

Mizoram Youth Congress torches work order, alleges bias in education contracts

Aizawl, Apr 10: The Mizoram Pradesh Youth Congress Committee (MPYCC) today staged a protest in Aizawl, accusing the State’s Education Minister Dr Vanlalhlana of alleged favouritism in the award of contracts under the Samagra Shiksha scheme, and symbolically burnt copies of work orders to press their demands.

In a statement issued after the protest, the MPYCC alleged that several works under the Education Department were awarded without following due tendering procedures. The organisation claimed that contracts were neither floated through open tenders nor even through restricted tenders, but were instead given to individuals and firms allegedly close to the ruling Zoram People’s Movement (ZPM) and those favoured by the Minister. Accord-



ing to the Youth Congress, within a span of just over two years—from January 1, 2024 to February 28, 2026—works amounting to Rs 50.18 crore were awarded under the Samagra scheme alone. The MPYCC further alleged that this was in violation of Samagra financial rules, which mandate that works exceeding Rs 25 lakh must be awarded through open tender. It cited a specific instance where a firm

identified as TiLi, allegedly linked to a close relative of a prominent ZPM leader, was awarded a contract worth Rs 59 lakh without any tender process or classification as departmental work.

The statement also raised objections to the Education Minister reportedly signing the agreement between the firm and the department, claiming that such direct involvement by a Minister in contrac-

tual agreements is unprecedented and deviates from established administrative practices. Recalling the pledges made by ZPM candidates ahead of the 2023 Assembly elections, the MPYCC said the party had assured the public that it would not indulge in favouritism towards relatives or party members. The Youth Congress alleged that the people of Mizoram had placed their trust in these assurances and handed over the mandate accordingly. However, it claimed that after assuming office, the ZPM government increasingly resorted to restricted tenders and approvals for awarding contracts to party affiliates. The organisation further alleged the introduction of what it termed as “blanket approval” for restricted tenders, a practice it claimed was previously unheard of in the State.

Kawrthah North In Mizoram Wins National First For Clean And Green

Aizawl, Apr 10 : Kawrthah North Village Council (LGD Code: 264555), Mizoram has been conferred the prestigious Deen Dayal Upadhyay Panchayat Satat Vikas, 2025 under the theme “Clean & Green Panchayat,” securing the top rank at the national level. The award recognizes the outstanding efforts of the Village Council in promoting sustainable development practices, environmental conservation, sanitation, and overall rural well-being.

This achievement highlights the commitment of village council towards building an eco-friendly and sustainable village model. The Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Govt. of India, has officially announced the recognition and appreciated the exemplary work carried out by the Village Council. The initiative reflects strong grass root governance and effective implementation



of development, reinforcing the importance of community-driven initiatives in achieving long-term environmental and developmental goals. The Rural Development and Administration Department, Government of Mizoram immensely appreciated the outstanding efforts and dedication undertaken by Kawrthah North Village Council and its community, while encouraging all other Village Council throughout the State to achieve utmost best in the coming years. In a his-

toric achievement for the Northeast, the Kawrthah North Village Council in Mizoram has been conferred the prestigious National First Rank in the “Clean & Green Panchayat 2025” category. This top honor was announced by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India, as part of the Deen Dayal Upadhyay Panchayat Satat Vikas Puraskar (DDUPSVP), recognizing the village’s exemplary commitment to sustainable development and environmental conservation.

In Brief

NPP seeks re-poll in Nagaland’s Koridang seat

Kohima: The National People’s Party (NPP) has demanded a re-poll in several polling stations under the Alichen cluster in Nagaland, raising concerns over what it described as unusual voting patterns in the 28 Koridang Assembly Constituency. In a complaint submitted to the Election Commission of India, the party pointed to a sharp drop in voter turnout in Alichen. According to figures cited by the NPP, only 1,323 votes were cast out of 3,310 registered voters, bringing the turnout to around 39.9 per cent. This, the party said, was much lower than neighbouring areas where polling ranged from over 70 per cent to as high as 99 per cent. The party said Alichen accounted for a large share of uncast votes in the constituency.

Drug-free district campaign launched in Mizoram’s Lawngtlai

Lawngtlai: The inaugural programme of the “Drug-Free District Campaign” under the Nasha Mukht Bharat Abhiyan was held at the DC Conference Hall, Lawngtlai today. The programme was chaired by Donny Lalruatsanga, Deputy Commissioner and Chairman of the Lawngtlai District Level Committee on Drug-Free District. The campaign was officially launched by C Lalsawmzuala, Chief Executive Member (CEM), LADC. C Lalsawmzuala expressed gratitude to the members of the District Level Committee and stated that the campaign was launched with the aim of making Lawngtlai district free from drug abuse and ensuring its successful implementation.

Assam CM on action against Pawan Khera

Guwahati: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has said the state police was doing their job by trailing Pawan Khera in connection with a case filed by the former’s wife over allegations that she held multiple passports and offshore properties. Sarma also took a swipe at state Congress president Gaurav Gogoi over the British nationality of his wife and children and asked how a person who “could not have an Indian family serve us”. Talking to reporters in Guwahati, he said, “We have put the police after Khera. Whom else will we task it with? It is not the ULFA that is after him; it is the police. If there is an FIR, it is the duty of the police to act on it.”

Telangana HC grants anticipatory bail to Pawan Khera

Guwahati: The Telangana High Court today granted anticipatory bail to Congress leader Pawan Khera for one week in connection with an FIR filed against him by Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma’s wife, Riniki Bhuyan Sharma. Khera had alleged that she has multiple passports and properties abroad. “The petitioner is granted time time for one week to file an application before the concerned court...relief to petitioner for one week with conditions,” said Justice K Sujana while pronouncing the order.

NDA to cross 80 seats, Himanta likely to return as CM: Hagrama Mohilary

Guwahati, Apr 10: Bodoland Territorial Council Chief Executive Member Hagrama Mohilary on Thursday expressed strong confidence that Himanta Biswa Sarma will return as Chief Minister, claiming that the NDA alliance is heading towards a clear majority in the Assam Assembly elections. Mohilary made the statement during his visit to Bijni, where he held a meeting with leaders of the Bodoland People’s Front at the party’s district office. After the meeting, he told reporters that polling across the state was conducted in a peaceful manner without any major problems. He said the election process was smooth and well-managed, pointing to proper arrangements made by the administration. According to him, ear-

ly trends and feedback from different areas suggest that the NDA alliance is leading in many constituencies and is likely to cross the 80-seat mark in the 126-member Assam Assembly. Speaking about the Bijni constituency, Mohilary said the result there was almost certain and did not need much discussion. He also claimed that the alliance is set to perform strongly in the Bodoland Territorial Region, adding that all 15 seats in the BTC area could go in favour of the NDA. He described it as a possible “clean sweep” in the region. Mohilary further said that if the NDA returns to power, the government will continue its development work in Assam. He added that the next term will focus on taking forward major development projects and improving



infrastructure in different parts of the state.

NPP seeks re-poll in Nagaland’s Koridang seat

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Assam CM on action against Pawan Khera

Guwahati, Apr 10: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has said the state police was doing their job by trailing Pawan Khera in connection with a case filed by the former’s wife over allegations that she held multiple passports and offshore properties. Sarma also took a swipe at state Congress president Gaurav Gogoi over the British nationality of his wife and children and asked how a person who “could not have an Indian family serve us”. Talking to reporters in Guwahati, he said, “We have put the police after Khera. Whom else will we task it with? It is not the ULFA that is after him; it is the police. If there is an FIR, it is the duty of the police to act on it.” “Police are slaves of the law, and they’re going to the house of a person named in a case, which is legal... The police are paid salaries to go to the houses of criminals,” he said. Sarma was responding to Khera, claiming that the chief minister has “unleashed” the police against him for making allegations against his wife, Riniki Bhuyan Sharma. A team of the Assam Police searched the Congress leader’s Delhi residence on Tuesday, acting on a complaint lodged by the chief minister’s wife. If there, however, could not find Khera, who is believed to be in Hyderabad. Khera today got anticipatory bail for one week in this case from the Telangana High Court.

Drug-free district campaign launched in Mizoram’s Lawngtlai

Lawngtlai, Apr 10: The inaugural programme of the “Drug-Free District Campaign” under the Nasha Mukht Bharat Abhiyan was held at the DC Conference Hall, Lawngtlai today.

The programme was chaired by Donny Lalruatsanga, Deputy Commissioner and Chairman of the Lawngtlai District Level Committee on Drug-Free District. The campaign was officially launched by C Lalsawmzuala, Chief Executive Member (CEM), LADC.

C Lalsawmzuala expressed gratitude to the members of the District Level Committee and stated that the campaign was launched with the aim of making Lawngtlai district free from drug abuse and ensuring its successful implementation.

He highlighted that since Lawngtlai is located along the international border, it is highly vul-

nerable to drug trafficking, making it essential to intensify efforts in combating drug abuse. He further stated that making Lawngtlai a drug-free district would not be easy and would require strong cooperation and collective efforts from the government, Village Councils (VCs), NGOs, churches, and the general public. He urged everyone to work together with full commitment.

The CEM emphasized the need for careful and innovative approaches in tackling drug abuse. While acknowledging the continuous efforts made by the government, NGOs, and churches in rehabilitating drug users, he stressed that sustained dedication and perseverance are crucial. He reiterated that LADC will continue to contribute actively and called upon all stakeholders, including VCs, NGOs, churches, MJA, and

the public, to take an active role in the fight against drugs.

Donny Lalruatsanga highlighted that, alongside the initiatives of the Mizoram Government, this campaign is also a significant initiative of the Central Government. He mentioned that various important committees have been formed under this programme and that funds have been allocated by the Central Government to support anti-drug initiatives. He affirmed that all efforts will be made to transform Lawngtlai district into a drug-free district.

He also stressed that combating drug abuse requires collective action, noting that the efforts of Police, Excise, and NGOs alone are not sufficient. He called upon all citizens of Lawngtlai to actively participate in the fight against drugs.

PC Lalchunglura, Superinten-

dent of Police, in his speech appreciated the leadership of the Deputy Commissioner and emphasized that every individual has a significant responsibility in achieving a drug-free district or village. He highlighted the importance of continued cooperation and collective effort in combating drug abuse.

The campaign will cover 187 villages—99 under LADC and 88 under CAD.

It is planned for a duration of three years and may be extended if necessary. Committees will be formed at the district, block, and village levels to carry out the campaign effectively within their respective jurisdictions.

Villages declared as drug-free, with the approval of the district administration, will be awarded certificates of recognition and citations on every Independence Day.

Telangana HC grants anticipatory bail to Pawan Khera

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Khera had alleged that she has multiple passports and properties abroad.

“The petitioner is granted time time for one week to file an application before the concerned court...relief to petitioner for one week with conditions,” said Justice K Sujana while pronouncing the order.

A detailed copy of the order is awaited. The anticipatory bail petition has been filed in Hyderabad, where Khera has a residence.

During the hearing on Thursday, Advocate General of Assam Devajit Saikia, appearing for the Assam Police, had challenged the maintainability of the anticipatory bail plea in Hyderabad.

He submitted that Khera, a resident of Delhi, had not shown any reason as to why he cannot come to Assam and

file for anticipatory bail there.

“There is no medical emergency...He can file prayer for anticipatory bail in Assam from any part of the country,” AG said.

The AG further argued that Khera is an “established flight risk” since, “when police went to him, he fled away...He could have gone to Delhi because that is his place of residence. Instead he is in Hyderabad... Tomorrow if police reaches there, he will fly to Chennai...”

On the other hand, senior advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi appearing for Khera had argued that the criminal action is motivated and reeks of political vendetta.

For context, the FIR has been registered under Sections 175 (false statement in connection with an election), 35, 36, 318 (Cheating), 338, (forgery of valuable will, security, etc.), 337 (Forgery of record of Court or of public register, etc.), 340 (Forged document or electronic record and using it as genuine), 352 (Intentional insult with intent to provoke breach of peace), 356 (Defamation) of BNS at Guwahati Crime Branch Police Station.

Shyamkanu Mahanta Moves Court for Bail in Zubeen Garg Murder Case

Guwahati, Apr 10: A day after voting concluded for the Assam Assembly elections, Shyamkanu Mahanta, an accused in the Zubeen Garg murder case, reportedly filed a bail application on Friday.

The plea is set to be heard in a special fast-track court, with the hearing scheduled for April 22.

