city, his love for Kusum, his obligation to the villagers, or Gopal’s tricks derail his plans.Modern allopathic medicine was introduced by colonial powers. This approach has made doctors a dominant force in society by securing all the key knowledge of ‘Western medical science’, leaving patients with little understanding of their own bodies. In the past, doctors were revered, even called the ‘Second God’ in Europe. However, the behaviour of some doctors has created a gap between them and their patients. People feel that doctors are arrogant and unapproachable, which has led to a change in attitude towards them. In Bangladesh, this issue is not uncommon. Many patients are dissatisfied with their doctors and often complain about their behaviour. Research shows that some patients even seek treatment abroad due to the perceived arrogance of local doctors. Could this disconnect be traced back to the roots of colonial medicine? It’s a question worth pondering. In the story of The Puppets’ Tale, we also see Shashi Doctor as an arrogant person. His dismissive behaviour to-

wards patients at his village hospital causes them distress. He even shows ‘arrogance’ when his old friend Paran visits him for treatment of a throat wound. Shashi demonstrates his impatience by not taking the time to ask Paran to sit down. Medical training in Bangladesh falls short of meeting patients’ humane expectations. Doctors see their role as one of compassion and mercy, but often lack true empathy. This lack of empathy is a major reason for patients’ distrust and disappointment. Research shows that nearly 80% of doctor–patient disputes stem from a lack of empathy during interactions. However, the story also shows a different side. When Sen Didi has a child, Shashi thinks, “Has Shashi only learned to save people, not to kill?” Then again, out of compassion, he tries to save Gopal’s child in Sen Didi’s womb.British colonialism shaped our health system much like it did in other colonial territories, intertwining with capitalist influences. Along with everything else, even the human body became colonised through the introduction of modern medicine. Although the British have departed, colonial values and practices persist in many ways. The esteemed status of medicine as an elite profession has not yet disappeared. Many people still aspire for their children to become doctors to elevate their social status. However, this respect is coupled with a lack of trust in physicians. Patients often question treatments they don’t fully understand, yet doctors are still seen as talented individuals. He used colonial Algeria as an example to show how colonial medicine contributed to the dominance of doctors in modern healthcare, the ambivalence patients feel about visiting doctors’ chambers, and the deep-seated distrust between the two parties⁴.Hospitals are where modern medical theories come to life. European colonisers introduced modern hospital systems to their colonies, including the Indian subcontinent. British rulers established hospitals in colonial Bengal as tools of imperial hegemony. These hospitals were staffed by colonial doctors who relentlessly worked hard to promote Western medicine and show a humanitarian face of colonial rule. The works of Frantz Fanon illustrated the discriminatory attitude of colonial doctors towards the natives compared to the Europeans.

What are seasonal guest worker visas

Trump admin to add 65,000 H-2B slots

New Delhi: US President Donald Trump’s administration is set to add about 65,000 H-2B seasonal guest worker visas through September 30, according to a Federal Register notice released this week. The joint decision announced by the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Labor (DOL) is a “temporary final rule” that will double the maximum number of H-2B guest visas this year. The rare move by the Trump administration marks a departure from the current government’s usual policy changes and visa overhaul moves aimed at immigration crackdown in the country. And so, the expansion of foreign worker program has now increased the cap on H-2B nonimmigrant visas to 64,716 additional visas for fiscal year 2026. “These supplemental visas are available only to US businesses that are suffering irreparable harm or will suffer impending irreparable harm without the ability to employ all the H-2B workers requested in their petition, as attested by the employer on a new attestation form,” the US Citizenship and Immigration Services stated in an official press release published on Friday, Jan 30 (US time). “This temporary final rule authorizes H-2B supplemental visas for FY 2026. To assist US businesses that need workers to begin work on different start dates, the supplemental visas will be distributed in three allocations, including two separate allocations for the second half of FY 2026.” Under the nonimmigrant visa program expansion, 46,226 of the 64,716 additional visas will be made available only for returning workers, which refers to workers who received an H-2B visa or were granted H-2B status in

one of the last 3 fiscal years. The remaining 18,490 visas will not require the migrant to be a returning worker. Additionally, the visas will be allocated to employers who demand H-2B workers during the late-season. And so, these slots are meant for foreign workers who will begin work between May 1 and September 30, 2026.

In addition to announcing the unconventional shift from the Trump admin’s plan to lead its mass deportation campaign, the USCIS firmly asserted that the increase in the H-2B cap is based on time-limited statutory authority. As a result, it will not apply to the H-2B program in future fiscal years. According to the US State Department’s website, the H-2 visa type (H-2A and H-2B) pertain to applicants performing ‘temporary’ or seasonal work. The H-2A classification is for ‘Temporary Agricultural Workers,’ whereas the H-2B is for ‘Temporary Non-agricultural Workers.’ US employers avail the H-2B program to fill temporary nonagricultural jobs in the country. To qualify for the nonimmigrant classification, the petitioner must establish that there are not enough US workers who “are able, willing, qualified, and available” to do the temporary work. Moreover, it should also be ensured that including H-2B holders in the workforce doesn’t adversely impact the wages and working conditions of similarly employed American workers. Even if the employment situation is otherwise permanent, a petitioner seeking to avail this visa must show that a temporary event of short duration has created the need for a temporary worker. Allocation of additional H-2B visas



As determined by the USCIS, the supplemental visas will be distributed in three allocations. And so the 64,716 visas are divided as follows: 1st allocation: For employment start dates from Jan 1 through March 31, 18,490 visas have been reserved for returning workers who were issued H-2B visas or held H-2B status in FY 2023, 2024 or 2025.

2nd allocation: For employment start dates from April 1 through April 30, 27,736 visas

(and any unused visa from the first allocation). Employers must file these petitions no earlier than 15 days after the second half statutory cap is reached. 3rd allocation: For employment start dates from May 1 through September 30, 2026, 18,490 visas (and any unused visas from the first two allocations). Employers must file these petitions no earlier than 45 days after the second half statutory cap is reached.

Meesho’s net loss increased Rs 491 crore

New Delhi: E-commerce unicorn Meesho reported a significantly wider loss in its first quarterly results post IPO, as the company increased investments in its logistics arms Valmo and overall user growth, which ate into its margins. Net loss for the third quarter of FY26 was Rs 490.7 crore, compared to a loss of Rs 37.4 crore in the year-ago quarter. The company said it rapidly expanded Valmo’s logistics network in second and third quarter, in response to a market consolidation of third-party logistics providers (3PL) in Q1. This rapid expansion resulted in inefficiencies such as under-utilised routes, redundant nodes and longer delivery distances, the company said in its shareholder letter, which impacted contribution margins by 1.1 percentage point in Q2 and another 1 percentage point in Q3. Contribution margins for its marketplace business, which forms 99% of its revenue, shrank to 2.3% from 4.3% a year ago. As a result, Meesho recorded a negative adjusted Ebitda of Rs 460 crore in Q3, compared to Rs 21 crore loss in the year-ago period. The bottomline was also hit by an increase in marketing

costs and employee-related expenses. Going ahead, the company expects significant improvement in its adjusted Ebitda margin. Over the next two quarters, it aims to reach near breakeven levels, as it was in Q1. In Q3, Meesho’s adjusted Ebitda margin was a negative 4.2%. “We have been shedding redundant nodes, refining delivery routes and increasing throughput in the newly scaled nodes — this will drive down per-order cost,” the management said in the letter. Despite the dismal bottomline performance, Meesho’s revenue from operation rose 31% y-o-y to Rs 3,517.6 crore, driven by more customers buying more often. Annual transacting users reached an all-time high of 251 million, pushing net merchandise value (NMV) up 26% year-on-year. The number of orders placed also jumped 35% to 690 million during the quarter. The company noted that NVM growth in the quarter needs to also be viewed in the context of festive calendar shifts. Diwali fell in mid-October this year compared to early November last year, shifting some festival shopping from Q3 into Q2.

Ambuja profit declines 91%, revenue rises



New Delhi: Adani Group firm Ambuja Cements’ net profit attributable to the owners dipped 90.6% year-on-year to Rs 204 crore in the third quarter of FY26. Profit after tax (PAT) was lifted by one-off gains in the form of government grants and write-backs to subsidiary ACC. Normalised PAT — without the impact of one-off gains — came in at Rs 378 crore compared with Rs 106 crore in the year-ago period. Profit attributable to the owners came in behind Bloomberg estimate of Rs 734 crore.

‘We estimate Rs 8,000–10,000 cr provisions to meet ECL framework’: Hardeep Singh Ahluwalia

The firm’s revenue from operations for the December quarter was Rs 10,181 crore,

up 19.8% year-on-year and marginally ahead of Bloomberg estimate of Rs 10,147 crore. Earnings before interest, taxation, depreciation and amortisation (Ebitda) was up 57.4% at Rs 1,257 crore, trailing Street estimate of Rs 1,759 crore. Ebitda margin was 12.3% and Ebitda per tonne was Rs 718, up 31%. The firm recorded quarterly sales volume of 18.9 million tonne, up 17% from the year-ago period. Realisations improved by ‘5/bag on-year. Its market share stood at 16.6%, share of premium cement sustained at 35% of trade sales and the volume growth of premium cement came in at 31% on-year, the company said. “We are now working to fix some of the specific issues on cost, importantly, power cost, share of green power, fuel efficiency, improvement of WHRS / AFR (waste heat recovery systems / alternative fuel & raw materials), improvement of logistics cost, which is part of the blueprint to achieve the targeted cost of Rs 3,650 per tonne by March 2028. The cost leadership journey has resulted in a 2% lower cost of sales in Q3,” Vinod Bahety, whole time director and chief executive, Ambuja Cements, said. Ambuja Cements’ net worth at the end of December was Rs 69,854 crore and it continued to be debt-free. “The cement industry is expected to maintain its growth momentum. The revival of demand from Q3 has continued with the trend in Q4, providing a growth of almost around 8% for the industry for FY26,” the company added.

Union Bank of India, Bank of India may combine by year-end

New Delhi: The initial merger process between Union Bank of India and Bank of India (BoI) seems to have begun, according to sources familiar with the matter. Both banks are currently undertaking due diligence, including internal assessments of processes and operational integration. Some officials said the merger could be completed by the end of the calendar year.

PSU bank mergers to create 4-5 lenders, says official “The government is keen to merge smaller banks with larger ones to create four to five big PSU banks instead of the current 12,” said a senior banking official aware of the developments, requesting anonymity. The merger would create one of the country’s largest public sector lenders, with a substantially expanded balance sheet, branch network and customer base.

The combined entity would become the second-largest PSU bank, with assets of about ₹25.4 lakh crore in FY25, and the third-largest bank overall after State Bank of India and HDFC Bank. In terms of market capitalisation, the merged bank would rank sixth at about ₹2.13 lakh crore at current prices, overtaking Bank of Baroda, Canara Bank and Punjab National Bank. At present, Union Bank and Bank of India are the fifth- and sixth-largest PSU banks, respectively. One of the key challenges in the merger process will be the integration of technology platforms, given differences in core banking systems and digital architecture. Queries emailed to both banks remained unanswered at the time of publication.