Meanwhile, a separate hearing was held regarding whether “Mahabir Aqua,” owned by Siddharth Sharma, should be reopened. The Gauhati High Court has authorized the special fast-track court to take a decision on this matter.

During today’s proceedings, serious allegations were raised against Siddharth Sharma. He is accused of misappropriating several crores belonging to Zubeen Garg. It was alleged that Sharma siphoned off large sums of money under various pretexts, including expenses related to the construction of Garg’s residence in Kharguli.

In one instance, Sharma allegedly claimed that ₹70 lakh had been paid to a contractor for construction work, while in reality only ₹35 lakh was paid.

Further allegations suggest that the



misappropriated funds were used for personal expenses. These include gifting his partner, investing ₹30,000 per month in SIPs for her, and presenting her with a scooter and a gold ring on her birthday.

The case continues to develop, with more details emerging during ongoing court proceedings.

NE/EAST

Jyotirmay Das of Patacharkuchi secures state first position in HSLC 2026



Guwahati, April 10: According to the official Abstract of Results published by the education authorities, there were more female candidates than male applicants in the High School Leaving Certificate (HSLC) Examination 2026, although males

formed female candidates with a pass percentage of 67.78% compared to 63.96%. The HSLC 2026 exam had an overall pass rate of 65.62%.2,81,701 applicants in all passed the test. There were 1,55,303 females and 1,26,398 males among them. In terms of division, 40,328 male applicants and 44,861 female candidates won first division. 26,834 females and 19,511 males were sent to the third level, while 83,608 females and 66,559 males passed the second division.Additionally, 9,315 candidates were absent from the exam. In addition, 135 candidates were expelled for using unfair methods, and the results of five candidates were withheld.Every year, students throughout the state take the HSLC exam, which represents a significant turning point in their academic careers.

had a greater pass rate. There were 4,38,564 applicants in all, comprising 1,90,239 men and 2,48,325 women. There were 2,42,781 girls and 1,86,468 boys among the 4,29,249 candidates that showed up.In terms of performance, men candidates outper-

The Koridang bypoll became a multi-cornered competition

Kohima, Apr 10: Kohima: The Koridang Assembly constituency by-election in Nagaland's Mokokchung district on Thursday has become a fiercely competitive multi-cornered race, with four newcomers and two seasoned leaders. Imkong L. Imchen, a sitting MLA, died on November 11, 2024, at a private hospital in Guwahati following a brief illness at the age of 75, necessitating the by-election. Daochier I. Imchen of the BJP is the consensus candidate put forward by the ruling People's Democratic Alliance He is the late lawmaker's son. I. Abenjang of the National People's Party and T. Chalukumba Ao of the Congress are two more well-known contenders.The election battle has become even more intense with the entry of three Independent candidates: Imchatoba Imchen, Imtiwapang Kichu, and Major Toshikaba. Major Toshikaba, a candidate for the Naga People's Front, narrowly lost the 2023 election, whereas Congress candidate Chalukumba Ao ran three times before, losing each time.

According to the chief minister of Tripura, the BJP will form a district council government

Agartala , Apr 10: Dr. Manik Saha, the chief minister of Tripura, stated on April 9 that he is very confident that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) will win a "historic mandate" in the upcoming elections and form the next government in the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC).

Speaking at an election rally in support of BJP candidate Abhijit Tripura in Kalachhara, South Tripura district, Saha claimed that the regional party Tipra Motha had engaged in corruption and disinformation, which would cause it to "inevitably exit" the district council.The Chief Minister accused opposition workers of trying to use violence and intimidation to deceive voters. He stated, "People must remain alert against such tactics," adding that fear cannot perpetuate political power. Saha made the historical analogy that "even Hitler would still be ruling if fear alone could retain power." Saha emphasized the value of keeping close ties with the public and said that understanding people's



wants and feelings, rather than using force, should be the driving force in politics. Additionally, he claimed that opposition workers were interfering with daily life by forcing stores to close before public gatherings and inciting disputes amongst ethnic communities. "It is unacceptable to harm livelihoods," he continued.Saha claimed that people joining the BJP were being unfairly labeled and questioned why members of the opposition party were quitting. He emphasized

how the party's Janajati Morcha has grown dramatically in a short amount of time and is running independently for all 28 TTAADC seats.

The Tripura tribal regions' political environment is expected to be significantly shaped by the TTAADC elections, which are set for April 12. The conclusion will decide how the council, which is crucial to the management and growth of the state's indigenous populations, is governed going forward.

CoTU demands a 24-hour shutdown of Kangpokpi after a Kuki-Zo man was shot in the Manipur buffer zone



Imphal , Apr 10: After a Kuki-Zo man was shot and injured in a designated buffer zone late on April 8, tensions in Manipur's Kangpokpi district have escalated once more. This led to protests and a shutdown call by a tribal organization.The event has sparked new worries about how vulnerable peace initiatives are in the state affected by the conflict. Shantipur, a designated buffer zone between Gangiphai in Kangpokpi district and Sekmai in Imphal West district, was the scene of the shoot-

ing at approximately 10 PM. At the time of the occurrence, three Kuki-Zo men were there. After one of them was shot in the left arm, he was sent to a hospital in Kangpokpi, where the bullet was safely removed by surgery. According to medical sources, there is no immediate threat to his life and he is currently stable and under monitoring.

Following the incident, the Committee on Tribal Unity (CoTU) announced a 24-hour shutdown in Kangpokpi, running from midnight

on April 9 to midnight on April 10. The shutdown will also affect traffic on National Highway-2, a key route connecting the hill regions of Manipur. Three Kuki-Zo citizens were allegedly attacked at close range by armed Meitei militants in the buffer zone, according to a statement released by CoTU, which vehemently denounced the shooting. The organization questioned the efficacy of security systems in such sensitive places and characterized the occurrence as a major setback to ongoing peace efforts.CoTU stressed that vital services won't be impacted by the shutdown.

The limitations do not apply to funeral processions, medical care, water and power supplies, or air travel. Local residents expressed concern that repeated incidents in fringe and sensitive areas are disrupting the gradual return to normalcy in the district.Some pointed to gaps in security deployment in buffer zones, warning that such lapses are eroding public trust and could reignite wider tensions. CoTU reiterated that buffer zones must be strictly respected and remain free from violations, calling for swift identification and legal action against those responsible for the shooting.

Why is Manipur on fire once more A bomb was thrown, the internet was cut off, and roads were blocked

Imphal, Apr 10: After suspected militants attacked a home in the Tronglaobi Awang Leikai region of the Bishnupur district with a bomb, killing two young siblings and wounding their mother, Manipur is witnessing a new wave of violence and protests. Locals were deeply offended by the attack. Traffic was disrupted and tensions in the area increased as

protesters set fire to at least three lorries and blocked the Imphal-Tidim Road many times. In the Bishnupur district, protesters also set fire to tires and halted traffic near Moirang Lamkhai and Ningthoukhong. A mob of around 500 protesters stormed a CRPF camp near Gelmol, a few hundred metres from Tronglaobi, and engaged in vandalism and burning of se-



curity vehicles. In the ensuing firing by security forces, three

protesters died while 30 were injured.

Three Manipur valley districts saw a partial relaxation of curfews due to the current state of law and order



Imphal, Apr 10: Following an assessment of the current state of law and order, Manipur authorities have ordered a partial lifting of curfew restrictions in three valley districts: Imphal West, Imphal East, and Thoubal.Residents will be allowed to move be-

tween 5:00 and 9:00 a.m., subject to stringent guidelines designed to ensure public safety, according to orders issued by the corresponding district magistrates on April 9. Movement will not be permitted outside of this timeframe, and curfew restrictions will

be in effect from 9:00 a.m. until 5:00 a.m. the next day. In reaction to tensions resulting from the Tronglaobi incident, prohibitory orders under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023 were issued earlier this week. These relaxations follow. According to the authorities, the partial easing was implemented after evaluating the local circumstances and making sure that law and order would not be jeopardized. Strict bans are still in effect notwithstanding the little relaxation. In addition to carrying sticks, stones, firearms, sharp objects, or explosive materials, gatherings of five or more people in public areas are prohib-

ited. Similar limitations are in place in Thoubal, where unapproved meetings of four or more people during the relaxation hour are also forbidden. Officials made it clear that the limitations would not apply to vital services like banking institutions, court operations, emergency services, or law enforcement. In some districts, movement pertaining to health services, utilities, media people, and air travel is also allowed both during and after the relaxation period.Authorities emphasize ongoing monitoring to prevent any escalation of the situation, and the directives specify that the updated limitations will stay in effect until further notice.

BJP employees report Mallikarjun Kharge to the police for making a "snake" comment during an Assam rally

Dispur, Apr 10: Workers of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Bathinda, Punjab, have filed a police complaint against Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge for allegedly making a "snake" comment during an Assamese electoral rally. They claim that Kharge made remarks that could spark instability in the nation. Former Punjab BJP state secretary Sukhpal Singh Sra told reporters that the complaint, which sought legal action against the Congress leader, was filed with the Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) in Bathinda. Speaking to the Muslim community during an election rally in Assam, Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge stated that if a Muslim is performing Namaz and a snake walks by, he should kill the snake first. He claimed that members of the RSS and BJP are today's snakes. They will destroy you if you don't kill them, Sra claimed.He went on to say that the statement showed a desire to stir up trouble in the nation. This demonstrates their dishonest plan to incite unrest across the nation. "We have complained to the Bathinda SSP about Mallikarjun Kharge," he stated. Sra went on to say that if the police did not respond to the



complaint, the party would go to the High Court. "We will approach the High Court if the police do not act," he declared.In response to Kharge's reported "poisonous snake" remark at the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), BJP officials and workers in Karnataka had organized a demonstration. Party activists demanded his arrest and filed an official complaint during the demonstration outside the Mandya Superintendent of Police (SP) office.Manjunath, Prasanna, Hosahalli Shivu, Shivakumar Aaradhya, Nithyananda, Madaraja Arasu,

and Mahantappa were among the BJP leaders that took part in the protest. Meanwhile, the Assam BJP also lodged a police complaint against Kharge at the Basistha Police Station in Guwahati, alleging that his remarks were derogatory towards the BJP and the RSS.The controversy stems from Kharge's speech during an election rally in Assam, which has triggered political reactions across multiple states. BJP leaders have alleged that the remarks were inflammatory, while further responses from the Congress party are awaited.

Nearly 80% of voters participated in the Dharmanagar by-election in North Tripura

Agartala, Apr 10: Nearly 80% of voters cast ballots in the Dharmanagar Assembly constituency bypoll in North Tripura on Thursday, and officials confirmed that there were no significant incidents at any of the 55 voting places. During the day, 79.84 percent of the constituency's 46,142 eligible voters cast ballots. Voting in the mixed-population constituency started at 7 AM and ran continuously until 5 PM.During the day, a few polling places reported issues with their electronic voting machines. Nevertheless, the Election Commission's technical staff acted quickly to replace or fix the damaged devices so that voting could proceed without much delay.

Manipur Police clarify the COTU's appeal for the NH-2 shutdown

Imphal, Apr 10: In response to the Committee on Tribal Unity's (COTU) 24-hour shutdown request along National Highway-2 (NH-2), the Manipur Police have released an explanation outlining the events leading up to the incident in Shantipur in the Kangpokpi district.The police said in an official press release that the shutdown call came after a man was shot after reportedly failing to halt his car at a naka (checkpoint) despite numerous signals from security guards.A Chevrolet Cruze with three people and an Alto automobile with one occupant arrived at Kanglatongbi Bridge from the Kangpokpi and Sekmai sides, respectively, at approximately 9:30 PM on April 8, 2026, according to the statement.

According to reports, the cars had gathered there for a test drive and swap. The Cruze had a slight mishap during this operation after colliding with an adjacent nullah.Police officers stationed at the security naka next to Shantipur's Kanglatongbi Hindi High School hurried to help.

The accompanying Alto car, meanwhile, allegedly ignored multiple instructions to halt and almost struck on-duty security officers as it approached the checkpoint at a high pace. The occupants of the Alto apparently tried to escape in the direction of Kangpokpi after realizing the police were there. Security personnel stopped the car by firing controlled bullets at the tires in light of the impending danger and

suspicious behavior. But the car didn't stop and kept getting away.It was then discovered that Lenkhogin Tuboi, the Alto's driver, had been shot and was being treated at Mission Hospital in Kangpokpi. Janggingen Khongsai, 21, the driver of the Chevrolet Cruze, was taken into custody and turned over to the G. Saparmeina Police Station.