Both Union Bank and BoI have reported steady improvements in asset quality and profitability



over recent quarters, aided by lower slippages, recoveries from stressed accounts and stronger capital buffers. The proposed consolidation follows the government’s mega-merger exercise between 2017 and 2020, during which 10 public sector banks were merged into four larger entities, reducing the number of state-owned banks

to 12 from 27. Since then, policymakers have repeatedly underscored the need to create fewer but stronger lenders capable of meeting India’s growing credit demand, funding large infrastructure projects and competing more effectively with private sector peers

FY 2027 H-1B cap initial registration open

USCIS issues bulletin for new season

New Delhi: Sharing a major update on the FY 2027 H-1B Cap Initial Registration Period, the US Citizenship and Immigration Services released a new bulletin on Friday, Jan 30 (US time). As per the latest announcement, the aspiring visa petitioners should mark March 4 and March 19 on their calendars as important dates related to the new season. “For the FY 2027 H-1B cap season, if we receive registrations for unique beneficiaries during the initial registration period that exceed the cap, we will conduct a weighted selection from the unique beneficiaries with properly submitted registrations. If we do not receive registrations for enough unique beneficiaries, we will select all registrations for unique beneficiaries that were properly submitted in the initial registration period.” Back in September, US President Donald Trump’s proclamation titled “Restriction on Entry of Certain Nonimmigrant Workers” worked as yet another major

step in the H-1B overhaul. “While the proclamation does not directly impact the electronic registration process, if a petitioner has their registration selected and is eligible to file an H-1B cap-subject petition, they may need to pay an additional \$100,000 fee before filing the H-1B petition as a condition of eligibility,” the new announcement highlighted. The new announcement this week shares not only information related to the registration process, but it also incorporates new policy changes under the Donald Trump administration, including the new weighted selection process and the \$100,000 H-1B fee. The registration period for the fiscal year 2027 H-1B cap will open at noon Eastern on March 4 and run through noon Eastern March 19, 2026. About the H-1B cap initial registration process

According to USCIS’ announcement, prospective H-1B cap-subject petitioners and representatives must use a USCIS online account to register each beneficiary for the

selection process. A \$215 H-1B registration fee must be paid for each registration. As an H-1B petitioning employer without a USCIS online account, you must first create an organisation account. Thereafter, company clients can be added to their accounts at any time. However, both representatives and employers must wait until March 4 to enter beneficiary information and submit registrations along with the associated \$215 fee. Selection for the new batch will kick off after the initial registration period closes. The USCIS has further revealed that selection notifications could be sent by March 31, 2026 via the same USCIS online accounts to prospective petitioners and representatives who have at least one registration selected. “A petitioner may only file an H-1B cap-subject petition, including a petition for a beneficiary who is eligible for the advanced degree exemption, if their registration for the beneficiary of the cap-subject petition was

selected in the H-1B registration process,” the official news release added. The fresh USCIS bulletin goes on to highlight what’s “new for the FY 2027 Cap Season.” Consequently, it lists out a final rule the Department of Homeland Security published last year, thereby amending the regulations determining the selection process for H-1B registrations. Alluding to the new weighted selection process replacing the random lottery system, the USCIS stated, “The new H-1B selection process prioritizes allocating visas to higher-skilled and higher-paid aliens to better protect the wages, working conditions, and job opportunities of American workers.” FY 2027 H-1B Cap Initial Registration Period Opens on March 4. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services announced that the initial registration period for the fiscal year (FY) 2027 H-1B cap will open at noon Eastern on March 4 and run through noon Eastern on March 19, 2026.

Digital census puts spotlight on cyber security risks

New Delhi: As the government prepares for the next population census, cyber security is emerging as a central operational concern, with experts maintaining that as much as a quarter of the total budget may need to be allocated to securing digital systems. The shift to app-based data collection for the first time, replacing paper schedules with mobile and web platforms, has significantly expanded the risk surface, exposing the exercise to threats ranging from data leaks to system disruption. The scale of the exercise — covering more than 1.4 billion people — means cybersecurity is no longer a back-end technology issue but a core governance challenge. With millions of enumerators using hand-held devices and temporary logins, the census will involve one of the largest real-time data collection exercises undertaken anywhere in the world. Any breach or prolonged disruption could undermine the integrity of official statistics and erode public trust in one of the country’s most important administrative exercises. Security experts point out that the first layer of defence lies at the device and application level. Enumerators will rely on smartphones, tablets and hand-held devices, making endpoint security critical. Data must be encrypted at the point of collection and remain protected during transmission and stor-

age. “Common best practices include hardened device configurations, regular updates, and the use of multi-layered mobile security and anti-malware solutions. In scenarios where enumerators use personal devices, periodic checks for basic cyber hygiene are generally part of the overall risk management approach,” Jaydeep Ruparelia, CEO of cybersecurity firm Infoperecept, said. “Key measures include end-to-end encryption, multi-layered security protocols for mobile applications and web portals, and stringent access controls. For such a critical initiative, around 25–30% of the overall budget should be earmarked for cybersecurity,” Chetan Jain, founder and managing director at Inspira Enterprises, told Fe. Unlike earlier censuses, where physical forms limited exposure, the digital format requires protection across the entire data lifecycle — from the moment information is captured in the field to its storage, processing and eventual use. Applications built for the census must follow security-by-design principles, with extensive testing and safeguards to ensure that data is automatically deleted from devices once successfully transmitted. This reduces the risk of data exposure in the event of device loss or compromise.

India’s Global Trade Engagement

Beijing: India–EU Union conclude a land-mark Free Trade Agreement, boosting exports, services, mobility, investment, and strategic cooperation. The India–EU FTA strengthens global trade ties and positions India as a key economic partner.Hon’ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi and European Commission President H.E.Ms. Ursula von der Leyen, to-day jointly announced the conclusion of the India–European Union Free Trade Agreement (India–EU FTA) at the 16th India–EU Summit, held during the visit of the European leaders to India. This announcement marks a historic milestone in India–EU economic relations and trade engagement with key global partners.The conclusion of this FTA positions India and the European Union as trusted partners committed to open markets, predictability, and inclusive growth. The FTA comes after intense negotiations since the re-launch of negotiations in 2022. The announcement of the FTA today marks the culmination of years of sustained dialogue and cooperation, between India and the EU, demonstrating the political will and shared vision to deliver a balanced, modern, and rules-based economic and trade partnership.The European Union is India’s one of the largest trading partner, with bilateral trade in goods and services growing steadily over the years. In 2024–25, India’s bilateral trade in goods with the EU stood at INR 11.5 Lakh Crore (USD 136.54 billion) with exports worth INR 6.4 Lakh Crore (USD 75.85 billion) and imports amounting to INR 5.1 Lakh Crore (USD 60.68 billion). India-EU trade in services reached INR 7.2 Lakh Crore (USD 83.10 billion) in 2024.India and EU are 4th and 2nd largest economies, comprising 25% of Global GDP and account for one third of global trade. Integration of the two large diverse and complementary economies will create unprecedented trade and investment opportunities. Union Minister for Commerce and Industry, Shri Piyush Goyal, lauded the strategic vision and steadfast leadership of Hon’ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi. He stated: “The conclusion of the India–European Union Free Trade Agreement represents a defining achievement in India’s economic engagement and global outlook. This supports India’s approach to secure trusted, mutually beneficial and balanced partnerships. Beyond a conventional trade deal, it represents a comprehensive partnership with strategic dimensions and is one of the most consequential FTA. India has secured unprecedented market access for more than 99% of Indian exports by trade value to the EU that also bolsters the ‘Make in India’ initiative. Beyond goods, it unlocks high-value commitments in services complemented by a comprehensive mobility framework enabling seamless movement of skilled Indian professionals.India, powered by a young and dynamic workforce and one of the fastest-growing major economies,

stands poised to leverage this FTA to create jobs, spur innovation, unlock opportunities across sectors, and enhance its competitiveness on the global stage.”The India-EU trade pact covers conventional areas such as trade in goods, services, trade remedies, rules of origin, customs and trade facilitation, as well as emerging areas such as SMEs and digital trade, amongst others. The India–EU FTA gives a decisive boost to its labour-intensive sectors such as textiles, apparel, leather, footwear, marine products, gems and jewellery, handicrafts, engineering goods, and automobiles bringing down tariffs up to 10% on almost 33 bn USD of exports to zero on entry into force of the Agreement. Beyond enhancing competitiveness, it empowers workers, artisans, women, youth, and MSMEs, while integrating Indian businesses more deeply into global value chains and reinforcing India’s role as a key player and supplier in global trade.On automobiles, calibrated and carefully crafted quota based auto liberalisation package will not only allow EU auto makers to introduce their models in India in higher price bands but also open the possibilities for Make in India and exports from India in future. Indian consumers to benefit from high tech products and greater competition. The reciprocal market access in EU market will also open up opportunities for India made automobiles to access EU market.India’s agricultural and processed food sectors are poised for a transformative boost under the India–EU FTA, creating a level playing field for Indian farmers and agrarian enterprises. Key commodities such as tea, coffee, spices, fresh fruits and vegetables, and processed foods will gain enhanced competitiveness, strengthening rural livelihoods, promoting inclusive growth, and reinforcing India’s position as a trusted global supplier. India has prudently safeguarded sensitive sectors, including dairy, cereals, poultry, soymeal, certain fruits and vegetables, balancing export growth with domestic priorities.Beyond tariff liberalisation, the FTA provides measures to tackle non-tariff barriers through strengthened regulatory cooperation, greater transparency, and streamlined customs, Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) procedures, and Technical Barriers to Trade disciplines.Through CBAM provisions, commitments have been secured including a forward-looking most-favoured nation assurance extending flexibilities if any granted to third countries under the regulation, enhanced technical cooperation on recognition of carbon prices, recognition of verifiers, as well as financial assistance and targeted support to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and comply with emerging carbon requirements.Services being dominant and faster-growing part of both economies will trade more in future. Certainty of market access, non-discriminatory treatment, focus on digitally delivered services, ease of mobility will provide boost to India’s services exports.

“Prevent the Bloodshed”: Filmmaker Sepideh Farsi on Iran Protests & U.S.

Beijing: The latest reliable estimates of the death toll in Iran’s recent nationwide protests are growing, potentially reaching the tens of thousands. Some estimates place the number of civilians killed by government forces at 30,000 or more. We play a rare eyewitness account of the deadly massacre of protesters in Rasht, Iran, and speak to the Iranian filmmaker and political dissident Sepideh Farsi, who says U.S. military intervention “would only worsen the situation.” She warns that President Trump’s interest in U.S. military action on the country is “for business,” and “not for Iranian people.” We end today’s show in Iran. The New York Times reports President Trump has been presented in recent days with a, quote, “expanded list of potential military options against Iran aimed at doing further damage to the country’s nuclear and missile facilities or weakening Iran’s supreme leader,” unquote. The current options include sending U.S. forces inside Iran to carry out raids.Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth spoke during Trump’s Cabinet meeting Thursday. AMY GOODMAN: Meanwhile, inside Iran, Reuters reports, security forces have rounded up thousands of people in an attempt to prevent renewed anti-government protests. According to the U.S.-based Human Rights Activists News Agency, over 6,000 protesters were killed since December, but some believe to be — that to be a vast undercount.For more, we’re joined by Sepideh Farsi, Iranian filmmaker and activist, the director of the documentary Put Your Soul on Your Hand and Walk. Sepideh Farsi was born and raised in Iran. She was jailed for almost a year as a teenager in Iran for helping a political dissident in her high school. Since 2009, she can’t go back to Iran due to her films and her political statements.Sepideh, explain what’s happening there in Iran right now. You’re deeply critical of the Iranian government, but also critical of the U.S. threats to strike Iran.I was just listening to the statement you broadcasted. I am amazed that they talk about everything except the Iranian people who are losing their lives. This is my main concern now, to prevent the bloodshed, to stop it. Of course I’m against Khamenei and the whole regime. And I am also very concerned about a possible military intervention, because it would only worsen the situation. As we remember, last June, it only reinforced the regime. When Israel first started the so-called preemptive attacks and America followed, they didn’t end the nuclear capacities of Iran, because they’re still talking about it, and they did not harm the regime, because all those who were killed by them were replaced. And now, even if they hit Khamenei, somebody else will take over. This is not the way to do.And we’re hearing about tens of thousands of killed people, people arrested. Many of my friends have been called in for interrogation. Doctors are being arrested. Lawyers are being arrested, kidnapped. And there are death sentences pronounced against people, activists, which will go if this attack would happen. This is really my concern, that what would go on in Iran if they do this, they would destroy part of the country, perhaps part of the regime’s capacity, but the regime will not fall. We’ve already seen this.How many people do you think have been killed? How many people have been arrested?