Following the proper procedures, he was later freed. An FIR has been filed, and the matter is still being looked into. The police reiterated their commitment to maintaining law and order and urged the public to remain calm, assuring that all necessary steps are being taken to ensure transparency and peace in the region.

The Arunachal BJP denounces the Pahalgam terror assault and advocates for Waqf reforms

Itanagar, Apr 10: The recently passed Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025 was praised as a significant step toward transparency, gender empowerment, and improved management of Waqf properties at a state-level seminar on Waqf Sudhar Janjagaran Abhiyan held by the BJP's Arunachal Pradesh unit on Wednesday at the party headquarters. Leaders used the seminar as a forum to convey their profound indignation and sorrow over the recent terror attack in Pahalgam that claimed the lives of 26 innocent people, including Corporal Tage Hailyang of the Indian Air Force from Arunachal Pradesh.

Law, Social Justice & Empowerment and Tribal Affairs Minister Kento Jini spoke to the group and went into detail about the important changes implemented by the Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025.He described how the amendment addresses significant shortcomings in



the original Waqf Act of 1995, most notably the elimination of Section 40, which gave Waqf Boards the authority to unilaterally designate any property—including Hindu property—as Waqf property.

In order to ensure due process, openness, and the preservation of property rights, the amendment now mandates a

public notice prior to such declarations. Jini also emphasized the Act's emphasis on women's empowerment because it requires the welfare of widows, divorced women, and orphans to receive income from Waqf assets. It also prevents previous abuse of Waqf-alal-aulad by protecting the rights of rightful heirs under family endowments.

Four Arunachal Ju-Jitsu athletes selected to represent India at South Asian Championship



Itanagar, Apr 10: In a proud moment for Arunachal Pradesh, four young Ju-Jitsu athletes from the state have been selected to represent India at the upcoming 3rd South Asian

Ju-Jitsu Championship 2026. The international event is scheduled to be held in Sri Lanka from April 10 to 12. The athletes, along with their team official, left Itanagar on Thursday to be-

gin their journey. They will first travel to New Delhi before heading to the host country for the championship. According to a statement issued by the Arunachal Ju-Jitsu Association, the selected athletes are Byabang Bhupal, Dongda Taduk, Langkung Adam, and Langkung Duta.

They will be accompanied by team official Nich Tell. The athletes have been selected by the Ju-Jitsu Association of India based on their performance and preparation for the international event. This selection is seen as a significant opportunity for the athletes to showcase their talent on a larger stage. It also reflects the steady growth of martial arts in Arunachal Pradesh, where more young players are taking part in national and international competitions.

CM Lalduhoma Chairs Second Mi-PRAGATI Meeting To Review Progress Of Development Projects

Aizawl, Apr 10 : The Chief Minister of Mizoram, Lalduhoma, today chaired the second meeting of the Mizoram Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation (Mi-PRAGATI) at the Chief Minister's Conference Hall. Several members attended the meeting in person, while others joined via video conference. Mi-PRAGATI has been constituted to monitor major development projects across the state, address implementation challenges, and strengthen inter-departmental coordination.

The initiative aims to ensure faster, more efficient, and transparent delivery of public services to the people. During the meeting, key proj-



ects and initiatives were reviewed, including the Aizawl Western Side Bypass Road, works undertaken by NHID-CL, implementation of the PM SHRI Scheme, PMJVK projects, and Railway development. The Aizawl Western

Side Bypass Road project has achieved 19.56% physical progress so far. Discussions covered issues related to land acquisition and resettlement of affected families, compensation demands from private quarry owners, crop damages

caused during construction, forest clearance, and challenges in debris disposal. Regarding the Vairengte-Aizawl 4-lane road project, it was noted that the issue of shifting electric power lines, raised in the previous meeting, has been resolved. Other ongoing challenges were also discussed along with their possible solutions. The total length of the project is 90.110 km, of which 60.295 km is planned under Greenfield alignment. Mi-PRAGATI was established in August last year. The Chief Secretary serves as the Member Secretary, while members include Principal Secretaries, Secretaries, Deputy Commissioners, and heads of Central Government.

65.62 pc students pass HSLC exam in Assam

Guwahati, Apr 10: Assam recorded an overall pass percentage of 65.62 in the High School Leaving Certificate (HSLC) examination 2026 with boys outperforming girls. The pass percentage among boys is 67.78 while girls registered 63.96 per cent. The examination was conducted by Assam State School Education Board from February 10 to 27, the results of which were declared today. This year, the overall pass percentage stands at 65.62 per cent, showing a slight improvement compared to last year's 63.98 per cent. A total of 4,29,249 students appeared for the examination, out of which 2,81,701 students have passed. Looking at division-wise results, 85,189 students secured first division, 1,50,167 students passed in second division, and 46,345 students were placed in third division. This shows that a large number of students have cleared the exam across all categories. A total of 3,983 students secured distinction marks, while 13,681 students achieved star marks, indicating strong academic performance among many candidates. Apart from this, the data also shows that 9,315 students were absent, while 5 results have been withheld and 135 candidates were expelled during the examination process. As per the merit list, the top five rank holders are Jyotirmoy Das of Sankardev Sishu Niketan, Patacharkuchi; Akankha Bhuyan of Ambikagiri Rai Chaudhari Jatiya Vidyalaya, Howaijan; Jia Farah Islam of Little Flower HS School, Dibrugarh, and Surajit Akhtar, Little Flowers School, Nalbari.

Manipur CM travels to Senapati via NH-2, first road visit since 2023 violence

Imphal, Apr 10: In a significant move, Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand on Friday travelled by road to Senapati district along National Highway-2, marking the first such visit by a Chief Minister since ethnic violence broke out in the state on May 3, 2023. The Chief Minister's convoy passed through several sensitive areas, including Kangpokpi district, which is largely inhabited by Kuki communities. The journey was carried out under tight and layered security arrangements. Officials had stepped up surveillance along the NH-2 corridor in advance, with additional security personnel deployed at key points to ensure safe movement. During his visit to Senapati, Khemchand inaugurated a multi-level parking facility with space for 147 vehicles. The facility is part of an in-



tegrated Inter-State and Inter-District Agriculture and Economic Transportation Hub set up at the district headquarters. The project is expected to support local trade and improve transport of agricultural produce. The Chief Minister also inaugurated multi-purpose community halls at Khabaduikung and Sangkumei villages. In addition,

he laid the foundation stone for the construction of 69 Anganwadi centres under the SASCI scheme, aimed at strengthening basic services at the grassroots level. As part of the visit, Khemchand is scheduled to address a public gathering and interact with leaders of civil society organisations. The outreach is seen as an effort to engage directly

with local communities and understand their concerns. The visit comes shortly after the Chief Minister undertook a similar road journey to Jiribam via National Highway-37. Officials said these back-to-back visits are part of a planned effort to restore administrative presence and build public confidence in areas affected by violence.

Manipur Police clarify NH-2 shutdown call, appeal for peaceful protest

Imphal, Apr 10: The Manipur Police on Friday issued a detailed clarification regarding the 24-hour shutdown call along National Highway-2 (NH-2) by the Committee on Tribal Unity (COTU), urging the public to maintain peace and avoid disruption of essential services. In an official statement, the police said the shutdown call followed an incident reported on April 8 at Shantipur in Kangpokpi district. According to the police, the incident took place around 9:30 pm near Kanglatongbi

Bridge, where two vehicles — a Chevrolet Cruze carrying three occupants and an Alto with a single occupant — had arrived from opposite directions for what was described as a test drive and exchange. During this process, the Cruze reportedly met with a minor accident after falling into a nearby drain. Security personnel stationed at a naka near Kanglatongbi Hindi High School rushed to the spot to assist. At the same time, the Alto car approached the checkpoint at high speed and

allegedly ignored repeated signals from security personnel to stop. The vehicle nearly hit personnel on duty and then attempted to flee towards Kangpokpi, raising suspicion among the forces present. Police said that, considering the risk and the behaviour of the occupants, security personnel fired controlled rounds aimed at the tyres to stop the vehicle. However, the car did not halt and managed to escape from the spot. Later, it was found that the driver of the Alto, identi-

fied as Lenkhogin Tuboi, had sustained bullet injuries. He was taken to Mission Hospital in Kangpokpi, where he is currently undergoing treatment. The driver of the Chevrolet Cruze, Janggingen Khongsai (21), was detained and handed over to G. Saparmeina Police Station. He was later released after completion of necessary formalities. The police confirmed that a case has been registered and further investigation is underway to establish all facts related to the incident.

Row over Sumi Bible translation: Language body seeks recall, flags 'serious errors'

Kohima, Apr 10: A controversy has emerged in Nagaland over the latest translation of the Sumi Bible, with the Society for the Preservation of Sumi Language raising strong objections and demanding its immediate recall. At a press conference held in Badampukhuri, Retired Pastor Rev. Heniji Zhimomi said the issue was not just about language but about the sanctity of religious texts. He alleged that the new translation contains additions and omissions that change the original meaning of the scriptures. He said the Bible must be clear and natural in the Sumi language, without outside linguistic influence. The body pointed out differences between the new version and existing Sumi literature, including hymn books and educational materials. It said changes in words, pronunciation and phonetics have created confusion among readers and affected uniformity in the language. Committee convener Agheto Chishi said many members of the



Sumi community are now finding it difficult to read and understand the Bible. He noted that the Sumi Bible was first translated in 1928 and revised over time, but claimed the present version has the most issues. He also said earlier concerns raised by Sumi organisations were not properly addressed. Advisor GB Kahuto Chishi said the committee has received several

complaints from across the community.

He claimed that around 5,000 copies were printed for review, but the process lacked transparency and feedback from the public was largely ignored.

He also questioned the use of resources on the project. The committee has approached the Bible Society of India, seeking re-

call of all copies and a halt to further publication. It warned of legal action if the demand is not met. Citing provisions under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and Article 29(1) of the Constitution, the body said the issue also concerns protection of language and culture. It cited changes in biblical references as examples of what it called distortion of meaning.

Mizoram village council wins award for clean and green panchayat

Aizawl, Apr 10: Kawrthah North Village Council, Mizoram has been conferred the prestigious Deen Dayal Upadhyay Panchayat Satat Vikas, 2025 under the theme "Clean & Green Panchayat," securing the top rank at the national level.

The award recognizes the outstanding efforts of the Village Council in promoting sustainable development practices, environmental conservation, sanitation, and overall rural

well-being. This achievement highlights the commitment of village council towards building an eco-friendly and sustainable village model.

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Govt. of India, has officially announced the recognition and appreciated the exemplary work carried out by the Village Council. The initiative reflects strong grass root governance and effective implementation of development, reinforcing

the importance of community-driven initiatives in achieving long-term environmental and developmental goals. The Rural Development and Administration Department, Government of Mizoram immensely appreciated the outstanding efforts and dedication undertaken by Kawrthah North Village Council and its community, while encouraging all other Village Council throughout the State to achieve utmost best in the coming years.

Cong files FIR against its Udalguri candidate who quit party a day before poll

Udalguri, Apr 10: The Congress has filed a police complaint against its Udalguri candidate, Suren Daimari, who resigned from the party just a day before the Assam Assembly elections, citing a lack of support and "betrayal" by the leadership.

Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) general secretary (organization) Ramanna Baruah filed the FIR at the Bhangagarh Police Station in Guwahati on Thursday evening.

In the FIR, the party has accused Daimari of committing criminal breach of trust and financial irregularities.

According to the complaint, Daimari, a resident of Kahibari in Udalguri district, had initially applied for a party ticket from the Indian National Congress on January 19, 2026. After scrutiny, the party approved his candidature, following which he filed his nomination that was



subsequently accepted by the Election Commission, officially recognising him as the Congress candidate for the constituency.

The complaint further alleges that the Congress party transferred an amount of Rs 30 lakh to Daimari's bank account through RTGS for election-related expenses. However, on April 9, the day of voting, it reportedly came to light

through various media reports that Daimari had resigned from the party a day earlier, on April 8.

On the other hand, Daimari expressed his frustration with the party. "Congress is a betrayer party. They defrauded me. Even after giving me the ticket, they did not respond. I called them multiple times, but they didn't answer," he claimed.

Mizoram Village Councils Receive Full Three Hundred Sixty Two Crore Grant Allocation

Aizawl, Apr 10: The All Mizoram Village Council Association (AMVCA) has lauded the state government for successfully securing and distributing the entire Rs 362 crore allocated by the 15th Finance Commission as Rural Local Body (RLB) grants for community development. Speaking to reporters at a press conference here, AMVCA president F.P. Laikhama said that Rs 362 crore was earmarked as RLB grants for Village Councils (VCs) for the 2021-2026 period, and the entire fund has been received by the VCs. He highlighted that the final installment was credited in full on March 28, well within the 15th Finance Commission's designated period. The association praised the state government's efforts in ensuring that the funds were secured without any deductions or losses, describing the feat as a testament to the government's proactive administration. It further expressed particular satisfaction with the government's "unbiased" ap-



proach to fund distribution.

"We are grateful that the government has prioritised grassroots development without political discrimination. Village Councils, regardless of their political affiliations, have received their fair share of development funds, ensuring a fair and balanced distribution across the rural sector," Laikhama said. The AMVCA president noted that the government is actively working on revising the honorariums of VC members, which have seen no increase since 2011. He also said that the government is currently taking steps to establish a dedicated guest house in Aizawl for Village

Council members to stay in when they visit the capital for official business. AMVCA president K Lalngaizuala said that members of village councils during a conference held in Aizawl on Tuesday unanimously adopted a resolution to approach a Gauhati high court in order to protect the prestige of village councils. A notification issued by the state local administration department last week said that the current term of the village councils in the state barring those within three autonomous district council areas in the southern part of the state, has been curtailed by six months and shall end on February 19 next year.

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The Role of Empathy in Strengthening Society

Empathy, the ability to understand and share the feelings of others, is a fundamental quality that strengthens social bonds. In a world often marked by division and misunderstanding, empathy plays a crucial role in promoting harmony and cooperation. Empathy allows individuals to see situations from different perspectives. This understanding reduces conflict and encourages respectful communication. When people feel heard and understood, relationships become stronger. In education, empathy helps create supportive learning environments. Students who understand each other's experiences are more likely to collaborate and respect diversity. In professional settings, empathy contributes to effective teamwork and leadership. Leaders who consider the emotions and needs of others can motivate and guide their teams more effectively. Empathy also plays an important role in addressing social issues. Understanding the challenges faced by different groups encourages collective action and support. Families are the first spaces where empathy is learned. Encouraging children to recognise and respect others' feelings helps build compassionate individuals. However, empathy must be accompanied by action. Understanding others' struggles should lead to meaningful support and solutions. A society that values empathy becomes more inclusive and caring. By fostering understanding and compassion, individuals can build stronger connections and promote social well-being.

Does life, of late, feel just too easy? Are you keen to make it harder than it already is? If that sounds like a genuinely demented question in the week that the world came close to threatened Armageddon, then fair enough. I bridled too when I read last week about friction-maxxing, the supposed trend for doing things in slightly more effortful, time-consuming or analogue ways – cooking from scratch instead of ordering a delivery, finding your way using road signs instead of just plugging in the satnav, or reading a book rather than half-listening to the audio version of it – as a form of creative resistance to the inexorable march of big tech through our lives. Times are tough enough for a lot of people without being made to feel lazy for taking shortcuts.

Besides, the list published this week by the Washington Post of ways to friction-maxx – which included such superhuman feats as seeing your friends in person rather than just WhatsApping them, and actively trying to remember something rather than just falling back on Google – sounds suspiciously like the rebranding under

an irritating new name of what used to be considered merely living. Your grandparents would have scoffed at the idea that any of these things were remotely difficult, or that making an effort to do them could somehow make you a better, more resilient person.

On closer inspection, however, it turns out that's the point. What Kathryn Jezer-Morton, the writer who originally coined the term friction-maxxing back in January was arguing is that none of these things are genuinely hard for most people – and if anything, they can be a source of deep meaning and joy. Yet somehow, she writes, we have allowed ourselves to fall for the idea that “reading is boring; talking is awkward; moving is tiring; leaving the house is daunting”, and that outsourcing all that supposed emotional labour to an app could be as liberating for 21st-century minds as the outsourcing of physical chores to the washing machine or the vacuum cleaner was supposed to be for 1950s housewives.

If you happen to be a socially awkward tech bro, anxious to offload as much of your personal life as hu-

manly possible to someone else in order to focus on working at your startup round the clock, then perhaps the headlong pursuit of convenience at all costs makes sense. But what if you don't want a life so effortlessly efficient, so devoid of contact with recognisably human surfaces, that it slides past mostly unnoticed while you're hunched over a screen? Worse still, what if removing all these supposed tiny drags on our time, energy and patience risks leaving us not only unhappier, but dumber into the bargain? For what differentiates this generation of AI tools from earlier labour-saving devices is that they largely replace mental rather than physical labour. Years of throwing the laundry into a washing machine and pressing a button instead of wringing it through a mangle may perhaps have made humans marginally less physically strong, but it hasn't deskilled us of anything that really mattered. The jury is still out, however, on the long-term intellectual impact of using AI tools at work – with a recent study conducted by Carnegie Mellon University and Microsoft con-

cluding that it could make workers more efficient but also less competent at “independent problem-solving” once they got used to relying on the programme to do their thinking for them – or students using ChatGPT to knock off an essay.

One (admittedly small) study of the latter led by researchers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology suggested that writers relying on large language models (LLMs) to assemble their material showed less activity in brain networks associated with cognitive processing, attention and creativity. As Nataliya Kosmyna, the researcher behind it, put it: “Your brain needs friction to learn.” It's the effort of sifting and absorbing facts and ideas yourself that seems to make them sink in, which may explain why students using ChatGPT seemingly struggled to remember quotes from the essays they had only just handed in.

If she's right, then it isn't just the reader's experience that is diminished when books are lazily cobbled together using AI, but the writer's: they're cheating themselves out of a crit-

ical stage in the creative process, which is working out what you think by scribbling it down and then suddenly, dismayingly, seeing all the holes in it. Perhaps it's merely force of habit. But the reason I still transcribe interviews the old-school way, by re-playing the recording and typing out what I hear rather than by getting an AI transcription tool to do it for me, isn't just fear of the machine making a mistake. It's that listening a second time helps me make connections or hear things I missed in the room. What might look from the outside like menial work that could easily be farmed out to a machine is, in other words, surprisingly often integral to the thinking process. And if that's true at work, now is the time to ask how far it's true in our personal lives, before the AI tools creeping into them become as hard to dislodge as smartphones already are.

In a world where everything becomes easier and faster, regulating emotion may be an increasing challenge. Making an everyday task even slightly harder forces people to slow down and think about what they are actually doing rather

than acting on impulse, which is why you are probably more likely to say something you later regret when firing off a quick, furious text in the heat of moment than when laboriously handwriting a letter. But perhaps the main skill at risk in a more friction-free world is that of patience with other people, in all their infinite capacity to be annoying.

Living with someone you love is friction, quite a lot of the time. Having small children is the living definition of friction, if you have hopes of ever getting anything done. Democracy, too, is ultimately friction, since it means accepting that other people also have a say. Friction is the name we give to rubbing up against the outside world and sometimes encountering resistance, and if nothing else it's time to reclaim the idea that there is actually nothing wrong with that; that this is simply what it means to love and be loved, to be engaged with society, to think and feel. And yes, sometimes friction burns. But it's also how you know you are alive – and in days like these, we should be maxxng out on that for all we're worth.

Both doctors and the government are handling this strike badly – that's why there is no end in sight



What's the off-ramp? When I ask one of the negotiating team close to the health secretary, the bleak answer is, “I don't know.” Resident doctors in England are on another strike, for six days this time. Labour arrived in office bearing a 22.3% pay rise to end the strike it inherited – and it thought it was all over. But within a year, doctors were out again. This time, negotiations over many weeks seemed to go well, but fell at the last fence: the doctors claimed there was a last-minute watering down and they returned to their fixed stand – restore their pay to its 2008 level, another 26%. “Impossible” is Wes Streeting's line. He says resident doctors are “by a country mile the standout winners of the entire public sector workforce when it comes to pay rises”. Everything looks stuck, no pasaran on both sides. Why? Because few involved are losing out right now. Streeting's system now delivers 95% of treatments during a strike, so waiting times have not increased. Senior consultants step up to do juniors' jobs at pay set by the British Medical Association (BMA) rate card, some £4,000 for a weekend. The Royal College of Emergency Medicine reported that during some of the strikes “everything works better than usual” in A&Es when specialists instead of juniors see patients.

In most industrial action, strikers suffer from loss of pay, but most of these doctors can recoup lost wages

by working overtime and weekends after the strike days are over. Although fewer resident doctors turn out to vote in each successive BMA ballot, those who are reluctant are not losing out financially from strikes they didn't vote for. In the most recent ballot in February, only 53% voted, with 93% voting to strike; but at the first ballot in 2023, 78% turned out to vote. Among high-flying doctors, this isn't apathy or ignorance, but a signal.

The NHS is the heavy loser. Paying consultants to cover for strikers costs £50m a day, a sizeable £3bn since industrial action began in March 2023 – money that is denied for more treatments, staff and community clinics. NHS results are improving, but slowly. Public perception of the NHS is improving too, but slowly, so that £3bn is sorely missed as ever-present predators on the right are eager to prove the NHS system fails. Though treatment times have been far off target for years, most people do get treated within target. While 25.9% of people in England waited more than four hours in A&E in February, that means 74.1% of patients didn't wait too long.

What went wrong after the latest negotiations seemed to go well? Beyond pay, the serious crisis for new medics is the lack of training posts: when Labour took over, only one in four on qualifying could progress towards their chosen specialism. Streeting increased training places to

one for every two doctors, by passing an emergency law giving the British-educated priority over foreign applicants. He offered 1,000 more training places this year, and another 3,500 over the next years. As well as this year's 3.5% pay increase, a 33% rise over the past three years, he offered to pay for medical exams (often more than £1,000 a sitting) and to propel doctors faster through higher pay bands. Streeting's people felt optimistic, but when BMA officers took the offer back to their committee, they rejected it out of hand, refusing to put it to members. Meanwhile, the BMA council is mid-election, its 69 seats contested by an unprecedented 247 candidates: those most likely to vote are activists, making this a bad moment for compromise. But it was a bad time, too, for the government's aggressively Trumpish response: “Because the BMA resident doctor committee has not agreed to call off these strikes and put an offer to members, we will now not be able to deliver the 1,000 extra training places which the BMA asked for.” Everyone knows those posts are needed. Nor was it a good time for NHS England chief executive, Jim Mackey, to threaten: “We'll reduce our reliance on resident doctors in response to strikes.” That's no way to get back round the table.

With the thunder clouds of Trump's pernicious war rolling towards every aspect of the UK economy, the NHS

is braced for a “huge shock” to its finances. The Treasury faces that same demand from all public services, alongside households and businesses. When asked in the abstract about fair pay, the public frequently rates doctors and nurses as the most deserving, and FTSE 100 CEOs among the least. Yet public support for the doctors' action, high at first, falls with each strike, now 53% opposed to 38% in support. In these stagnant growth decades, the BMA's 26% pay demand restoring 2008 pay rates is deserved by virtually everyone else too, public and private.

Resident doctors' pay in England starts at £40,000, rising to £76,500 in their last training years. Is that a lot or not, with national median pay at £39,000? Doctors may not choose a career in medicine for money, but tend to compare themselves with equivalent high achievers who choose commercial law or the City.

A senior consultant, overseeing resident doctors in his team at a top hospital, talks to me of his easier training days: accommodation was free and student loans were nothing like the £100,000 debts weighing down new staff now. This year, only one out of eight of his residents got a training place, which shocks him. But despite his sympathy, he's against the strike: he has had to cancel patients this week. These torn sympathies are what no off-ramp looks like. No end is yet in sight.