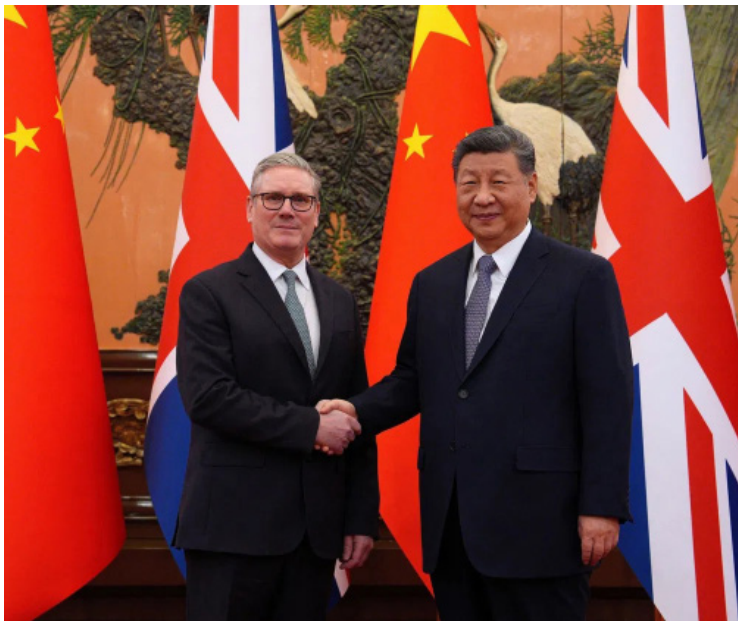


What do you base your information on?It’s very hard to evaluate that. And even one life is too much gone, you know. I mean, but I’ve seen, and I see every day — every time I go on social media, I see new names coming up. Right now the latest, quite believable, I would say, but I’m not, you know, a human rights NGO, and all the figures are quite kind of under. But we are — I saw a count which was city by city, and that was a bit more than 30,000 — 30,274, to be precise. And we’re talking about 100,000 people injured in the eye, who lost one or two eyes. We’re talking about tens of thousands of arrestees, more people who are being called in. All those who might, in one way or another, help wounded people or defend prisoners are now being called in to be jailed or to be interrogated. It’s a total disaster. Total disaster. During the nationwide uprising, Iranian security forces apparently killed dozens of protesters in the market of the Caspian Sea city of Rasht on the night of January 8th. We turn now to a rare eyewitness testimony of that apparent massacre. For the safety of the eyewitness, we’re keeping her identity concealed. main group, the mass of the people, but instead, they ran into the alleys. But whoever went into the alleys and the side streets was shot by the forces and killed. They tracked them down there and cornered them and shot them.She said, “I was running away, and they shot me once. And when I continued running, one of them followed and hit me with a baton. But because I continued to run, they shot me a second time. And when I fell down to the ground, they thought I was dead, and they left me. After they left, I crawled to a fruit shop, and the shopkeeper is the one who took me to the hospital.” As if we are not human beings. It’s as if we are all running away from a mass murder. What happened to her could have happened to any of us there earlier that night.At the beginning of the evening, you didn’t see any special forces there around the town hall, where the rally and the gathering had started and was taking place. And there were so many people at the rally. The gathering was so crowded, so

big. But not one of the protesters attacked any of the administrative buildings. No one attacked the town hall. No damage was done by the protesters to the administrative buildings, nor to the banks.You can’t imagine. You can’t imagine the size of the rally, how many people were there. And then they, the military forces, came back by the evening. Why did they come and start rounding up all the young people and burning buildings? A number of people had taken shelter in the bazaar, and that’s where they opened machine guns on them, and they killed them all. It was a rain of bullets. I was farther away, and I was hearing the bullets, the gunshots, and I thought, “Well, there are so many people. The military forces cannot do anything. So they are just shooting in the air to scare people.” But it turns out that they were actually shooting on the people and killing them. Killing them.AMY GOODMAN: We’re not identifying this eyewitness. Sepideh Farsi, in this last minute or so that we have left, your message to the United States, to Israel, to Iranian protesters and to the world?My message to America, to the United States, and to Israel is, please, think of the Iranian people. If you are thinking of democracy in Iran — and I do believe deeply that a democratic Iran is the best partner for any of those countries to deal with afterwards — leave it to the Iranian people. Please put maximum pressure, but diplomatic pressure. IRGC has been listed by Europe, the European Council yesterday, finally, as a terrorist organization. They can freeze their assets. Please stop dealing with this regime, and do not do a military attack. I don’t believe that. That is not for the interests of the people. That is, again, to strike a deal, as Trump wants to. This is not for Iranian people. This is just for business. So, I—AMY GOODMAN: I want to thank you so much, Sepideh Farsi, for being with us, from Paris, France, Iranian filmmaker and activist, once jailed in Iran, director, most recently, of Put Your Soul on Your Hand and Walk. That does it for our show. On Monday, February 23rd, Democracy NowHurray for the Riff Raff. I’m Amy Goodman. Thanks for joining us.

As Trump upends alliances, Britain says it needs a ‘more sophisticated’ with China

Beijing: UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer said it was “vital” to build a “more sophisticated relationship” with China as he made the first visit of a British leader to the country in eight years.Starmer’s four-day trip comes as he looks to mend strained ties with the world’s second biggest economy in the face of global frictions unleashed by Britain’s closest ally the United States.“China is a vital player on the global stage, and it’s vital that we build a more sophisticated relationship,” Starmer told Chinese leader Xi Jinping in a meeting at Beijing’s ornate Great Hall of the People on Thursday.“Our international partnerships help us deliver the security and prosperity the British people deserve, and that is why I’ve long been clear that the UK and China need a long term, consistent, and comprehensive strategic partnership,” he said. Chinese leader Xi Jinping also said China was willing to develop a “stable, and comprehensive strategic partnership” in remarks to the visiting leader and called for the two sides to “create new momentum” in their relationship. Starmer is the latest in a string of leaders from US allies traveling to Beijing as US President Donald Trump’s tariffs threats and unpredictable foreign policy — including rhetoric earlier this month threatening to take control of Danish territory Greenland — upend America’s longstanding partnerships. The visit is also a key step in Starmer’s bid to reset a relationship that has in recent years been riddled with mistrust and friction — part of his broader push to expand business opportunities with China to deliver on economic growth.Speaking to reporters following his meeting with Xi, Starmer hailed the summit as a “very good, constructive meeting with real outcomes” and stressed the “huge opportunities” for British business in China. He also described the relation-



ship with Beijing as in “good place, a strong place.” He said the two sides made “some really good progress” on reducing China’s tariffs on whisky and on visa free travel to China, as part of a “much wider opening of access for business that we discussed at great length.” Another take-away was security-related cooperation on “irregular migration” to Britain, he said.The prime minister’s office later announced China had agreed to cut tariffs on Scotch whisky from 10% to 5% and to relax visa rules for British citizens for business and tourism travel under 30 days. Timelines for implementation were not specified A delegation of nearly 60 businesses and cultural groups are traveling as part of Starmer’s delegation, including British corporate giants HSBC, GSK, Jaguar Land Rover. The group is also expected to visit China’s financial capital Shanghai. The trip — which follows one from Canada’s Mark Carney earlier this month and France’s Emmanuel

Macron in December — is widely seen as a boon for Xi. Analysts say Beijing has long looked to drive a wedge between the US and its allies on China, and hopes to cast itself as a reliable defender of free trade and globalization, in contrast to the uncertainty unleashed by Trump’s “America First” stance. Xi pointed to the rise of “unilateralism, protectionism, and power politics” during talks with Starmer, according to a readout released by Chinese state media. He framed China and the UK as supporters of multilateralism and free trade who can work together to “promote the establishment of a more just and equitable global governance system.”Starmer also alluded to an uncertain international climate, telling Xi in opening remarks that “working together on issues like climate change and global stability during challenging times for the world is precisely what we should be doing as we build this relationship.” He called for the two sides to “iden-

tify opportunities to collaborate but of course also allow a meaningful dialogue on areas where we disagree. When asked by reporters if he had brought up human right concerns — including the jailing of pro-Hong Kong democracy publisher Jimmy Lai and alleged abuses against the Uyghur minority group in China — Starmer said he raised those issues and had a “respectful discussion.” Starmer has framed improved relations with China as imperative to expand business opportunities for British firms. His Labour government came to power in 2024 with a pledge to put UK relations with China on a firmer footing. His trip comes a week after Britain green-lit plans for China to build a “mega” embassy close to London’s financial district. The decision had been delayed for months due to security concerns about the facility, which will sit near fiber-optic cables carrying sensitive data for financial firms, and which some fear could be used to spy on Chinese nationals living in London.Starmer has previously argued that business development and stronger relations with China don’t have to compromise national security. The British leader will be under pressure, however, to walk a fine line in his meetings with Xi, which is sure to be closely watched by the White House. After Canadian leader Mark Carney visited Beijing earlier this month and announced Canada would cut tariffs on some Chinese electric vehicles, Trump threatened to slap 100% tariffs on Canadian imports if Canada makes a trade deal with China.The visit also comes as countries across Europe are warily eying China’s record-breaking \$1.2 trillion global trade surplus, which is driving concern among governments that cheap Chinese goods are hollowing out domestic industries.

Insurgent attack India Assam Rifles repel

Guwahati: Fierce gunfight erupts as Assam Rifles repel insurgent attack on a Company Operating Base in Arunachal Pradesh’s Changlang near the India–Myanmar border, prompting intensified counter-insurgency operations and heightened security across the sensitive frontier region. A tense security situation unfolded in Arunachal Pradesh’s Changlang district on Monday after armed insurgents opened fire on an Assam Rifles Company Operating Base (COB), triggering a fierce exchange of gunfire in the sensitive border region near Myanmar, officials confirmed.According to security sources, the Assam Rifles COB located at Ranglum village came under coordinated fire from multiple directions. Ranglum is a remote and strategically significant village situated close to the India–Myanmar international border, near border pillar number 168. The location’s proximity to the unfenced international boundary makes it particularly vulnerable to cross-border militant movement and infiltration attempts. Troops stationed at the COB responded swiftly and effectively, engaging the insurgents in a controlled counter-fire operation. Sources said the exchange of fire continued for some time, after which the insurgents reportedly dispersed into the surrounding forested terrain. As of the latest reports, no injuries or fatalities have been confirmed on either side. Security officials stated that the counter-insurgency operation remains underway. Additional Assam Rifles units and reinforcements have been deployed to strengthen the operational grid in and around the area. The entire region has been cordoned off, and intensive search operations are being conducted to track down the armed militants and prevent their escape across the international border.A senior police official said that state police teams have also rushed to the border areas to assist in ground-level coordination and gather further inputs. However, the identity of the militant group involved in the attack has not yet been officially con-

firmed, as detailed operational information from the Assam Rifles is still awaited Arunachal Pradesh shares a long and largely unfenced 520-kilometre border with Myanmar, a factor that has historically posed significant security challenges. Dense forests, difficult terrain, and limited connectivity in border districts like Changlang have often been exploited by insurgent groups for movement, regrouping, and logistics.Security agencies recalled that the latest incident follows a series of attempted militant attacks in the region over recent months. A few months ago, cadres of the NSCN-K (YA) faction carried out a standoff attack on the Hedman Camp in Changlang district. That attempt was successfully foiled due to the swift and decisive response of alert Assam Rifles troops, preventing any damage or casualties.In another related incident, ULFA (Independent) extremists attempted to launch an attack on the Kakopathar Camp in Tinsukia district of eastern Assam. The assault was repulsed, resulting in casualties among the insurgents and the apprehension of an Over Ground Worker involved in the conspiracy.Following these incidents, the Assam Rifles significantly intensified counter-insurgency operations across the eastern Arunachal Pradesh and upper Assam region. An extensive security grid was activated, supported by advanced surveillance systems, drone reconnaissance, and intelligence-driven, high-technology operational teams.These efforts led to a major operational success during an ambush at the 6 Mile Lekang Khampti area in Namsai district of south Arunachal Pradesh. In that operation, one ULFA (Independent) cadre was neutralised, and a cache of warlike stores was recovered. During a subsequent search operation in the same area, security forces recovered the body of a militant identified as Iwon Axom, a self-styled Sergeant Major of ULFA (Independent).

Brazilian rancher ordered to pay \$50m for damage to Amazon

A Brazilian cattle rancher has been ordered to pay more than \$50m (£39m) for destroying part of the Amazon rainforest and ordered to restore the precious carbon sink.

Last week, a federal court in Brazil froze the assets of Dirceu Kruger to pay compensation for the damage he had caused to the climate through illegal deforestation. The case was brought by Brazil’s attorney general’s office, representing the Brazilian institute of environment and renewable natural resources (Ibama). It is the largest civil case brought for climate crimes in Brazil to date and the start of a legal push to repair and deter damage to the rainforest.

Kruger had previously been forced to pay damages by Ibama for destroying 5,600 hectares (13,838 acres) in the Amazonian municipalities of Boca do Acre and Lábrea. This was on public land belonging to the federal government and the state of Amazonas.

The rancher used chainsaws to clear vegetation, then set fires to clear the land and finally planted grass to establish pasture for raising cattle. Satellite images showed the scale of the damage and Kruger admitted having caused it on film. The Amazon rainforest is vital to the global climate system, but is seriously threatened by legal and illegal activities; a recent study showed that half of it could hit a tipping point by 2050. Bringing a civil case against Kruger, the attor-



ney general’s office argued that his actions had damaged the climate in two ways: burning vegetation directly emits greenhouse gases and removing plants means they can no longer draw carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. The court heard that damaging the Amazon rainforest emits on average 161 tonnes of carbon per hectare, leading to a total of 901,600 tonnes.

The court assessed the value of this damage at €60 (\$65/£50) a tonne, a number derived from averaging the social cost of carbon calculated by the US Environmental Protection Agency and Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). This is a relatively low figure; more recent estimates of social cost are significantly higher.

This put the total damage caused by Kruger at 292m Brazilian reais (\$50m). The money paid by Kruger will go to the national climate emergency fund. Kruger’s assets have been frozen and he is banned from receiving government finance or tax benefits. He is also forbidden from selling cattle and agricultural products, as well as buying machinery

such as chainsaws and tractors.

In addition, Kruger will have to restore the land he degraded so it can become a valuable carbon sink again. The court said making offenders pay compensation for climate damage is vital because the damage caused can never be fully remedied. This was the biggest claim to date for damage to the rainforest sought by Brazil’s attorney general’s office, which intended it to be “just the first of a series of actions that seek to repair the climate damage caused by the destruction not only of the Amazon, but of all Brazilian biomes”. Mariana Cirne of the national prosecutor’s office for the defence of climate and the environment said the success of the case was “a matter of climate justice” and would help Brazil meet its national emission targets. Cirne said: “Today, millions of people are already suffering the direct and indirect impacts of climate change, with the added concern that the most vulnerable populations are the hardest hit. Hence, it is crucial to ensure full accountability for illegal emissions and the imposition of the obligation to implement carbon-capture projects.” The decision has yet to be finalised by the court and could still be appealed. Several similar cases are winding their way through Brazil’s judicial system. It is not only those who directly destroy the Amazon rainforest who are being sued. A lawsuit is under way against the import-export company Importação

e Exportação de Madeiras Floresta Verde for storing wood that is alleged to have come from illegal deforestation. Rafaela Santos Martins da Rosa, a federal judge and editor of a forthcoming book on climate litigation in Brazil, said Brazilian courts are increasingly recognising that each act by individuals and companies that releases greenhouse gas emissions or causes loss of carbon sinks adds to the cumulative effect on the climate. Quantifying the wider societal cost of this damage also helps deter future illegal activity. Da Rosa said: “Convictions for environmental damage in general in Brazil would never reach these monetary values. Only with the recognition of the climate dimension and the monetary calculation of emissions will these levels be reached. This could actually discourage similar behaviour by other deforesters.”

The court stressed that the ruling against Kruger did not open the door to claims about legal deforestation, but Da Rosa said civil actions of this kind could be brought against public authorities. Earlier this year, Brazil’s supreme court ordered the federal government to reinstate a plan to prevent and control deforestation in the Amazon and to monitor and investigate environmental crimes occurring there. The court recognised that Brazil’s environmental policy was still being updated following the election of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in 2022, but said more could be done.

Stand tall, hum and try a dead hang: 22 two-minute tension relievers

Scrunch your shoulders

Restore a feeling of calm by scrunching your shoulders up to your ears as tightly as possible, holding for 10 seconds, then inhaling. Exhale as you release the tension in your shoulders.

Marie-Claire Stanmore, pilates teacher, yoga teacher and sports massage therapist Eye strain is on the rise thanks to our increased use of digital devices. The symptoms can include headaches, eye soreness, dry eyes, double vision and blurred vision. To counteract eye strain, start by keeping your head completely still while looking as far as you can to the right, left, up and down. Hold each position for three to five seconds, and repeat twice. Next, imagine you see an infinity symbol straight ahead of you and use your eyes to trace the contours of it. Slowly expand the movement for 15 seconds one way, 15 in reverse. After this, look outside at a tree or object about 30 metres away and focus on it for 15 seconds. Repeat this twice. End by blinking rapidly for 15 seconds, as this helps to lubricate the eyelid.

Daniel Collis, vice-president of the Institute for Osteopathy Hum a little When we hum we stimulate the vagus nerve which connects our brains to our major organs. This signals safety and allows our heart and breath rate to fall – easing feelings of stress and tension. To hum, simply drop the shoulders down and bring your lips together. Take a deep inhale in through the nose. Exhale slowly through the nose while gently making an “aum” sound. Repeat as necessary.

Farzana Ali, sound therapist and author of Sound Healing: How to Use Sound to Beat Stress and Anxiety Take a breath to reduce tension When we are stressed, our breath shortens as we go into fight or flight mode. To recalibrate, sit straight with square shoulders and a proud chest. Inhale for four seconds, hold for four seconds and exhale for four seconds; repeat this at least four times. Hold on to something smooth (like a stone) or gently stroke the top of your hand. As you breathe in, imagine inflating your belly like a balloon and as you exhale imagine letting out all the tension, while repeating to yourself, “it’ll pass, as it’s always passed”. Smile even though you do not feel like it – your facial muscles give a powerful feedback to your brain. Squeeze your shoulders Alleviate tingling fingers and sore wrists by squeezing your shoulder blades backwards, imagining a tennis ball between them. Count to 10, and then just relax. Then repeat that exercise a couple of times.

Maxim Howitz, consultant or-

thopaedic hand and wrist surgeon; founder of The Hand Doctor Practice Relieve your back with a tennis ball For targeted back relief, a tennis ball self-massage can work wonders. Lean against the ball, either on the floor or a wall, apply light pressure and move it in a circular motion for just a couple of minutes to ease discomfort in the affected area. Philippa Oakley, chiropractor and member of the British Chiropractic Association

Pinch your eyebrows

Many of us spend hours a day frowning at our screens, which can create dynamic wrinkles between the eyebrows and tension in the forehead. To release the tension, place the thumbs under the inner eyebrow and press for five seconds. Then place the index fingers at the top of the eyebrow to pinch and gently pull apart the eyebrows. Hold for five seconds and then glide fingers along to the end of the eyebrows. Repeat five times.

Lauren Hughes, facialist

To relieve a stiff lower back, stand with your feet wide apart to stretch the inner thigh muscles. Then turn your right foot out and bend the knee, leaning your body over it and stretching your arm over your head. You should feel the stretch along the left side of your torso. Hold for a few seconds, breathing gently, then repeat on the other side. Slowly return to your starting position, then fold your upper body forwards towards the floor between your legs. Feel the stretch in your hamstrings before gradually returning to standing position, and bending backwards to get stretch in your lower back. If any of the positions bring on pain, take a break and try again later.

Lengthen your spine

To counteract rounded shoulders and relieve back tension, try standing tall, while imagining a string pulling you up from the crown of your head. Inhale through your nose, expanding your ribcage, and exhale through your mouth as though blowing out a candle. Roll your shoulders back and down, creating space between your ears and shoulders. Circle your arms slowly backward five times, imagining you’re moving through water to engage your back muscles.

Next, interlace your fingers behind your back, keeping your arms straight. Gently draw your hands down while lifting through your chest. Hold for 30 seconds, breathing deeply. Finally, with feet hip-width apart and soft knees, slowly roll down vertebrae by vertebrae, letting your head hang heavy. Take three breaths here, then roll up slowly. Focus on quality over quantity – move mindfully without

forcing. Release and repeat twice more. Louise Drake, fitness expert and founder of the Louisa Drake Method

Extend your exhale

A simple way to start to calm your nervous system is to exhale for longer than you inhale. Start by exhaling through your nose. Inhale for four seconds through your nose. Exhale for six seconds through your nose. Hold your breathe for two seconds. Repeat this breath cycle at least 10 times, or until you have reached your desired state of relaxation.

Richie Bostock, Breathwork coach, author and speaker

To help alleviate shoulder tension, stand with your feet shoulder-width apart and your knees slightly bent. Keeping a loose upright posture, turn from the centre of the body, allowing your arms to swing from side to side, and contact the body – one in front, one behind. The swinging motion is completely driven by the body’s rotation. Stephanie Fowler, tai chi instructor and massage therapist

Grab the dog lead

Lie on your back with your knees bent, and feet flat, ensuring your feet and knees are a fist-width apart. Hold a strap (a scarf or a dog lead also works well) in both hands – not too tight or too loose – across the front of the body, with the arms straight and palms down on the floor beside you. Inhale to prepare, then exhale. Tilt your pelvis towards your face, press your feet down into the floor and curl your spine off the mat, like a piece of Velcro. It should feel as though your ribcage is heavy and your tailbone is trying to pour over your head like a wave. You should have a straight line between shoulder, hip and knee. Inhale and take the arms overhead, hovering them just off the floor with palms facing up. Next, exhale and start to roll down through your spine, adding a little tension in the strap and imagining someone pulling your arms in the opposite direction to your knees as you roll your spine down. Inhale and return the arms to the start position. Repeat five to eight times. Massage your jaw The most immediate thing you can do to relieve facial discomfort is a gentle massage. Gentle neck stretches from side to side, and shoulder rolls can relieve tight muscles in these areas before starting on the jaw. Place your fingers just in front of your ears, along your jawline, and clench your teeth. You’ll feel the muscle tighten under your fingertips. Start by tapping up and down along the muscle on both sides, with two fingers for 10 counts. Next, massage with your fingertips moving in

slow, circular motions. Gradually work your way up and down the muscle from the jawline and back up to the cheekbone, adjusting the pressure to what feels relieving. Charlie Perry, skincare expert and facialist

Try a dead hang

Dead hangs are an effective way of releasing tension in the vertebrae, reducing back pain and improving overall spinal alignment. They promote better posture and relieve tightness from poor sitting or standing habits. Firstly, find a bar: use a pull-up bar or any sturdy overhead structure that can safely support your bodyweight. Hold the bar with an overhand grip (palms facing away from you), shoulder-width apart. Make sure your grip is secure but not too tight to allow for relaxation. Lift your feet off the ground and allow your body to hang freely. Relax your shoulders and let your body stretch downward. Your arms should be fully extended. While you’re hanging, focus on deep, slow breathing. As you exhale, allow your body to relax more deeply into the stretch, feeling the release in your back and shoulders. Start by hanging for 20 to 30 seconds, and gradually work up to longer holds (up to a minute or more) as your grip and endurance improve. When you’re ready to come down, gently lower yourself to the ground or step back on to a platform. Avoid dropping down suddenly to prevent jarring your body. Aimee Victoria Long, personal trainer

Help your hips

To relieve tension on the hip joints, start by lying on your back. Draw up your right ankle over the front of your left thigh to a position that is comfortable above the knee. Using your left hand, slowly pull your left thigh toward your torso with an exhale. Hold the position for 10 to 15 seconds, taking slow, deep breaths. Release with a slow deep inhale and repeat on the other side. Rej Bhumbra, consultant orthopaedic and trauma surgeon at London Orthopaedic Clinic

Hold your head up

To relieve neck tension caused by looking down at our computers and phones, lie face down on the floor. Connect your forehead to both hands, one on top of the other. Next, keep the head and hands connected as you lift your head and chest off the mat. Hold for one deep inhale and exhale, then lower back down to the mat. Repeat eight to 10 times. Marsha Lindsay, pilates teacher and founder of Nobu Pilates

Tuck in your chin

A chin tuck is a quick, easy exercise to alleviate symptoms of a

headache. Cradle your hands behind your head, as if you were creating a basket for your head to sit in and gently push your head into your hands. Hold the position for five to 10 seconds and then relax. Repeat 10 times. This exercise can be continued throughout the day, as required. Faye Pattison, physiotherapist and founder of Faye Pattison Physiotherapy

Raise your legs

Relieve tension in the lower body by lying on the ground and resting the backs of your legs on the wall, a sofa, a bed or any sturdy surface you have. Your legs can be straight or bent and you can make the environment cosier by lying on a blanket, or putting a pillow behind your head. Hold this supported inversion for two minutes, trying to let yourself soften into the support around you. Press the flesh Locate the fleshy part of your palm, between the thumb and the forefinger. To relieve stress, apply thumb pressure into that point, using the opposite hand (make sure your hand is relaxed; you can’t locate it if the receiving hand is tense). Work into this point deeply, but comfortably, for about one to two minutes. Andrea Hurst, reflexology practitioner

Soothe your scapula

To release shoulder pain and tension, stand tall, with arms by your sides. Slowly move your shoulder blades up, forward, down, and back in a controlled, circular motion. Reverse the direction after a few repetitions. Keep the arms still and focus on the scapula movement. Artur Zolkiewicz, personal trainer

Pop a squat

The best exercise for knees is the humble squat. It helps to put the knee through the full range of movement, stretch all the tissues and relieve tension. A squat should be performed with the feet hip-width apart, the back straight and with a controlled movement from standing into a deep squat, and then coming back up. I’d recommend doing 20 to 30 squats in two minutes. Keeping good form and posture throughout the movement is key. Bilal Barkatali, orthopaedic surgeon specialising in knee and hip surgery And don’t forget your feet ... A simple stress-relieving exercise for the feet is rolling a spiky massage ball – or if you don’t have one, a tennis ball will do – underneath the arch and along the length of the foot. Sit comfortably in a chair, place the ball under one foot, and gently roll it back and forth for a minute or two on each foot. A light to medium pressure can be applied to massage the muscles, targeting any areas of tension.