A precarious peace in West Asia

The announcement of a two-week ceasefire between the United States and Iran marks a fragile pause in a conflict that had rapidly escalated into one of the most consequential geopolitical crises of recent times. Brokered through last-minute diplomacy, involving Pakistan, the truce hinges on critical conditions, including the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most vital energy corridors. While the ceasefire offers temporary relief, both in strategic and economic terms, it is at best a tentative step towards de-escalation rather than a durable peace. Its implications are far-reaching, affecting not only regional stability in West Asia but also global energy markets, international diplomacy, and the broader architecture of conflict resolution. At the heart of the crisis lies the Strait of Hormuz, through which a significant portion of global oil supplies passes. Iran's willingness to reopen the strait as part of the ceasefire has already had an immediate calming effect on markets, with oil prices falling sharply and global equities responding positively. However, this relief remains contingent on the sustainability of the truce. The ceasefire's conditional nature underscores its fragility, particularly given ongoing hostilities in parts of the region and the involvement of multiple actors, including Israel. The strategic significance of the ceasefire extends beyond energy markets. It represents a moment of recalibration for both Washington and Tehran. For the United States, the decision to suspend military action suggests a recognition of the limits of escalation, particularly in a region already fraught with overlapping conflicts. For Iran, agreeing to a temporary pause reflects both economic pressures and the costs of sustained confrontation. Yet, the ceasefire also highlights the persistent mistrust between the two sides. Tehran has repeatedly indicated that a temporary cessation of hostilities is insufficient, highlighting the need for a



comprehensive end to the conflict and the lifting of sanctions. This divergence in expectations points to the fundamental challenge of translating a short-term truce into a long-term settlement. The humanitarian dimension of the conflict cannot be overlooked. With thousands of casualties reported and significant displacement caused by weeks of hostilities, the ceasefire provides a critical window for relief efforts. However, the limited duration of the truce raises concerns about the continuity of such efforts. Without a sustained cessation of violence, humanitarian gains may prove short-lived. Diplomatically, the ceasefire underscores the role of third-party mediation in conflict resolution. At the same time, it raises questions about the long-term framework for negotiations. A structured and inclusive diplomatic process, possibly involving multilateral institutions, will be essential to build on the current momentum. The ceasefire also has significant implications for global governance. It reflects the challenges of managing conflicts in an increasingly multipolar world, where traditional mechanisms of deterrence and diplomacy are being tested. The interplay of regional powers,

non-state actors, and global economic interests complicates the path to resolution. For countries like India, the developments carry both risks and opportunities. As a major importer of energy, India stands to benefit from any stabilised oil prices. At the same time, the volatility of the region underscores the importance of diversifying energy sources and strengthening strategic reserves. The situation also highlights the need for proactive diplomacy, given India's deep economic and diaspora ties with West Asia. Looking ahead, the future course of action must be guided by realism and restraint. The immediate priority should be to extend the ceasefire beyond its initial duration. This will require both sides to demonstrate flexibility and a willingness to engage in substantive negotiations. Confidence-building measures, such as prisoner exchanges, humanitarian access, and phased de-escalation, can help create the conditions for more comprehensive talks. Equally important is addressing the underlying issues that have fuelled the conflict. These include concerns over Iran's nuclear programme, regional security dynamics, and the impact of economic sanctions. Any durable solution

will need to balance these competing interests while ensuring mutual security guarantees. The international community has a critical role to play in this process. Major powers must avoid actions that could exacerbate tensions while supporting diplomatic initiatives aimed at a negotiated settlement. Multilateral forums, including the United Nations, can provide a platform for dialogue and help institutionalise peace efforts. Ultimately, the two-week ceasefire is a reminder of both the possibilities and limitations of diplomacy. It demonstrates that even at the brink of escalation, dialogue can prevail. At the same time, it underscores the fragility of such gains in the absence of sustained political will. The path ahead is uncertain. The ceasefire may well serve as a stepping stone towards a broader peace process, or it may prove to be a brief interlude before renewed hostilities. The outcome will depend on the choices made in the coming weeks. In an era of global uncertainty, the stakes could not be higher. The challenge for policymakers is to seize this moment, not merely to pause the conflict but to lay the groundwork for a more stable and secure regional order.

As semaglutide generics gain traction in India, Eli Lilly’s Mounjaro is under pressure

New Delhi: The rapid entry of semaglutide generics is beginning to weigh on the growth of Eli Lilly’s tirzepatide brand Mounjaro, even as the broader market expands, data from pharma market intelligence and data analytics firm Pharmarack showed. The swing follows the expiry of semaglutide’s patent on March 20, 2026, which triggered multiple generic launches by domestic companies. The GLP-1 agonist market has reached around Rs 1,579 crore as of March 2026, with competition increasing after these launches. While Mounjaro continues to rank as the top brand in the segment, its value share has declined in recent months, pointing to changes in prescribing patterns as lower-cost semaglutide options gain traction. Eli Lilly’s value share in the GLP-1 segment declined to about 56% in March from higher levels in preceding months, according to Pharmarack data. “IPM recorded a strong 10.1% value growth in March, with all three growth levers volume, price and new products remaining positive. Semaglutide generics saw an aggressive push this month,



shifting market dynamics and raising interesting questions for innovators,” said Sheetal Sapale, Vice President, Commercial, Pharmarack. Early trends also point to a rise in volumes following the launch of generics. Industry estimates suggest unit sales of semaglutide could increase two to three times within a full month of availability, although value growth remains lower due to pricing pressures. In India, Eli Lilly launched Mounjaro in March 2025, while Novo Nordisk introduced Ozempic and

Wegovy subsequently in early 2026, intensifying competition in the GLP-1 segment. The sharp rise in demand has also drawn caution from trade bodies. “Sales of GLP-1 therapies have seen a significant increase in recent months. While these therapies have an important role in the management of specific medical conditions, their indiscriminate use poses concerns for public health,” said Rajiv Singhal, general secretary of the All India Organisation of Chemists and Druggists (AIOCD). “We have advised that such medi-

cations must be dispensed strictly against a valid prescription issued by a registered medical practitioner.” With more launches expected and regulatory advisories around appropriate use likely to come into play, competition in the GLP-1 segment is set to intensify further, Sapale said. Innovator Novo Nordisk has also reduced prices of its brands Ozempic and Wegovy in recent months as competition intensifies. In early 2026, the company slashed prices on starting doses by up to 48% to defend its market share. The report further indicated that while Novo Nordisk has held its ground relatively better in the semaglutide segment, the influx of branded generics is increasing pressure. More than 25 brands from over a dozen companies have already entered the market, with companies adopting a mix of competitive pricing and multiple dosage formats to gain share. The broader Indian pharmaceutical market (IPM) also showed strong momentum during the month, with value growth of 10.1%, supported by volume expansion, price increases and new product introductions.

Reliance Industries, MGL, IGL and others Target prices, Q4 preview

New Delhi:Systematix Institutional Equities expects pressure on margins across parts of the oil and gas space in the March 2026 quarter (Q4 FY26), as rising input costs and supply disruptions weigh on city gas distribution (CGD) companies, even as select firms continue to show resilient growth.

With Brent crude rising 24.2 per cent sequentially, spot LNG averaging at \$13.2/mmbtu (vs \$10.9/mmbtu in Q3FY26), Henry Hub (HH) prices remaining elevated at \$4.9/mmbtu and the Indian rupee depreciating 2.8 per cent quarter-on-quarter (QoQ), the brokerage believes CGD players are likely to witness margin compression due to sharp increase in input costs, amid geopolitical tensions in West Asia. Among large-cap names, Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) is expected to report stable performance. The brokerage estimates consolidated revenue and EBITDA to grow around 8 per cent and 8.5 per cent year-on-year (YoY) to Rs 2,82,200 crore and Rs 47,600 crore, respectively, supported by strong traction in digital and retail businesses. EBITDA from the digital and retail segments is seen rising 13.9 per cent and 3.6 per cent YoY, respectively. However, the oil and gas segment may see a 5.5 per cent YoY decline in EBITDA due to a 4.6 per cent drop in production from the KG-D6 block.

For CGD players, Systematix estimates Mahanagar Gas Ltd (MGL) to post around 6.6 per cent YoY growth, while Gujarat Gas Ltd and Indraprastha Gas Ltd (IGL) are likely to report earnings decline of 17 per cent and 1.7 per cent YoY, respectively. On Petronet LNG Ltd (PLNG), the brokerage noted that volumes are expected to decline 4.5 per cent YoY and 16 per cent QoQ, mainly due to lower utilisation at the Dahej terminal (around 78 per cent). “The quarter was particularly weak in March ’26, impacted by



supply disruptions (force majeure) from RasGas and a sharp rise in spot LNG prices (~21.7 per cent). However, potential inventory and trading gains could partially support earnings,” it said. Among other companies under coverage, Systematix expects Gulf Oil Lubricants India Ltd to report total volumes of 79.6 million litres, up 4 per cent YoY and 1.4 per cent QoQ. Core and AdBlue volumes are projected to grow 5 per cent and 3 per cent YoY, respectively, but may see a marginal sequential decline of around 0.1 per cent and 3 per cent QoQ due to weaker transportation demand amid lower industrial activity. Deep Industries Ltd, the brokerage anticipates a 31 per cent YoY rise in revenue driven by higher contribution from new assets and business segments. EBITDA and profit after tax (PAT) are

expected to grow 81 per cent and 61 per cent YoY to Rs 100 crore and Rs 67.3 crore, respectively. Systematix has assigned ‘Buy’ ratings on RIL, Deep Industries, Gulf Oil Lubricants, MGL, IGL and Petronet LNG, with target prices of Rs 1,700, Rs 693, Rs 693, Rs 1,660, Rs 1,374, Rs 226 and Rs 342, respectively. The brokerage has given ‘Hold’ ratings on Gujarat Gas and GAIL, with target prices of Rs 447 and Rs 176, respectively. GAIL (India) Ltd may also see muted performance in the quarter. “GAIL’s YoY performance is expected to remain subdued on lower gas transmission (-6.7 per cent YoY/-12.1 per cent QoQ) and trading performance amid supply disruptions. This, coupled with muted performance across other segments, is expected to weigh on overall earnings,” the brokerage mentioned.

Jefferies is betting big on NBFCs Top picks with 28% to 72%



New Delhi: The growing apprehension across West Asia and upcoming Q4 results, has put the spotlight on domestic investment themes including financials. The end of the fourth quarter is traditionally a period of high activity for lenders, and this year appears to be no exception. In simple terms, NBFCs are expected to report better profits compared to the previous quarter, mainly because loan disbursements have remained strong and repayment trends have improved. According to Jefferies report, “Profit growth at covered NBFCs should improve to 30% (22% ex gold NBFCs) vs. 28% in Q3 in a seasonally strong Q4 led by healthy disbursement, rangebound NIMs & better asset quality.” International brokerage house, Jefferies, in its latest report, noted that the sector could see steady growth supported by strong lending activity, stable margins and improving asset quality. Loan growth, or assets under management (AUM), is expected to remain stable. Jefferies report added, “Healthy growth

in loans: We expect AUM growth for covered NBFCs (ex-PIRAMALE, IIFL) to grow 18% YoY (17% in Q3) in Q4; ex gold, AUM growth should be stable at 16% YoY.” Margins to stay stable, not expand much Net Interest Margin (NIM), which is the difference between interest earned and interest paid, is expected to remain steady. The report highlighted, “Range bound NIMs: We expect stable NIMs QoQ for our coverage NBFC.” Loan books and asset quality resilience: Another key takeaway from the report is the improvement in asset quality. The brokerage house Jefferies in its report added, “Stable asset quality, ceasefire: We expect asset quality and credit cost trends to improve QoQ in a seasonally strong Q4.” Despite the geopolitical ripples caused by the West Asia conflict, Jefferies remains optimistic about the resilience of domestic finance. The brokerage house also projects a jump in profitability across several niches, from gold loans to affordable housing

Tata Power partners Databricks for AI platform, accelerate energy transition

New Delhi: Tata Group subsidiary, Tata Power has partnered with software company Databricks, announcing enterprise-wide adoption of the platform across all its business segments. It said the collaboration is aimed at building a future-ready data and AI platform to accelerate energy transition. Tata Power- Databricks Partnership: Key Details

According to the company’s regulatory filing, the enterprise-wide adoption of the Databricks platform will help drive Tata Power’s AI transformation by enhancing its operational efficiency, helping in decision-making, and scaling up digital innovation. “As Tata Power advances its transformation in line with the energy transition – spanning renewable integration, smart grids, and an expanding B2C portfolio – the company is building a future-ready data and AI platform to power its next phase of growth,” the company said in its press release. “With its natural language interface, Genie redefines how organisations access enterprise data to quickly generate insights, dashboards, and analytics, and make better decisions, faster,” it added. Tata Power- Databricks Part-



nership: Management Commentary Speaking on the collaboration, Dr. Praveer Sinha, CEO & Managing Director, Tata Power said, “By leveraging the power of data and AI, we are strengthening our digital foundation to drive smarter operations, accelerate renewable integration, and deliver more agile, customer-centric solutions while contributing to a resilient and sustainable power sector.” TCS Q4 Results Today LIVE: Rupee impact

vs AI risk; Final dividend, FY27 guidance in focus In the afternoon trade, the company’s shares were trading flat at Rs 393.85. Over the past one month, the company’s stock has delivered a return of more than 5%, while over the past one year, the stock has climbed by nearly 10%. “Tata Power’s decision to standardize on Databricks underscores the growing importance of data and AI in transforming the energy sector,” said Kamalkanth

Tummala, Managing Director for India at Databricks. Adani Group Earnings: Q4 result dates for Adani Green, Power, Ambuja Cement— Full list It stated that the Databricks unified platform will enable intelligent grid management, advanced power planning and optimisation, improved billing and collection efficiencies, accurate renewable forecasting, and operational excellence across solar manufacturing and rooftop businesses.