An Expert Share Easy Tips To Bring Acne And Pigmentation Under Control

Radiant, clear skin is a common goal – but for many, acne and pigmentation stand in the way. The Dermafique Indian Skin Health Report notes that 68% of Indian women list acne as a top concern, with 94% of those aged 20–25 battling breakouts. The reason lies in our biology: larger pores, higher sebum production, and greater melanin content make Indian skin more susceptible to acne and post-inflammatory pigmentation.

Understanding the Acne-Pigmentation Cycle

When acne heals, it often leaves behind dark spots instead of scars. This happens because melanin-rich Indian skin overreacts to inflammation, producing excess pigment. Dr Aparna Santhanam explains, “Breaking this cycle requires a two-pronged approach, reducing breakouts and controlling pigment overproduction simultaneously.”

Ingredients That Work for Indian Skin

Gentle exfoliants like glycolic acid help keep pores clear and regulate oil. Niacinamide plays a dual role – it minimises inflammation and inhibits melanin transfer, helping fade post-acne marks. Zinc PCA helps regulate sebum, while azelaic acid targets both acne-causing bacteria and hyperpigmentation. Given Indian

skin’s higher sensitivity and barrier weakness as highlighted in the Dermafique report, Dr Santhanam cautions against over-exfoliation. Instead, she recommends skin cycling: “Alternating exfoliation with repair days using ceramides and panthenol to maintain balance.”

The Post Holiday Routine

Post-holiday skincare should focus on consistency, not intensity. Cleanse twice daily with a mild foaming agent, use a niacinamide-based serum, and apply a light moisturiser enriched with hyaluronic acid to maintain hydration without clogging pores. To tackle pigmentation, vitamin C and liquorice extract help brighten skin while protecting against oxidative damage. Pairing them with niacinamide enhances tone evenness over time. As Dr Santhanam concludes, “Indian skin demands balance – between cleansing and nourishment, brightening and protection. The Dermafique Indian Skin Health Report reiterates that our skin’s unique melanin profile and pore structure make customised, ingredient-driven care essential. With the right actives and patience, even stubborn acne and pigmentation can be managed effectively – just in time for the glow.”



ENTERTAINMENT

After becoming a mother, Alia Bhatt says she wants to remove her social media accounts



Mumbai: Actor Alia Bhatt, who gave birth to her daughter Raha Kapoor in 2022, has acknowledged that she occasionally wishes to remove her social media accounts. Alia talked candidly about her de-

sire to offer content on social media and her celebrity. Alia added that she would lose contact with people who had long supported her if she deleted her social media accounts. On certain days, I wake up and decide that all I want to do is remove my social media accounts and become an actor. I don't want to continuously listen to this discussion. She stated, "I know that would really cut off contact with so many people who have supported me from the beginning, and I don't want to do that." "I find it a little challenging to truly share my own life because it is so intimate. Raha is all over my photo album. I truly have to work hard to take images of myself," she added. Motherhood is "a massive change" that alters a person's body and attitude, according to the actress. Alia dated actor Ranbir Kapoor for numerous years. They got married in April 2022. November of that year saw the birth of their first child, Raha. On Christmas 2023, Ranbir and Alia made their first public appearance with Raha, shocking their admirers. The movie's original release date of Christmas 2025 was rescheduled for April 17, 2026. The movie was once more delayed and is anticipated to be released later in 2026, however the precise release date has not yet been disclosed. Alia will also appear alongside Ranbir Kapoor and Vicky Kaushal in the historical romantic drama Love & War, directed by Sanjay Leela Bhansali.

In response to the popular "Kis Kisko Pyaar Karoon" posters, Yuzvendra Chahal



Mumbai: Yuzvendra Chahal, an Indian cricket player, is once again in the news, this time due to fresh rumors regarding his personal life following his divorce from Dhanashree Verma, his alleged split from RJ Mahavash, and rumors that he is dating Shefali Bagga. AI-generated posters featuring Kis Kisko Pyaar Karoon started making the rounds on the internet amid the continuous rumors. Chahal was shown with Dhanashree Verma, RJ Mahavash, and Shefali Bagga in the posters, which drew comparisons to the tumultuous romantic relationships connected to the Kapil Sharma-led franchise. The pictures, which were made by graphic designer Vijay Kumar Baria and posted on Instagram, quickly became popular. Chahal gave a humorous response to the widely shared posters. "2-3 reh gai admin, do better research next time," he said in a comment on one of the posts, implying that a few more names were absent from the made-up story. Yuzvendra Chahal and RJ Mahavash have been connected in recent times. However, social media fans observed that the two had unfollowed one another on Instagram, which sparked rumors of a potential fallout and increased online talk. The cricket player and Shefali Bagga, who had a cameo on Bigg Boss 13, were spotted leaving a restaurant in Mumbai shortly after. On social media, the sighting soon gave rise to new dating rumors. Meanwhile, Dhanashree Verma has made significant claims surrounding their marriage. She claimed that Chahal had cheated on her within the first two months of their marriage when she appeared on Ashneer Grover's reality show Rise And Fall. Dhanashree said in an interview with fellow competitor Kubbra Sait that she learned of the adultery only two months after the marriage. Chahal subsequently refuted the charges. He responded by pointing out that the couple had been married for about four and a half years and asking why someone would stay in a marriage for that long if there had been infidelity in the first few months. After getting married in December 2020, Chahal and Dhanashree finalized their divorce in March 2025.

Netflix's Dhurandhar Is Four Minutes Shorter Than the New Film Version

Mumbai: Days after it made Rs 1,000 crore in Indian theaters, Dhurandhar finally made its much-anticipated Netflix debut. Globally, the Ranveer Singh movie has now made over Rs 1,300 crore. Many people were still awaiting Dhurandhar's OTT premiere, even though some had seen it several times in theaters. And some social media users had a grudge against the filmmakers when that occurred on January 30 at midnight. On Friday morning, a number of irate social media users bombarded X with accusations that a "censored" version of Dhurandhar is available on Netflix. The movie's runtime on the streaming service was 3 hours and 25 minutes, which is much less than its original 3 hours and 34 minutes. The movie's color grading, sound, and video quality on Netflix were also criticized by several.



or 3 hours 28 minutes 56 seconds. Netflix runtime: 3.25 hours. That makes it, 4 minutes. The Netflix version of Dhurandhar looks to have a substantially quicker frame rate than the original theatrical version, which debuted in theaters on December 5, 2025.

Two allusions to the Baloch people made by Sanjay Dutt's SP Chaudhary Aslam are muffled around the one and a half-hour mark of the movie on the streaming service. In the original speech, the character labeled his previous police partner who was a Baloch worse than a "crocodile." "Police ke dinon mein mera ek Baloch partner tha... Hamesha bolta hoon Bade Sahab ko, magarmachh par bharosa kar sakte hain, par ek Baloch pe nahin," says SP Chaudhary Aslam in the original dialogue of Dhurandhar. The updated dialogue reads: "Police ke dinon mein mera ek (mute) partner tha... Hamesha bolta hoon Bade Sahab ko, magarmachh par bharosa kar sakte hain,

magar (mute) nahin." The subtitles in English said, "Back when I was in the police, I had a partner... I always tell Bade Sahab, I'd trust a crocodile, but never someone like them." After its production banners, Jio Studios and B62 Studios, were ordered to mute the allegedly insensitive references to the Baloch people, Netflix began airing the updated version of Dhurandhar. Netflix is currently streaming the movie's final DCP theatrical version. According to insiders, the platform uploads films in the precise format supplied by the creators because it is an OTT distributor. The film's graphic and brutal portrayal of violence is another thing that hasn't changed. Therefore, the new version of Dhurandhar that is also faster in terms of frame rate is available on Netflix; a filtered or edited version is not. Prepare for the release of Dhurandhar: The Revenge on March 19, 2026, after rewatching the film on OTT.

71-year-old Catherine O'Hara passes away

Mumbai: The Emmy-winning performer Catherine O'Hara passed away on Friday at the age of 71. She was well-known for her humorous appearances over the years, from Kevin's struggling mother in "Home Alone" to the famous Moira Rose in "Schitt's Creek." According to a statement from her management, Creative Artists management, the Canadian-born O'Hara passed away at her Los Angeles home "following a brief illness." Additional information was not immediately accessible. O'Hara's career was begun at the Second City in Toronto in the 1970s. It was there that she first collaborated with her "Schitt's Creek" costar, Eugene Levy, who would go on to become a lifetime partner. The two would be part of the founding cast of the sketch show "SCTV," which helped establish the careers of other well-known Canadian comedians including Andrea Martin and Martin Short. O'Hara was nominated for an Emmy for both her recent portrayal as a Hollywood executive in "The Studio" and her emotional performance in HBO's "The Last of Us."

As they conclude filming Cocktail 2, Shahid Kapoor, Kriti Sanon, and Rashmika Mandanna celebrate

Mumbai: One of the most eagerly awaited future movies that the public is looking forward to is Homi Adajania's Cocktail 2. The crew recently finished filming the movie, and the director posted a beautiful photo of the group on Instagram. "Cocktail 2 shoot wrapped," wrote Homi Adajania. I might be biased, but this one seems a little unique. Many thanks to my amazing cast and crew for putting up with my ridiculousness. I adore you all. Alongside the three leads, Shahid Kapoor, Kriti Sanon, and Rashmika Mandanna, was Homi Adajania. Kriti Sanon stated that she was searching for a movie that was lighter than her most recent release in an interview with Zoom. "I believe that the timing of Cocktail 2 was perfect. I had a strong desire for it. I wanted to move into that incredibly young, urban, entertaining area of a rom-com," the actress remarked. "Yes, it's a sequel, but I



think it's more of a mood sequel. The people, the plot, and their backstories are all very different. With the exception of Cocktail's atmosphere, everything has changed. And Homi Adajania and Maddock Films, of course. Thus, that stays the same," she continued. Kriti Sanon also disclosed that the movie's two main schedules have already been finished, and the third schedule would start in Mumbai shortly. The actress said, "I think I'm looking so different from what I have ever looked, which I'm very excited about, and it's also very fresh." "When you watch Cocktail 1, something about it still feels today," Kriti Sanon remarked, drawing comparisons between her movie and its precursor. You don't get the impression that

it's twelve years old or something. And it still seems like a movie from today. And even this movie, in my opinion, is like that. It has a perspective on contemporary equations and relationships, is quite refreshing, and has beautiful pictures. extremely pertinent to the topic it discusses. Additionally, I've had a great time filming with Shahid and Rashmika. Naturally, Homi is insane, so his crazy behavior kind of keeps us all on an exciting journey." After Teri Baaton Mein Aisa Uljha Jiya, Kriti and Shahid Kapoor collaborated in Cocktail 2. By the end of 2026, the movie is anticipated to be released. Cocktail 2, directed by Homi Adajania, is a follow-up to the popular 2012 film Cocktail, which stars Diana Pentz, Deepika Padukone, and Saif Ali Khan. With a new plot and ensemble, including Shahid, Kriti, and Rashmika, Adajania makes a comeback more than ten years later.

Deepika Padukone on arranging Ranveer Singh's ideal day

Mumbai: Celebrity pair Deepika Padukone and Ranveer Singh's latest holiday images have taken over social media, with admirers drooling over their picture-perfect moments. Deepika now talked candidly about her passion for travel in an interview, stating that it's never about crossing things off a list. Whether for business or pleasure, Deepika acknowledges that travel plays a significant role in her life. She says that on certain days, she finds herself fully immersed in the local way of life, and on other days, she prefers peaceful, unusual getaways. Deepika responds, "I'd say it's a mix," when asked if she enjoys quiet getaways, adventure, or culture. However, if I had to pick just one, I would say that soulful encounters are my favorite. The actor, who has a daughter named Dua with Ranveer, continues, "I love immersing myself in local cultures, learning about a place's history, meeting its people, and understanding their way of life." "I also value quiet moments, whether it's walking through a museum full of masterpieces from centuries ago or watching a sunset with my loved ones on the beach," Deepika goes on. For me, travel is more about how a location makes you feel than it is about the to-do list. Through movies like Goliyon Ki Raasteela Ram-Leela, Bajirao Mastani, Padmaavat, and 83, Deepika and Ranveer have given audiences a glimpse of their relationship and on-screen chemistry over the years. Recently, the duo worked together on Experience Abu Dhabi and reconnected on television for the tourism promotion. Planning a "perfect day" with Ranveer is never complete without music and dance, Deepika says, giving fans a look into their light-hearted relationship. Deepika responds, "It would start with a peaceful morning swim at Corniche Beach, followed by a visit to the Louvre since we both love art and architecture," when asked how she would arrange the ideal day in Abu Dhabi with Ranveer. "After lunch, a trip through the desert at golden hour, and a peaceful traditional BBQ dinner outside beneath the stars to cap off the day.

Norway vs. Mrs. Chatterjee is surpassed by Rani Mukerji's Film Mardaani 3

Mumbai: Mardaani 3 marks Rani Mukerji's comeback to theaters. The release comes after Mrs. Chatterjee vs. Norway, a performance that won Rani her first National Award. In the most recent episode, Rani plays Shivani Shivaji Roy once more, taking on a case that looks at patriarchy and systematic misogyny. While the film has earned mainly decent reviews, its box office opening has been moderate. Sacnilk, an industry tracker, reports that Mardaani 3 made Rs 3.8 crore on its opening day. The film was distributed in about 2,345 shows around the country and earned an overall occupancy of 18.01% on day one. Shows in the morning started at 8.97% and increased to 14.78% in the afternoon. Evening occupancy stood at 17.13%, before night shows saw a stronger turnout at 31.14%. With 526 performances and an occupancy rate of 18.75%, Delhi-NCR had the most



screenings. Mumbai came next, with 381 performances and a higher occupancy rate of 26.75%. The movie has had a relatively small run despite being supported by Yash Raj Films. It is still playing on around 5,000 screens throughout the country alongside last week's major release, Border 2. Border 2 made Rs 11 crore on its seventh day, far more than Mardaani 3's initial earnings. Nonetheless, the most recent movie has matched the Rs 3.8 crore that its predecessor, Mardaani 2, made on its opening day in 2019. Additionally, it has surpassed a number of Rani's recent efforts, such as Hichki (Rs 3.3 crore), Bunty Aur Babli 2 (Rs 2.8 crore), and Mrs. Chatterjee vs. Norway (Rs 1.27 crore on day one). When compared to other female-led movies of a comparable genre, Mardaani 3 has done better than Hansal Mehta's The Buckingham Murders, starring Kareena Kapoor, which made Rs 1.15 crore on its opening day, and Yami Gautam's Haq, which made Rs 1.75 crore. But it lags behind Alia Bhatt's Jigra, which made Rs 4.25 crore on its first day, and Yami Gautam's Article 370, which debuted at Rs 5.9 crore.

At first look, Vipul Amrutlal Shah's movie appears contentious

Mumbai: Today, January 30, the creators of The Kerala Story 2: Goes Beyond released the teaser. Directed by Kamakhya Narayan Singh, the movie is a follow-up to the crime drama The Kerala Story (2023), which starred Adah Sharma. With Ulka Gupta, Aishwarya Ojha, and Aditi Bhatia as new characters, the upcoming movie offers a unique story. In contrast to The Kerala Story, the second installment's plot spans several regions of India, extending its canvas beyond Kerala. The journey of three ambitious Hindu ladies is chronicled in The Kerala Story 2. Divya Paliwal is an enthusiastic dancer who aspires to be a social media influencer; Surekha Nair from Kerala is a UPSC candidate; and Neha Sant from Madhya Pradesh wants to compete for India in the Olympics as a javelin thrower and win gold. Three Muslim guys are married to the three ladies. Divya marries Rasheed, Neha marries Faizan, and Surekha marries Salim. The three can be seen donning burqas. According to the trailer, the main narrative of The Kerala Story 2 is about how these Muslim guys "tricked" them and how their "dreams shattered" when they converted to Islam in order to marry them. The three women shout "Isiliye hume ladna hoga" together as the video comes to a dramatic close. Kuyunki abhi nahi toh kabhi nahi. We have to fight because of this. For if not now, then never. Under Sunshine Pictures, Vipul Amrutlal Shah is the producer and Aashin A. Shah is the co-producer of The Kerala Story 2. Sharing the teaser on Instagram, the creators remarked, "Our daughters do not fall in love, they fall in traps. Ab sahenge nahin... ladenge (We won't put up with it anymore... we'll fight back). On February 27, The Kerala Story 2 will be released. When the first portion was released, it created a lot of hype. In addition to Adah Sharma, Siddhi Idnani, Yogita Bihani, and Sonia Balani played significant parts in the movie. Sudipto Sen was in charge of it. At the 71st National Film Awards, the movie won Best Cinematography and Best Direction.

Sharad Pawar’s Significant Remark Regarding Sunetra Pawar Obtaining a Deputy Position

New Delhi, Jan 31: Following her husband’s death in a plane crash on Wednesday morning, Sunetra Pawar, the wife of Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, will take up his enormous responsibilities. According to Sharad Pawar, the NCP-SP Chief and uncle of Ajit Pawar, the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) made the choice without consulting the Pawar family.

Sharad Pawar responded, “I don’t know,” when asked if he was excluded from the selection of Ajit Pawar’s successor.Senior Pawar’s comments make it quite evident that politics and family are two different things. After Ajit Pawar left his party in July 2023 to forge his own route in the state’s political history, the NCP became divided into two factions. “We don’t know about the swearing-in. The news was how we learned

about it. When asked if any members of the Pawar family will be present for the ceremony, he responded, “I have no idea about the swearing-in,” during a press conference in Baramati.NCP (SP) leader Ankush Kakade stated on Friday that although Ajit Pawar intended to offer uncle Sharad Pawar a “gift” of reunion on his birthday (December 12), the merger did not happen at the time.Kakade claims that Ajit Pawar had asked him and other high-ranking officials, such as Vitthal Sheth Maniar and Srinivas Patil, who have a close relationship with the senior Pawar, to help bring people together. “Please speak with Saheb (Sharad Pawar), with whom you have good relations. Kakade remembers Pawar junior saying, “Try to see how both NCP factions can become one again.”We were meant to get together on December

12, but we were unable to do so, according to Ajit Pawar. We’ll get together after the elections, so don’t worry. Sadly, he was unable to grant the request,” the NCP (SP) head stated. Pawars had planned to declare reunion on February 12, sources stated.Senior Pawar responded, “Ajit Pawar and Jayant Patil were present during the discussions and Patil will take a call now,” when asked about the reunion.The Learjet 45, a small aircraft owned and managed by VSR Ventures, crashed during a second landing attempt as NCP Chief Ajit Pawar was traveling from Mumbai to Baramati. Pawar was accompanied by four other individuals: flight attendant Pinky Mali, pilot Sumit Kapur, co-pilot Shambhavi Pathak, and Pawar’s personal security guard Vidip Jadhav. In a terrible collision, all five perished.

The investigation into the death of a migrant in Bengal is taken over by an anti-terror agency



Mumbai, Jan 31: Due to the death of a migrant worker from West Bengal in neighboring Jharkhand, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) has taken over the investigation into the violence that occurred in the Beldanga area of Murshidabad district for two days earlier this month.The development coincided with Union Home Minister Amit Shah’s visit to

West Bengal, according to sources on Saturday.The probe was taken over by the NIA on the day that Home Minister Shah was supposed to hold a workers’ meeting in Barackpore and Siliguri later on Saturday.It should be mentioned that on January 16, after a migrant worker from the state of Jharkhand died, violent protests erupted in Beldanga, Murshidabad. For several hours,

a significant number of individuals blocked the national highway and railroad tracks, and they even attacked police officers and members of the media.Traffic on the national highway was disrupted as the protests persisted for an additional day. Later, in order to calm the situation and remove the blockades, police used lathi-charge.

A leader of the Hyderabad-based minority political organization AIMIM was among the 36 individuals detained in relation to this incident.After watching CCTV footage and social media recordings, they were taken into custody.It should be mentioned that a PIL requesting the deployment of central forces in the violent region of Beldanga was submitted to the Calcutta High Court. A Division Bench of the Calcutta High Court allowed the Union government to order an NIA investigation into the violence and tension that occurred in Beldanga over the course of two days while considering the PIL.Chief Justice Sujoy

Paul and Justice Partha Sarathi Sen of the Calcutta High Court Division Bench also ordered that Central Armed Police Force (CAPF) personnel be stationed in Beldanga until 100% normalcy is restored in the area. If more CAPF companies are required, they may be stationed there.Additionally, the Division Bench explicitly instructed the state government to utilize the CAPF in the difficult areas as efficiently as possible.The court gave this judgment after a comprehensive hearing on a Public Interest Litigation filed by Leader of the Opposition (LoP) in the West Bengal Assembly, Suwendu Adhikari, demanding deployment of CAPF personnel in the region, as well as an NIA probe into the situation.The District Magistrate and the Superintendent of Police of Murshidabad were also instructed by Justices Paul and Sen to submit affidavits to the court within 15 days, assuming responsibility for the safety of local residents and property.

The Union Budget 2026 is anticipated to include five major railway reforms

New Delhi, Jan 31: The Railway Budget 2026, which will be presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman as part of the Union Budget tomorrow, is expected to focus on passenger-friendly policies, capacity development, and safety improvements. Rail safety has been in the news due to a few recent incidents. Additionally, the budget is expected to fulfill passenger demands, such as more contemporary trains and concessions for senior citizens.These are the things in the Railway Budget that travelers should be aware of.The reinstatement of senior citizen ticket discounts, which were discontinued during the Covid-19 pandemic and have not been reinstated since, is one of the main expectations of passengers for Railway Budget 2026. Previously, women 58 years of age and older received a 50% discount, while males 60 years of age and older were eligible for a 40% discount. These advantages were available for postal, express, Rajdhani, Shatabdi, and Duronto services. Even though rail operations have resumed at full capacity, the concession has not returned, despite the withdrawal being characterized as a temporary



measure during the pandemic.The Railway Budget 2026 is anticipated to prioritize safety, and the government will probably increase funding. Spending on rail safety may surpass Rs 1.3 lakh crore, according to some reports. At the same time, overall railway capex is estimated to climb by roughly 10% to around Rs 2.75 lakh crore, up from Rs 2.52 lakh crore in 2025. The jump might occur against the backdrop of well-publicized derailments.

Large-scale operation in Kishtwar, J&K, to eliminate Jaish terrorists

New Delhi, Jan 31: As Operation Trashi-I enters its fourteenth day, security forces and militants are engaged in a heavy gunfight in the Kishtwar district of Jammu and Kashmir.After a huge cordon and search operation in the Doglam area for the previous two weeks, security forces focused on hiding militants, including commanders Saifullah and Adil of Pakistani descent. This led to the encounter at approximately 5.40 am on Saturday. The troops quickly took cover and replied after the terrorists started fire upon seeing them. Reinforcements are being sent to the scene to strengthen the cordon and stop the terrorists from escaping while the fierce fighting continues.There are allegedly at least three terrorists from Jaish-e-Mohammed sheltering near-



by. Following coordinated intelligence regarding the presence of terrorists, the Indian Army, CRPF, and Jammu & Kashmir Police initiated Operation Trashi-I on January 18.On December 18, an engagement with terrorists in the Chatroo district of Kishtwar resulted in

the death of one army soldier and the injuries of seven others.Since then, a large anti-terrorist operation has been ongoing, with senior army and police authorities overseeing the coordinated effort across the region’s rough and dangerous highlands. As part of the effort, helicopters, sniffer dogs, and drones have all been used.

Eight soldiers have been hurt and one paratrooper has died since the operation began.Within a 6-kilometer radius, internet services have been suspended. According to reports, Saifullah and Adil had been working in the region for two years, hiding out in hardened bunkers and natural caverns. Recently, a terror hideout in Singhpora was busted, exposing food and supply caches, marking a significant breakthrough.