Nestlé India expands ‘Serve Safe Food’ footprint to Mizoram, strengthens Northeast vendor ecosystem



Aizawl: Nestlé India, in collaboration with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Mizoram, and the National Association of Street Vendors of India (NASVI), has launched Project ‘Serve Safe Food’ in the state, completing its expansion across the Northeast. The initiative will train 100 street food vendors in Mizoram, taking the cumulative number of trained vendors in the region to over 10,000 across all seven states. The programme, launched in 2016, has so far benefited more than 92,800 street food vendors across 26 states and four Union Territories. It focuses on building capabilities in health, hygiene, safe food handling, waste disposal, and entrepreneurship, aimed at improving operational standards and business outcomes for vendors. K. Lalrinzuali, IAS, Commis-

sioner of Food Safety, FDA Mizoram, highlighted that the initiative will strengthen food safety standards and enhance the state’s tourism profile, citing key attractions such as Aizawl’s bustling markets, Reiek Mountain, and Phawngpui National Park. Kunwar Himmat Singh, Head of Sustainability and Societal Initiatives at Nestlé India, said the programme is designed to drive long-term behavioural change while supporting vendor sustainability and growth. In Mizoram, the initiative is expected to improve quality benchmarks in the informal food sector, boost consumer trust, and increase tourist spending. Enhanced hygiene standards could strengthen demand in key urban and tourist hubs, supporting the growth of the state’s evolving street food and tourism-linked economy.

Up to 75% upside targets Bernstein says on 5 afford

New Delhi: The brokerage suggested Home First Finance Company India Ltd, Aadhar Housing Finance Ltd, and Aptus Value Housing Finance India Ltd as ‘Outperform’, while it rated Aavas Financiers Ltd and PNB Housing Finance Ltd as ‘Market-Perform’. It also updated its earnings estimates for FY26E-FY28E and revised target prices, hinting at 8-75 per cent potential upsides on the five stocks, based on April 7 closing prices. is set at Rs 350. HomeFirst’s target has been revised upward to Rs 1,430 against Rs 1,400. For PNB Housing Finance, the target is lowered to Rs 880 against Rs 1,060. Bernstein said the prevailing macro concerns have triggered a broad-based sell-off across Indian banks and NBFCs, and affordable housing finance companies (AHFCs) have not been spared.

“However, beyond now-attractive valuations, we see several compelling reasons to turn constructive on the segment, driven by an impending inflection in both growth and asset quality. Further, relative to NBFC peers, stronger liability profiles - Supported by longer-tenor borrowings and access to NHB funding - along with the inherently secured nature of assets and the relatively smaller scale of these franchises, make AHFCs an attractive segment to own in the current environment,” it said.

HDFC Bank Q4 results quarterly earnings announcement schedule

New Delhi: HDFC Bank Q4 results expectations: Country’s largest private sector lender HDFC Bank will announce its Q4 earnings on April 18, 2026. This will be the first set of earnings after the resignation of Atanu Chakraborty in mid-March as the Part-time Chairman and Independent Director of HDFC Bank. According to a bank statement, the board of directors will meet to approve the audited consolidated financial statements for the quarter and full year ended March 31, 2026. The trading window for designated employees is closed until 48 hours after the results announcement, as per SEBI regulations. April 18, 2026 is an important date if one holds or tracks HDFC Bank

stock. April 18 is a weekly stock market holiday. The earnings are likely to be announced in the afternoon that day. Mirae Asset Sharekhan expects HDFC Bank to report a 8.2% rise in net profit to Rs 19,067 crore in the March 2026 quarter against Rs 17,616 crore in the year ago. On a quarter on quarter basis, net profit is likely to rise 2.2% from Rs 18,654 crore. HDFC Bank Q4 results expectations: April 18, 2026 is an important date if one holds or tracks HDFC Bank stock. April 18 is a weekly stock market holiday. The lender is expected to post a 5.3% rise in net interest income (NII) to Rs 33,770 crore against Rs 32,065 crore in the year ago period. Pre-Provision

Operating Profit is likely to grow at 7% to Rs 28,373 crore in the last quarter against Rs 26,536 crore in the year ago period, according to Sharekhan. In the third quarter of the previous fiscal, standalone net profit came at Rs 18,653 crore, rising 11.5 per cent compared to the Rs 16,736 crore profit reported in the corresponding quarter of the previous financial year. Net Interest Income (NII) came in at Rs 32,615 crore, rising 6.4 per cent from Rs 30,653 crore in the year-ago period. The bank reported Gross Non-Performing Assets (NPA) at Rs 35,179 crore, which was 1.24 per cent of gross advances. This is an improvement from the 1.42 per cent recorded in the previous year.

The United States withdrew from the Iranan precipice However, what comes next

Iran: Donald Trump presents himself as an unbeatable tough person who never gives up. However, he doesn't always follow through on his threats. Think of his threats to raise tariffs on trading partners or his demand that Denmark give up Greenland. He has even managed to prolong his deadlines for Tehran to reopen the Hormuz Strait by asserting—without proof—that Iran was “begging” for an agreement. Trump went above and beyond on Monday. He threatened to “kill a whole civilization to night” if Tehran did not reopen the strait by Tuesday at 8 p.m. ET. The United States was rocked by the president's open threat to carry out genocide. “Trump has lost his mind,” according to several Democratic leaders. His removal from office was demanded by more than 70 Democratic members of Congress. Some politicians and media figures who supported Maga either followed suit or severely chastised him. Commentators reminded soldiers that they had to defy instructions that were blatantly unlawful. There has never been a spectacle like this in American presidential politics. Iranians were taken aback, even those who opposed the administration. Around bridges and power plants that Trump might target, thousands of people built defiant human chains. Trump, according to one military general, is “delusional,” and Iran will retaliate even more forcefully.

The senior leadership of the nation said that direct diplomatic relations with the United States will cease. In public, Tehran declared that it would never compromise. Trump was left with two poor options. The first was to raze Iran. However, that would have exacerbated the domestic political frenzy—some Republican lawmakers may have even called for his removal—and set off a wave of international criticism, including from friends. The price of energy and other commodities (fertilizers, aluminum, helium, and petrochemicals) would have increased further as a result of Iran's strikes on Persian Gulf oil and gas infrastructure, perhaps creating the conditions for a global recession. Additionally, the midterm elections are scheduled for November, and Trump's poll numbers have already plummeted. He might lose power over legislation and Supreme Court confirmations if the



Democrats win, and probes into the Epstein scandal and accusations of official corruption would get more intense. Trump could have ordered the US navy to open the strait – which he has sometimes declared unimportant to an oil-rich United States – but keeping it open would have been far more difficult. That would have required a permanent military presence that went beyond warships alone. And the mission would have been hazardous and open-ended. Iran overlooks the strait. It has many mines, short-range missiles, and Ghadir- and Nahang-class mini submarines. Tehran would not have to fight US warships. It could instead choose to strike a tanker every now and then, causing red lights to flash, and limit traffic to ships from countries willing to pay the transit fee. For other vessels, sailing through the strait would be perilous. Moreover, the largest supertankers cost north of \$100m and insurers would balk. The other option was to back away. That would have prompted renewed cries of “Taco” – Trump always chickens out. Trump would also have been diminished in the eyes of world leaders, especially China's president Xi Jinping, whom he is scheduled to meet in Beijing this month. The Taco taunts would subside, and diehard Maga devotees will forgive him for anything. But a GOP defeat in the midterms would have ended the overweening power he has wielded, thanks to a supine GOP-controlled Congress. As the deadline neared, Trump faced a decision between escalation or capitulation. He chose the latter but has tried to dignify his retreat by claiming that he granted Pakistan's request for a two-week ceasefire, providing Iran opens the strait. Iran's foreign minister tweeted that, thanks to Pakistan's good offices, Trump had agreed to accept Tehran's 10-point

plan, presented on Monday, as “a general framework” for negotiations and that the US had requested talks based on Trump's 15-point plan, which dates back to May last year. (It came to naught after the US and Israel attacked Iran the following month, and another version sent in late March was also rejected.) Iran had steadfastly said no to a ceasefire. It insists on a permanent end to the war, reimbursement for war damages, a non-aggression pledge from Israel and the US, and an Israeli commitment to cease attacks on Tehran's Lebanese ally, Hezbollah. It seeks the full lifting of primary and secondary economic sanctions and the right to levy a \$2m per ship fee, split with Oman, to finance postwar reconstruction. It demands that US troops depart the Middle East. Iran has now agreed to permit safe passage through the strait for two weeks but will likely keep collecting tolls. Major differences remain, however, between the US and Iranian plans, particularly on the extent of sanctions relief. Moreover, since the Geneva talks that Trump abandoned to launch the war, Iran has not offered any major concessions on nuclear enrichment – it insists on the right to enrichment for peaceful purposes – or agreed to slash its missile stocks, both key Israeli demands. Perhaps there will be a real ceasefire that lasts a fortnight. But if there's no firm deal, then what? Iran still controls the strait, remains defiant, and retains the military muscle to spark a worldwide recession. Its demands remain unacceptable to Trump and vice versa. If there's a ceasefire but no comprehensive deal, he and Benjamin Netanyahu could resume their war. But to what end? They can't achieve “regime change” from the skies alone, and a ground war would be bloody and protracted. Though Iran cannot match

US military power, it has 1 million active, reserve, and paramilitary troops, who would be fighting on home ground. Its territory, more than half of it mountainous, exceeds that of Spain, France and Germany combined. Many Iranians – even those who dislike their rulers – might be hostile toward American ground troops, given that the United States and Israel have targeted, among other structures, bridges, 30 universities, and the famed Pasteur Institute, founded more than 100 years ago. A mega-deal remains the only path to averting a return to full-scale war. Under the 2015 Joint and Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which Trump was quick to ditch, Iran made substantial and verifiable concessions on uranium and plutonium enrichment and went much further during the Geneva talks that Trump's war scuttled. Despite the scaremongering, Tehran was neither hell-bent on building nuclear weapons nor on the verge of acquiring them when Israel and the US attacked on 28 February. Getting Tehran to cut its ballistic missile stocks will be harder now – the US-Israeli attack has made them seem all the more essential – but full sanctions relief and a non-aggression commitment might still change the calculus.

None of this, however, will be achievable unless Trump stops making maximalist demands and civilization-ending threats and also reins in Israel. Iran said on Wednesday that Israel must end its Lebanon war before the strait can be fully reopened. That same morning, airstrikes hit Iran's Lavan Island refinery.

(By whom remains unclear as of now.) Now there is an uneasy pause. The chasm between the two sides remains vast. Absent compromises and adept diplomacy the conflict will almost certainly reignite.