Another significant achievement for Arjun Tendulkar in the Ranji Trophy



New Delhi : Arjun Tendulkar, a fast bowling all-rounder, reached a significant milestone in First-Class cricket on Friday. Arjun, who is the son of India’s great batsman Sachin Tendulkar, completed his 50 wickets in First-Class cricket for Goa. During Goa’s Ranji Trophy match versus Maharashtra, he accomplished this accomplishment. Arjun, who made his Goa debut in 2022–2023, has also claimed five wickets in red-ball cricket. In

addition, he scored a century in his Goa debut match against Rajasthan.Thirteen of the fifty wickets were taken during the current Ranji Trophy season. Even though Arjun has taken 50 First-Class wickets, he still hasn’t surpassed his father’s record by 21 wickets. In addition to being a great batter, Sachin’s outstanding bowling has made a significant contribution to Indian cricket. In First-Class cricket, he claimed 71 wickets. Sachin also claimed 154

wickets in ODIs and 46 wickets in Test cricket at the international level.

From his early years in Mumbai to becoming an essential bowling all-rounder for Goa, Arjun has forged a unique career in domestic cricket.The Mumbai Indians (MI) purchased Arjun Tendulkar in the 2021 IPL auction for his basic price of Rs 20 lakh. Simarjeet Singh was brought in by the Mumbai Indians to replace him after an injury kept him out of the IPL that year. At the IPL 2022 auction, MI once more purchased Tendulkar for Rs 30 lakh. In 2023, he made his IPL debut against the Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR). He took his debut wicket against Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH), dismissing Bhuvneshwar Kumar to help his team win by 14 runs.

Arjun was kept by the Mumbai Indians for the 2024 season after taking two more wickets in the 2023 IPL.Arjun was traded from MI to the Lucknow Super Giants prior to the 2026 season auction.

Zhang Shuai and Elise Mertens Win the Australian Open Women’s Doubles



New Delhi: Elise Mertens of Belgium and her Chinese partner Zhang Shuai defeated Anna Danilina and Aleksandra Krunic at the Australian Open on Saturday to win their maiden Grand Slam women’s doubles championship together. On Rod Laver Arena, the fourth seeds defeated the seventh-seeded Kazakh and Serbian team 7-6 (7/4), 6-4, in just their third event together. With

the win, Mertens, who is currently ranked sixth, will retake the top spot in the women’s doubles world rankings. It was a third Australian Open doubles crown for the experienced Belgian, who won in 2021 partnered Belarusian Aryna Sabalenka and again in 2024 playing with Taiwan’s Hsieh Su-wei. In 2019, Zhang and Australian Samantha Stosur won the competition.

Ahead of the 2026 T20 World Cup, the ICC has new worries amid the Bangladesh dispute

New Delhi: Ahead of the 2026 T20 World Cup, the World Cricketers’ Association (WCA) and the International Cricket Council (ICC) are at odds over squad participation terms that control name, image, and likeness (NIL) rights. The ICC allegedly gave players a version of the team participation criteria that did not “align with an agreed version signed by both bodies in 2024,” according to a report by ESPNcricinfo.” The revised version, according to the WCA, was more “exploitative” in character. The international cricket governing body rejects the complaint, despite the fact that the WCA has already written to the ICC expressing its worries. The ICC retorted that the other teams competing in the forthcoming World Cup were not covered by the 2024 agreement, which only applied to eight member boards.

The WCA informed the ICC that the 2024 agreement will apply to all players connected to the players’ body, including those from non-competing nations as well as those competing in the World Cup.



Therefore, the WCA feels that the agreement should safeguard all participants.The two versions differ significantly in terms of content/media appearances, behind-the-scenes content, access to changing rooms, biological player-related data, licensing, name, image, and likeness (NIL), player agreements, and dispute resolution, according to WCA CEO Tom Moffat. The 2024 deal gave players the power to decide and bargain over issues, but the new version will give their respective cricket boards that power, according to the WCA.In comparison to those agreed upon, the ICC conditions considerably weaken player rights and safeguards, notably those related to image and commercial use, according to Moffat.

The fact that the most vulnerable playing groups seem to have been singled out and are expected to compete under different terms and conditions than other playing groups competing in the same Men’s T20 World Cup is particularly troubling. Participating in ICC competitions serves as a major source of revenue and career advancement for many impacted players. ”The WCA is in favor of the expansion of the game and ICC tournaments, but these goals ought to be pursued in collaboration with players rather than at their expense. The affected WCA players have now accepted the agreed Squad Terms, and we anticipate that the ICC will uphold these terms for the T20 World Cup,” he continued.

Significant Concerns Arise Before the 2026 T20 World Cup

New Delhi: Concerns have been expressed in Pakistani cricket circles over the increasing pattern of visiting teams from SENA nations excluding important players for series in Pakistan, especially after a revamped Australia team lost the opening Twenty20 International by 22 runs. For the current three-match preparation series, the touring Australians have rested its T20 World Cup-bound marquee players, including Pat Cummins, Josh Hazlewood, Tim David, Glenn Maxwell, and Nathan Ellis. The explanation offered was that these players were recuperating from injuries and receiving more time off before the T20 World Cup, which starts on February 7. In the opening Twenty20 International on Thursday, Australia played three debutants in addition to captain Mitchell Marsh, veteran all-rounder Marcus Stoinis, wicketkeeper batsman Josh Inglis, and first-choice pacers Scott Abbott and Ben Dwarshuis.

Many in Pakistan questioned how seriously Australia was taking the series because these stars weren’t there.They don’t play their best players from the touring group for the opening game, and they already arrive here without some of their key players. Omair Alavi, a journalist and cricket analyst, stated, “I see it as an insult to Pakistani cricket fans.”Moin Khan, a former Test captain, claimed that Pakistan cricket was suffering as a result of Australia’s attempts to shield their players for the T20 World Cup. Australia, South Africa, and New Zealand have recently visited Pakistan with weaker teams. He remarked, “It seems like they are fulfilling their formalities to play a series.Pakistan have a fair chance to win the series against any squad Australia fielded, according to former Test batter and top selector Haroon Rasheed, and they should now avoid playing their best eleven.”

An Outspoken Opinion on Gautam Gambhir from an Ex-Indian Star

New Delhi: After Suryakumar Yadav and company won the current five-match Twenty20 International series against New Zealand, former India opener Aakash Chopra commended head coach Gautam Gambhir. India put up a strong show against the Kiwis, winning the first three games handily to create an unbeatable 3-0 lead before falling short by 50 runs in the fourth. Since Gambhir became head coach, India has won T20I series nine times in a row. India has continued to dominate T20Is despite their inconsistent performance in ODIs and Tests.Given that Gambhir received harsh criticism during the team’s difficulties in other forms, Chopra argued he should be given entire credit for India’s triumph in the shortest format. ”Gautam Gambhir is deserving of recognition. Why be reluctant to provide praise while we don’t hesitate to offer criticism? I am referring to the T20 batting strategy of India. That strategy is the present, not

the future. We didn’t realize it right away. This is what you can accomplish if you play recklessly. The formula was the same: 11 players, 20 overs. In a video posted on X (previously Twitter), Chopra stated, “India weren’t able to do it before.””Even now, ODI and T20I series take place concurrently. India’s strategy has evolved, but New Zealand’s bowling unit hasn’t. We broke the resolve of the opposition as soon as we began to dominate and decimate. Since this crew is unique, they are now claiming that even 300 could not be sufficient,” he continued. Chopra went on to say that earlier, India’s ODI and T20I teams “overlapped,” which lessened the aggressive purpose needed in T20 cricket. The work was done by Gautam Gambhir. In the past, playing aggressively under Rohit Sharma was the topic of discussion. Rohit walked the talk and played that manner. Second, there used to be overlap between the ODI and T20I teams.

Believing Alcaraz outlasts Zverev, reaches maiden Australian Open final showdown

Alcaraz defeats Zverev in gruelling five-set marathon clash

Melbourne: An ailing Carlos Alcaraz said “believing” helped him pull through one of the most demanding matches of his career to down Alexander Zverev in five epic sets and reach his first Australian Open final Friday. The world number one outlasted the German third seed 6-4, 7-6 (7/5), 6-7 (3/7), 6-7 (4/7), 7-5 over a titanic 5hrs 27 mins in hot conditions and will play either Jannik Sinner or Novak Djokovic in Sunday’s title match in Melbourne.

The Spaniard only narrowly avoided crashing out after a huge fright at 4-4 in the third set when he pulled up in pain with what appeared to be cramp. He was allowed to have treatment at the changeover, leaving



Zverev furious and angrily remonstrating with officials. Medical timeouts are not permitted solely for muscle cramping. Alcaraz continued but his movement was hampered and he lost his first set of the tournament, before the pickle juice kicked in and he fought on. Despite not being at 100 percent the 22-year-old somehow found a way to claw back from a

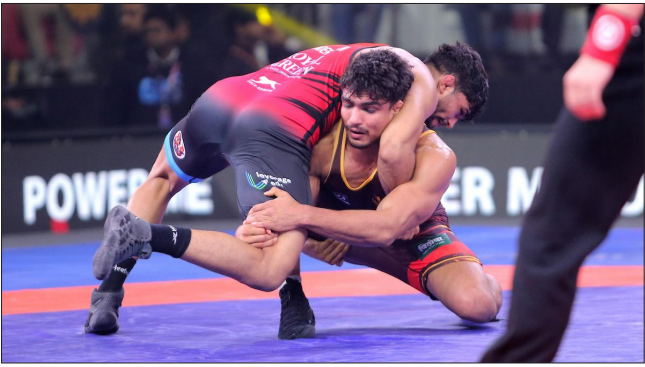
break down in the fifth set as the crowd roared him on. Germany’s Zverev was left shattered in his latest failed bid to win a major. Believing all the time,” Alcaraz, into his eighth major final and fourth in a row, said of how he pulled through. I always say that you have to believe in yourself no matter what, no matter what struggles you’ve been through,

you’ve gotta still believe in yourself all the time. I was struggling in the middle of the third set,” he added. “Basically it was one of the most demanding matches that I have ever played in my short career. But I’ve been in these kinds of situations, these kinds of matches before. I had to put my heart into the match. I fought until the last ball.”

Alcaraz has won two French Opens, two US Opens and twice at Wimbledon, but success on the blue Melbourne Park hard courts has eluded him in four previous campaigns. Should he snap the drought he would be the youngest man in the Open era to win all four majors, surpassing compatriot and legend Rafael Nadal.

Haryana Thunders storm ahead, securing dominant entry into PWL 2026 finals stage

Noida: Haryana Thunders produced a composed and resilient performance in the first semi-final to defeat Punjab Royals 5-4 and book their place in the final of the Pro Wrestling League 2026 here at the Noida Indoor Stadium on Friday night. Entering the contest as table-toppers with four wins and eight points, Haryana absorbed early pressure before turning the tie decisively in the second half, underlining why they have been the most consistent side of the season. Punjab Royals, who finished fourth in the league stage, pushed Haryana all the way in a gripping nine-bout contest, as per a PWL press release. Parvinder was named Impact Player of the Match for his crucial comeback win that arrested Punjab’s momentum, while Priya Malik earned the Fighter of the Match award for her stunning victory in the women’s 76kg bout. Player of the Match honours went to Iryna Koliadenko, whose emphatic fall in the 62 kg contest proved to be the turning point as Haryana booked their place in the final. Punjab Royals struck first in the 57 kg men’s category, where Chirag Chhikara controlled the opening exchanges against Rohit. A decisive takedown in Period 1



gave Chirag the early edge, and despite Rohit drawing a passivity point later, the Punjab wrestler held on for a narrow 2-1 win. Haryana responded immediately in the 74 kg men’s category through Parvinder, who staged a strong second-Period comeback against Chandermohan. After trailing through activity point and push-outs,

Parvinder landed a crucial takedown and a late push-out in the Power Minute to clinch the tie on last-point criteria after an 8-8 tie. Punjab regained the advantage in the heavyweight clash, as captain Dinesh Dhankhar edged past Anirudh Gulia 8-6. The contest remained tight throughout, with push-outs and activity points shaping the early exchanges before both wrestlers traded big takedowns in the Power Minute, where Dhankhar’s overall scoring proved just enough. Momentum swung further Punjab’s way in the 76 kg women’s tie, where Priya Malik delivered a stunning performance to hand Kajal Dhochhak her first defeat of the season. Priya’s relentless offence ended the contest by fall inside 99 seconds, pushing Punjab into a 3-1 lead. Haryana began their fightback in the 86kg men’s tie through Ashirov Ashraf who produced.

Five rising Indian stars shine brightly at Women’s Hockey India League with standout performances



New Delhi: The second season of the Women’s Hockey India League provided a significant platform for Indian players to compete at a high level alongside some of the best international talent in the sport. The tournament not only delivered competitive matches but also saw several young Indian players step up their game and make a strong impression with their consistent and match-winning performances. Following their impressive performances in the Women’s Hockey India League, these players have been included in the senior Indian women’s national coaching camp under new Chief Coach Sjoerd Marijne. The camp is part of the team’s preparations for upcoming international assignments, including the FIH Hockey Women’s World Cup 2026 Qualifiers Hyderabad, Telangana, scheduled to be held in March, as

per a press release from Hockey India. Twenty-year-old Lathantluangi was a key part of the Ranchi Royals defensive unit that finished the Women’s Hero Hockey India League with the best defence of the season, conceding just seven goals across the tournament. Showing strong game awareness and composure at the back, she read situations well and played an important role in building play from defence, using her distribution to effectively spread the ball and initiate attacks from deep positions. SG Pipers goalkeeper Bansari Solanki played a decisive role in her team’s campaign at the Women’s Hero HIL, producing a standout performance in the Final against Shrachi Bengal Tigers. Introduced specifically for the shootout after a 1-1 draw, the 24-year-old made three crucial saves, including a penalty stroke, to help

SG Pipers secure a 3-2 shootout victory and lift the title. Her composure under pressure in the Final and her consistent performances alongside Argentine goalkeeper Cristina Cosentino also earned her the ‘Goalkeeper of the Tournament’ Award, underlining her impact throughout the season. Forward Sonam had yet another commendable season for JSW Soorma Hockey Club, showcasing confidence and attacking intent throughout the season. In the last edition, the 20-year-old claimed the ‘Upcoming Player of the Tournament’ Award, and she delivered strong performances yet again which has earned her a national camp call-up. JSW Soorma Hockey Club had their struggles in the attack this season with only six goals scored, however, one of them was a field goal by Sonam. A member of the Indian junior women’s squad, Sonam’s performances at the Women’s Hero HIL reflected her ability to adapt to the senior level. Defender Shilpi Dabas delivered a series of mature and assured performances at the back for SG Pipers as they claimed the Women’s Hero HIL trophy. Having consistently impressed in the National Championships over the years, she translated that form onto the league with her composure, positioning and decision-making at the back. Her performances for SG Pipers in their title-winning campaign played a key role in earning her a long-awaited senior national team call-up, marking a significant milestone in her career. At just 21 years of age, midfielder Hina Bano stood out with her calm and disciplined displays for JSW Soorma Hockey Club.

Invincible India, unbeaten juggernaut, stand prepared to defend the T20 World Cup

India dominate T20 cricket, ready to challenge history

New Delhi: If it had not unfolded in front of our eyes, it would have sounded like exaggeration. T20 cricket is designed to resist sustained control. It is volatile, unforgiving and often indifferent to reputation. The shorter the format, the thinner the line between the best and the rest. And yet, India have turned this chaos into a pattern.

Since August 2023, India have treated T20Is as a personal domain, rolling through bilateral series and multi-nation tournaments without blinking. They have remained unbeaten across competitions, winning 49 of their 63 matches and losing only three. The centrepiece of this run was an immaculate T20 World Cup campaign that demanded adaptability of the highest order. India began on the green, seam-friendly surfaces of New York, moved to the batting-friendly pitches of the Caribbean Islands, adjusted to the spin-heavy conditions in Guyana and finished on the run-glutted strip in Barbados. Eight matches, eight opponents, eight victories. Since lifting the trophy in



2024, India have not lost a single bilateral series or tournament. Their match record in this phase stands at a commanding 32 wins and just five defeats. They sit atop the ICC Men’s T20I Team Rankings and boast the format’s leading performers, with Abhishek Sharma as the No.1 men’s T20I batter and Varun Chakravarty as the No.1 T20I bowler. Now comes the next chapter. India enter the 2026 T20 World Cup as hosts and defending champions, carrying the weight of history. No host nation has ever won the men’s T20 World Cup. No defending champion has successfully retained the title. Suryakumar Yadav and his side stand on the edge of something the format has never seen. This Indian

team does not aim to merely survive the first six overs. They aim to distort them. Abhishek Sharma arrives at the World Cup as the No.1-ranked T20I batter, a position earned through volume, impact and fearlessness. This is not a brief surge but sustained output that defines India’s intent. From ball one, the message is clear. Bowlers are not allowed to settle. T20 batting greatness comes in different shapes. Some offer stability, others finishing power or flexibility. Danger is different. Danger is the batter who makes captains feel they are one over away from losing control. Abhishek thrives in that space, forcing defensive fields before the innings has even settled. Then there is Suryakumar Yadav, the

captain and the axis around which this batting order turns. A T20I career strike rate above 160 still challenges convention, but it is his timing and range that unsettle opponents most. Around him, Sanju Samson and, fitness permitting, Tilak Varma complete a top four that blends aggression with control. Both may need a few balls, but once set, containment becomes difficult. India’s squad construction follows a simple rule. The run rate must never die. Wickets can fall and plans can wobble, but scoring cannot stall. Power hitters, left-right combinations and batters comfortable against both spin and pace ensure momentum survives deep into the innings. The real edge lies in how many players can flip a match within a single phase. They possess a rare commodity in T20 cricket, a fast bowler who shapes both the beginning and the end of an innings. Jasprit Bumrah remains unmatched in his ability to strike early and close games at the death. His overs do more than save runs. They change direction.

Delhi Pro Volleyball League debuts

New Delhi: Delhi Pro Volleyball League (DPVL) is officially launched with the vision of creating a structured, professional, and sustainable platform for volleyball talent in the city. The league has the backing of the Delhi Volleyball Association and the Delhi Olympic Association. Former national volleyball players Neeti Rawat and Jasoda Gulliya officially announced the Delhi Pro Volleyball League, which will take to the court in 2026, as per a DPVL release. Kuldeep Vats, President, Delhi Olympic Association and Joint Secretary, Volleyball Federation of India, was present at the official announcement and assured full support to the league. Kuldeep Vats said, “Delhi has always produced outstanding volleyball talent. The Delhi Pro Volleyball League is a timely initiative. As Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said, “Volleyball is not just a sport, it is a game that builds coordination, cooperation and collective strength.” Taking this spirit forward and aligning with India’s growing sporting economy, Volleyball League.

Panipat Panthers overpower Gurugram Gurus, while Hisar Heroes suffer defeat to Rohtak

Gurugram: An entertaining night of kabaddi unfolded at the Haryana Sports University, Rai, as Panipat Panthers delivered a commanding win over Gurugram Gurus, while Rohtak Royals handed Hisar Heroes their first defeat of the season in a double-header on Day 6 of the Kabaddi Champions League (KCL), according to a release. The evening began with Panipat Panthers asserting complete control against Gurugram Gurus, cruising to a comprehensive 42-27 victory. After an early exchange, the Panthers found rhythm through their raiders Narender Kandola and Meetu Sharma, while the defensive trio of Ankit Jaglan, Deepanshu Khatri, and Ashish Narwal kept the Gurus under constant pressure. Panipat forced multiple all-outs, including a crucial one early in the second half that opened up a nine-point cushion.



Meetu Sharma was in sublime touch, consistently breaching the Gurugram defence to complete a Super 10, while Ankit Jaglan anchored the backline with a High 5, ensuring the Panthers stayed firmly in command. Despite flashes from Neeraj Narwal, Gurugram Gurus were unable to break their winless run. The second match saw Rohtak Royals produce a clinical all-round performance to defeat Hisar Heroes 40-28, handing the previously unbeaten side their first loss of the campaign. Hisar began brightly with early tackles, but Rohtak quickly wrestled back momentum through a disciplined defensive display led by Sandeep Narwal, who completed a High 5 and repeatedly shut down Ashu Malik.

The Royals capitalised on their defensive dominance to inflict two all-outs, opening up a decisive lead by halftime. In the raiding department, Vijay Malik stood out with a Super Raid and consistent scoring, well supported by Naveen and Ankit Rana, as Rohtak steadily pulled away in the second half to seal a convincing win. The double-header not only

reshaped the league standings but also underlined the depth of talent on display, with both matches highlighting the balance between aggressive raiding and organised defence. With momentum building and teams beginning to find their identity, the league phase continues to promise high-intensity clashes and breakthrough performances in the days ahead. Devank soon found his rhythm, repeatedly breaching the Gurus’ defence and pushing them towards their first all-out. While Mandeep Kumar produced a series of brave raids to delay the inevitable, Bhiwani’s defence eventually held firm, handing Gurugram their first all-out and establishing early control of the match. Despite Jatin Narwal’s efforts, including a crucial raid before the strategic timeout, Bhiwani maintained momentum. Bhiwani Bulls delivered a statement performance at the Kabaddi Champions League, registering a dominant 62-34 victory over Gurugram Gurus in a high-octane encounter that belonged almost entirely to Devank Dalal, the tournament’s most expensive player, who lived up to his billing in emphatic fashion, according to a release. Devank Dalal opened the scoring with a bonus point but was dismissed early, keeping the score level at 1-1. Gurugram Gurus responded through Jatin Narwal, who broke the deadlock and revived Devank back into the game. What followed was a fierce early exchange between the raiders, with the opening five minutes witnessing end-to-end action and Bhiwani edging ahead 7-4. Devank soon found his rhythm, repeatedly breaching the Gurus’ defence and pushing them towards their first all-out. While Mandeep Kumar produced a series of brave raids to delay the inevitable, Bhiwani’s defence eventually held firm, handing Gurugram their first all-out and establishing early control of the match. Gurugram Bhiwani heading into the break firmly in control at 25-15.

Elite umpire Menon poised to achieve 150-match milestone in fifth T20I

Chennai: When he walks out to officiate India’s fifth T20I against New Zealand at Thiruvananthapuram on Saturday, he will join a distinguished list — umpires who have stood in 150 international matches. Just to put the figure in context there is no Indian who has served as an on field umpire in as many matches. Former India captain S Venkataraghavan is second on the list with 125 matches. He may not be playing cricket for India, but Nitin Menon is a household name in the country. He is the only Indian representative in the ICC Elite Panel of Umpires. The 42-year former Madhya Pradesh cricketer joined the distinguished panel in 2020 and has been a regular part of it since then. Menon started as a cricketer but could play only two List A matches before foraying into umpiring. Speaking on the big switch, he had told this daily two years ago that his father, who was also an umpire, advised him to have an alternative career as a match official. “When I was playing, till U-19 I was doing well. But when I went past that stage, the performances were not that good so I was dropped from the team. I was struggling to get a place in the Madhya Pradesh team. That time my father gave me advice that the BCCI was going to conduct examinations for umpires, so why don’t you appear in it and have an alternative career. So I went ahead, took exams and cleared it. Actually, I found umpiring more challenging and more rewarding than playing cricket,” Menon had said. Before the change, he had played cricket for 15 years. More importantly, he was only 23 when he took the risk. But as the saying goes — all’s well that ends well. The risk paid off as Menon is now not only the leading um-



pire from the country but also a role model to many, especially the former cricketers who have switched to the other side of the fence. As far as his umpiring career is concerned, Menon has been officiating in the domestic circuit since 2006. The big day eventually arrived, though after 11 years of toil, when he made his international debut as an umpire. but Menon’s journey has begun. He then got his first ODI when Afghanistan took on Ireland in their adopted home at Greater Noida On March 15, 2017. The striking aspect about Dube in the last 12 months or so is how much he has upskilled as an all-rounder. In the past, any captain would know what his match-ups are and often tend to go to pacers the moment walks in. That, however, has made little difference since 2025. Numbers say it as well. Since 2023, Dube has had a strike rate of 162.66 against spin and 144.85 against pace with the average dropping from 40 to 32.83. From 2025, however, the 32-year-old has a 193.54 SR against spin and 167.59 versus pace. The average against pace has dropped to 25.85, but he hits a boundary every 3.85 balls against seamers in this period. And that is in line with the brand of cricket this team has been playing. For India to become the first team to defend their T20 World Cup crown successfully puzzle.