If the ceasefire with Iran continues, who can declare victory China is an early winner

China: China is one significant power that stands to gain whatever as the world tries to understand what, if anything, was accomplished by the ceasefire agreement announced by the US and Iran on Tuesday. Beijing's influence is said to have persuaded Iran to accept the truce, enhancing Beijing's standing as a regional mediator. Articles praising China for being the adult in the room during a global crisis were permitted to circulate in China's strictly regulated internal media. On Wednesday, the nationalist online publication Guancha released a story discussing stories from the New York Times and Associated Press that claimed China was crucial to the cease-fire agreement between the US and Iran. “The conclusion of this ceasefire could not be achieved without active mediation of China, Pakistan, and other countries,” the Guancha article stated. Donald Trump, the president of the United States, told the AFP news agency that he thought China had persuaded Iran to accept a truce. This supported claims made by Pakistani and Iranian officials that Beijing was instrumental in the last-minute talks in Islamabad. However, other observers doubt China's potential influence in the late-night talks. The deal, as initially advertised by Tehran, is so advantageous to Iran that encouraging the regime to agree to it was like “pushing an open door”, according to one analyst. Nicholas Lyall, a senior researcher at Trends, a research and advisory firm in Abu Dhabi, said: “In terms of whether China had to do much pushing of Iran for it to agree to the temporary ceasefire, and whether Iran was swayed by this reported Chinese effort, it's important to clarify what Iran has actually agreed to.” The 10 points on Iran's ceasefire plan, which were initially touted by Trump as a “workable” basis for negotiation, were “maximalist and represent all of Iran's pre-existing stated demands from previous weeks”, Lyall said. “This all means Iran has made no real concessions in agreeing to begin talks, and is very legitimately able to present it as a genuine political win to any audience.” Therefore, any Chinese involvement in the process of Iran agreeing to talks is highly likely not as influential as some might assume, as it was largely pushing on an open door given apparent US acquiescence to those Iranian demands.” Officially, China has not confirmed or denied reports that it played an active role in the Islamabad negotiations. At a press conference on Wednesday, the foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said only that China “had been actively working to promote de-escalation and an end to all hostilities”. Still, Beijing



will be happy to be credited with brokering a fragile peace agreement that appeared to pull the conflict in Iran back from the brink of a major escalation. Before Trump's second term in the White House upended global stability and fractured regional alliances, China was building up a reputation as a mediator in the Middle East, most notably by brokering the surprise rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Iran in 2023. In 2024, leaders from rival Palestinian factions signed a “Beijing declaration” after talks in China, in which they agreed to form a national unity government for Palestine at an unspecified point in the future. More recently, officials from China and Pakistan – the country that has emerged as the more pivotal mediator in this conflict – published a five-point plan aimed at bringing about a ceasefire and re-opening the strait of Hormuz. All of these plans “are geared to build a global image of Chinese responsibility and moderation as opposed to being geared to actually solve the conflicts they pertain to,” said Lyall. William Yang, a senior analyst at the International Crisis Group, said: “There have been previous attempts where China claimed victory in some very easy cases. This time around, it's quite different because I think China does sense the continuous disruption will have a more direct impact on its core interests.” He added: “Ultimately, if China is able to ensure that it uses its influence and leverage over Iran to really help to facilitate any form of ceasefire, it would see that being in its interest to do so,” but he said Beijing would be “cautious” about making public what kind of pressure was or was not exerted. China's actual diplomatic sway in the region is limited, although it is growing. As the biggest buyer of Iranian oil, China is economically important to Tehran. But the two countries do not have a

particularly deep diplomatic relationship. Song Bo, a fellow at the Center for International Security and Strategy at Tsinghua University, said Iran was “outside of the top 10” of countries that were important to Beijing. Analysts are even more sceptical of the idea that China might act as the guarantor of any ceasefire agreement in the Middle East. On Wednesday, the Iranian envoy Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli said in Beijing that he hoped that “big countries like China and Russia” would work together to help guarantee peace in the region. China and Russia did support Tehran by vetoing a UN security council resolution, proposed before the ceasefire, that aimed to force the re-opening of the strait of Hormuz. But actually committing resources to the conflict is a much bigger ask. Song said: “China doesn't have a direct stake with any of the parties in the Middle East. Acting as a guarantor for a ceasefire would be an extremely high-cost diplomatic undertaking, and I don't think China would commit to that easily.” It's just not realistic. Even if China were to act as a guarantor, it lacks the diplomatic or military leverage to actually influence or control the parties involved in the conflict.” Lyall said China did not have the capacity to verify whether the ceasefire terms were being adhered to, and was unlikely to be able to impose any meaningful penalty on a party that broke those terms. The ceasefire deal is not just a public relations win for China. Although the country has large stockpiles of oil, the risk of a global recession and soaring fossil fuel prices nevertheless poses a threat for the Chinese economy, which is heavily dependent on exports. “If it is possible to manage this conflict, and through managing the conflict be able to push down some oil prices, then that is certainly still very important for China,” said Song.

As investors doubt the sustainability of the Middle East ceasefire, oil prices soar



Washington: As the two-week ceasefire in Iran appeared more precarious, with Israel continuing its attacks on Lebanon and the US and Iran threatening to resume military action, oil and gas prices increased on Thursday and Asian financial markets declined. There are still a lot of unanswered concerns and indications that the 11th-hour ceasefire between the US and Iran, which included a deal to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, has caused anxiety in the markets. New York light crude increased by 3.7% to \$98 per barrel on Thursday, while Brent crude, the global benchmark, increased by 3.5% but stayed below \$100 per barrel at \$98.10. Brent fell 13.29% on Wednesday, hitting a four-week low of \$94.75 per barrel. After falling 15% on Wednesday following the announcement of the truce, the month-ahead UK gas contract increased 2.8% to 117.50p per therm. European natural gas futures recovered from a five-week low on Thursday, rising to €46 per megawatt hour. On Wednesday, they had fallen nearly 15% to €45.30 per megawatt hour. The speaker of Tehran's parliament, Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, said that Israel and the US had broken multiple clauses in the agreement, while the UAE and Kuwait claimed that their air defenses had stopped Iranian drones. The Revolutionary Guards warned of a “regret-inducing response” if Israel did not stop its strikes against Lebanon. The Fars news agency reported that the passage of oil tankers through the strait was halted because of Israel's barrage of strikes on Lebanon on Wednesday,

the worst since the war started, killing at least 254 people and wounding at least 837. Donald Trump posted on his Truth Social platform that US forces would “remain in place in, and around, Iran, until such time as the REAL AGREEMENT reached is fully complied with”. He threatened that if it were not complied with, the military action would be “stronger than anyone has ever seen before”. In Asian stock markets, Japan's Nikkei fell 0.7% after Wednesday's bounce of 5.4%, while South Korea's Kospi lost 1.7% after rising 7.5% the day before, and Hong Kong's Hang Seng edged 0.4% lower. European stocks also opened lower, as the optimism from Wednesday's rally faded. The UK's FTSE 100 index slipped 0.3%, while the German Dax fell 1.2%, France's Cac dropped 0.75% and Italy's FTSE MiB was down 0.3%. The pan-European Stoxx 600 index dropped by 0.7% after Wednesday's near 4% rise, its best day since 2022. US stock futures are pointing to a lower open on Wall Street later. Jim Reid, a strategist at Deutsche Bank, said: “Nevertheless, compared to 24 hours ago, the market stress has eased considerably, as the ceasefire news and hopes for a de-escalation pathway have created a lot more optimism.” He said fears had eased considerably about a stagflationary shock. There are still signs of progress, with the White House press secretary, Karoline Leavitt, saying that the vice-president, JD Vance, would lead a delegation to Islamabad, with a first round of talks scheduled for Saturday morning.

A small boat in the Channel sinks, killing four persons



Europe: According to French local officials, a small boat sank in the Channel between France and Britain, killing two men and two women. Today, a taxi-boat sank. The situation is currently being evaluated and could change, according to Calais local officials. Early on Thursday morning, emergency services were called to Équihen-Plage, according to the

French media outlet La Voix du Nord. People smugglers have been transporting migrants along the coast of northern France and Belgium using driving dinghies for the past year. They are called “taxi-boats” by the authorities.

The event on Wednesday occurred the day after 102 individuals had to be rescued after encountering diffi-

culties while attempting to cross the Channel. Two persons lost their lives while attempting to cross the Channel at the start of April in another recent incident. Individuals smugglers employ taxi-boats, which are contentious since they go along the coast and pick up individuals at various locations instead of having a single, set launching point into the sea. Some of these taxi-boats are reportedly departing from Belgium and traveling around the French coast. After failing to extend an accord that ended on March 31, the UK and France are discussing a new agreement to prevent small boats from crossing the Channel. About 2,200 refugees and migrants crossed the Channel, one of the world's busiest shipping lanes, to the UK in the first two months of 2026, according to data from the University of Oxford's Migration Observatory. About 41,500 people made the crossing last year.

Is Truth Always Bitter? I Tried Black Coffee At These Speciality Coffee Roasters In Delhi And Found Out

I had always thought of coffee as a functional beverage; a hurried, bitter companion of those chasing deadlines on early mornings and late nights. Since I have never needed this fuel to function, I have always taken my coffee cold, masked in sugar and dressed in milk and chocolate. This delicious concoction, for me, became so synonymous with leisure that I rarely questioned it. To my coffee connoisseur (read: snobs) friends, my harmless concoction felt “fake”. For the longest time, I was told that coffee had to be bitter to be “real”. That sharp, almost punishing taste felt like something you trained yourself to tolerate in exchange for alertness. Milk and sugar, I was told, were crutches. Black coffee was the truth. And the truth, apparently, was bitter. But what good is a journalist who never questions the norm? What I then realised was that while many believe that bitterness is the hallmark trait of good coffee, somewhere between Delhi’s Greater Kailash and Chankyapuri, that notion quickly crumbles. Here, I was introduced to speciality coffee, which felt less like tasting the beverage and more like discovering it for the first time. It was lighter, almost tea-like, with a gentle acidity that reminded me of citrus and something faintly floral. There was no heaviness or harsh bitterness. Instead, it unfolded slowly on my palate, layered and deliberate. It wasn’t sweet in the way sugar is sweet, but it wasn’t aggressively bitter either. I remember pausing after the first sip, slightly confused by the cup of black coffee that didn’t make me wince.

What Is Speciality Coffee? This was my initiation into the world of speciality coffee. Speciality coffee refers to coffee that scores 80 points or above on a 100-point scale by certified tasters, known as Q graders. But beyond the numbers, it’s about the bean’s traceability, quality, and care at every step.

Unlike commercial coffee, which is often mass-produced and blended to maintain consistency, speciality coffee celebrates difference. Each cup tells the story of the soil the beans grew in, the altitude of the farm, the climate of the region, and the hands that cultivated it. It is, perhaps, a rather intriguing lesson in geography.

Where Is Speciality Coffee Grown?

Speciality coffee is mainly grown in Ethiopia, Colombia, Brazil, and parts of India. Here, altitude plays a crucial role. Speciality coffee is typically grown at higher elevations, where cooler temperatures slow the growth of coffee cherries. This extended maturation allows the beans to develop more complex sugars, which translate into richer, more nuanced flavours.

The cherries are often hand-picked, ensuring only the ripest ones are selected. This alone sets speciality coffee apart. The beans then undergo careful processing via methods like washed, natural, honey or carbonic maceration. Washed coffees tend to be cleaner and brighter, while natural processes can bring out fruity, wine-like notes. The beans are carefully dried, sorted, graded (every year), and then roasted in small batches to highlight their inherent characteristics rather than mask them.

A Coffee Omakase Experience

My first lesson in speciality coffee education happened at Libertario, a speciality coffee roaster proudly placed in Greater Kailash 2. They primarily source their beans directly from the La Palma y El Tucan estate in Colombia, giving Delhi a touch of international flair. I attended their curated coffee Omakase experience, where I was guided through a multi-beverage tasting journey exploring different brewing techniques, bean origins and flavour profiles. The story-led experience was quite the sensory journey, which took me from traditional to entirely experimental profiles. As I made my way to the private space dedicated to this experience, the coffee bag-lined walls gave me an air of importance typically reserved for those who can differentiate between the pour-over and the siphon.

Smell First, Sip Later

I was first asked to close my eyes and get a whiff of the grounds used for their Paz profile. The instructions for my first sip were similar. The Paz felt familiar and comfortable due to notes of caramel and milk chocolate. It felt well-rounded, and our first encounter was rather smooth. Then came Libre with its bolder, more intense flavour.

Libre had hints of cherry,



brown sugar and dark chocolate. It was made with Indian coffee beans sourced from the Riverdale estate in Tamil Nadu, and it accurately expressed its layered character. This felt like a brew that would be enjoyed by people who need a wake-up coffee punch in the mornings. It was also my wonderfully knowledgeable barista’s favourite profile. Then we entered the experimental territory, and my elementary education was over. I was then introduced to the Geisha varietal, which is considered as precious as gold in the coffee world. What are varietals? Think of them as “types of coffee”. For example, an apple can be of the red, yellow, red delicious or Granny Smith variety.

Their first preparation was called Voyage, and it featured notes of jasmine, black tea, honey and lavender. We were in the big leagues then. The flavour felt vibrant yet sophisticated. It was like nothing I had had before. The taste evolved with every sip, allowing me the opportunity to fully explore its complexity.

The Rebel came at last. It had notes of rose, orange blossom, raspberry and dark chocolate. This Geisha preparation felt unconventional, disruptive and experimental



to a simpleton like me. As much as I relished the taste of speciality coffee, I also enjoyed the unhurried Omakase experience. It almost felt like a gin tasting.

A Slow, Almost Hallowed Process

The baristas didn’t seem like they were just making my coffee; it looked like they were engaging in a holy ritual. Water was poured slowly

in circles over freshly ground beans, blooming them first, then coaxing out their flavours with patience. It took time, and there was an insistence on slowing down. I didn’t quickly gulp down my drink. I sat with it and noticed how it changed as it cooled. I identified notes like a quiet conversation unfolding between me and the cup.

Here I learnt that when

coffee is treated with a little more care, something shifts. The bitterness doesn’t disappear entirely, but it stops dominating the palate. Instead, it shares space with other notes: a gentle acidity that can feel bright rather than sour, a rounded body that feels almost comforting, and sometimes even a natural sweetness that lingers at the end. Black coffee, in that sense, isn’t about stripping something away. It’s about revealing what’s already there.

Speciality coffee demands respect for the farmer, the process, and the product. It’s about transparency in sourcing, sustainability in farming, and intentionality in consumption. It asks you to care about where your coffee comes from, and in doing so, transforms a daily habit into something meaningful.

A Modern Take On Speciality Coffee

This is also the intent behind Pour Over Coffee Roasters tucked in Chanakyapuri’s Santushti Complex. Pour Over believes in making great coffee accessible without necessarily screaming “Speciality” from the top of their lungs. Their coffee speaks for itself, without emphasising the fluff.

From Typica from South and Central America, Bour-

bon and Geisha from Latin America and special beans harvested in India, Africa and Indonesia, they want to create an experience for every palate without overwhelming the consumer.

My experience here was quite different from my time at Libertario. It felt less pious and more informal. It is a space where you don’t take yourself too seriously and where even my milky, chocolatey coffee felt different. Pour Over is a modern, engaging and friendly space. I felt at ease at Pour Over, mostly because of how I was welcomed to be a part of their process.

What Is A Cupping Session?

From understanding the math (of roasting temperatures and ratios) behind the method to being a part of the first cupping session for their coconut profile, I was invested from the first sip. Coffee cupping is a method for tasting and evaluating coffee aroma, flavour, acidity, body, and aftertaste. It allows one to compare different beans by steeping coarsely ground coffee in hot water, breaking the crust, and loudly slurping from a spoon to assess quality and flavour.

Tasting freshly ground coconut coffee was a transformative experience for me. I learnt about flavour profiles from industry experts and also realised how I understand them through my palate. While the roaster could easily detect notes of coconut oil, my taste buds picked up the flavour of burnt husk. If taste is so personal, how can a bitter Americano be “more right” than a sweeter mocha?

Why Does Coffee Turn Bitter?

This Earth-toned cafe is not a space that judges you for how you like your coffee. The coffee nerds here were also quick to dismiss the notion that coffee needs to be bitter to be good. It turns out, bitterness isn’t the defining feature of coffee. They taught me that it’s often just the result of how we make it. Over-extracted coffee, where hot water pulls too much out of the grounds, can taste harsh and astringent.

Poor-quality beans, roasted too dark to mask defects, can lean heavily into bitterness. Even something as simple as water that’s too hot or a brew that sits too long can tip the

scales in the wrong direction. Since Pour Over is founded by a coffee roaster, there is meticulous detailing that goes into every cup.

Coffee Beyond The Americano

Pour Over takes ‘special’ to another level. From introducing a whiskey barrel-aged coffee in Delhi to soon bringing never-before-seen (in India) profiles to the country, they are focused on their mission of accessibility. This access was also highlighted in their concoctions beyond the Americano that tasted equally as interesting.

I tried their strawberry mocha, and it was unlike anything similar that I had tried before. While many cafes treat their milkier and fruitier drinks with less seriousness and more sugar, Pour Over gives them a certain respect. Here, the coffee still takes centre stage with strawberry and chocolate only enhancing the flavour of the grounds, not consuming it entirely. It is treated like coffee and not a milkshake.

But milk aside, even the Raspberry Espresso Tonic had an interesting character of its own. The punchiness of the raspberry married and magnified the flavour of the espresso instead of overwhelming it. In treating the “less serious” coffee drinks with equal respect, this place increased my appreciation of the bean and the beverage. It echoed the sentiment that coffee isn’t meant to be endured. It’s meant to be experienced.

What Is Good Coffee?

What I had been drinking all along wasn’t “how coffee tastes”. It was only one version of it. The idea that “true coffee” has to be bitter and black is outdated. It feels too formulaic. Good coffee demands a little presence. It asks you to slow down just enough to notice the taste, texture, temperature, even the way the flavour evolves as the cup cools. Trying speciality coffee is a good way to understand this.

What speciality coffee does, more than anything else, is challenge the idea that bitterness is coffee’s defining trait. Once you experience its balance, where acidity, sweetness, and body exist in quiet harmony, it becomes difficult to go back to the idea that coffee has to be harsh to be authentic. Because it doesn’t. It never did.

Vegan recipe for soy, sake and sesame oil-braised aubergines

Here are two things about aubergines that you may not know: first, they are giant berries (!) and, second, they’re roughly 92% water. The latter is important, because to get this mighty berry to reach its delicious potential, we need to dehydrate it (that is, remove as much water as possible and then hit it with lots of flavour). You could fry it, but, when the weather is lovely, I prefer hands-free cooking, which means roasting it. In this recipe, after roasting, I’ve used one of my favourite braising liquids – a mix of soy sauce, sake and sesame – to bring the aubergine back to life.

Soy sauce, sake and sesame oil-braised aubergines

Cooking sake can be bought in larger supermarkets and Chinese grocery stores (if you can’t find it, use a nice drinking sake that will go nicely with the meal instead). Cook the rice before starting on the aubergines and cover it with a lid – it will stay warm for an hour.

Prep 10 min
Cook 35 min
Serves 4
3 large or 4 medium aubergines (1.1kg)
4 tbsp sunflower oil, or rape-

seed oil
5 tbsp light soy sauce
¼ tsp fine sea salt
6 tbsp cooking sake
2 tsp light brown sugar
2 tsp seasoned rice vinegar
5 tbsp toasted sesame oil
3cm x 3cm piece fresh ginger, peeled and finely grated
4 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
1 red bird’s eye chilli, slit lengthways
100g spring onions, halved across the belly, then cut lengthways into long, thin strips (and rinsed, if need be)

Toasted sesame seeds, to finish

Cooked plain rice, to serve
Heat the oven to 220C (200C fan)/425F/gas 7, and line two large trays with baking paper. Trim the tops off the aubergines, then cut each one into eight long wedges. Put these in a bowl with the sunflower oil, toss with your hands to coat, then lay the wedges side by side on the oven trays. Bake for 25 minutes, until soft. Meanwhile, make the braising liquid. In a small bowl, combine the soy sauce, a quarter-teaspoon of salt, the sake, brown sugar, rice vinegar and three tablespoons of toasted sesame oil. Put the remaining two tablespoons of



sesame oil in a small frying pan on a medium to low heat and, once hot, add the ginger, garlic and chilli, and fry for two minutes, until pale golden. Add the

spring onions, stir for a minute, then add the soy and sake mixture, take off the heat and mix well. When the aubergines have had their 25 minutes, transfer

them to a smaller, lipped baking tray, laying the wedges on top of each other. Stir the braising liquid again, then pour it all over the aubergines and shake

the tin to make sure all the aubergines are covered. Roast for a further 10 minutes, sprinkle with sesame seeds and serve with rice alongside.

The best news for Bollywood this year is that Akshay Kumar is doing humor instead of mass action in Bhooth Bangla

Mumbai: Perhaps it was the KGF and Pushpa movies, or perhaps Baahubali. However, following the pandemic, Bollywood’s strategy for “big” movies did shift. Following the lockdowns, prominent performers turned to the only formula they believed was safe: mass action, south style, as slice-of-life stories and “daring” genres failed. All of a sudden, every performer desired their own Pushpa or Rocky bhai moment. Akshay Kumar is subtly defying the norm at a time when even the king of romance (look at you, Jawan) and National Award winners (recall Manoj Bajpayee in Bhaiyaji) were calling for widespread action. After a respectable performance in Housefull 5 last year, he is now the only big performer to go back to his roots with three stand-alone comedies scheduled for release. And it might be Bollywood’s greatest achievement of the year. With the success of Wanted and Dabangg in 2009–2010, Hindi film entered its first phase of south-style mass action. Akshay was among the first to follow this trend, while Salman continued to be its poster



child with numerous hits. Rowdy Rathore and Khiladi 786, two of his smashes, were heavily influenced by this style of filmmaking. Other celebrities followed suit after “pan-India” popular films reappeared in Bollywood’s consciousness throughout this decade. Salman’s fortunes were mixed with Kisi Ka Bhai Kisi Ki Jaan and Sikan-

dar, Shah Rukh achieved success with Pathaan and Jawan, and Ranbir Kapoor achieved success with Animal. Subedaar, starring Anil Kapoor, Bhaiyaji, starring Manoj Bajpayee, and Maalik, starring Rajkummar Rao, were even smaller films that followed the trend.Still, Akshay continued his work. There was no Rowdy Rathore

from him this time. The actor persisted despite the failure of experiments like Ram Setu and Raksha Bandhan. After seeing some success with OMG 2, Kesari 2, and Jolly LLB 3, he returned to comedy. Khiladi Kumar’s transition from action star to comedy genius was rather natural. He released a number of hits after Hera Pheri, primarily with Priyadarshan. Additionally, the actor consistently had one comedic hit every year during his prime (2007–19). Most of those movies have become cult favorites thanks to his comedic timing, and his sequences have become memes. Housefull 5, which went well at the box office but received a lot of negative reviews, marked the beginning of Akshay’s comeback. It is therefore a relief that he pursues that with Priyadarshan, his most reliable partner. The two are working together on three movies: Hera Pheri 3, Haiwaan, and Bhooth Bangla. Bhooth Bangla is scheduled to be released this year, and two of them are comedy. And before you accuse me of exaggerating when I say it’s “the best thing for Bollywood this year,”

allow me to clarify. Variety is what mainstream Bollywood movies have been lacking lately. Every movie has the same appearance as every other movie. There seem to be only two genres at the moment: chirpy romance and mass action.

Every now and then, “different” movies like Tu Yaa Main and Ikki come out, but they lack the star power. Bollywood is largely responsible for Dhurandhar’s once-in-a-generation triumph because the filmmaker has mostly relied on clichés. For some time now, mainstream Hindi cinema has been producing the same kinds of movies. Therefore, it is admirable that Akshay and Priyadarshan are doing something lighter on a large scale. Words like “nostalgia” and “clutter-breaking,” which are triggered in the trailer, should tell you everything you need to know about what the audience desires.Tabu, Paresh Rawal, Wamiqa Gabbi, and Rajpal Yadav are among the other actors in Priyadarshan’s Bhooth Bangla, which is produced by Balaji Telefilms. On April 17, the movie opens in theaters.

Jana Nayagan, Vijay's unreleased film, leaked online, shocking the industry

Mumbai: Although it hasn’t yet been released in theaters, Tamil actor Vijay’s last movie, Jana Nayagan, has been leaked online. Small snippets of the movie were posted on social media on Thursday night, and by Friday morning, HD copies of the entire movie had been posted on pirate websites. The unreleased movie has been in limbo for three months and has not yet received CBFC clearance. The Tamil cinema industry has been shaken by the leak, which occurs right before Vijay enters politics with the Tamil Nadu Assembly elections. High-quality prints of Jana Nayagan were being posted to pirate websites, according to social media messages that appeared on Friday. The quantity of printouts on the internet continued to rise despite Vijay fans’ pleas to others not to distribute the links. Many pointed out that the entire movie had suddenly been uploaded, although previously just five to ten-minute clips had been published online. Given that the movie is only a few weeks away from its premiere, many disgruntled fans conjectured about the source of the leak. The disclosure has angered both industry insiders and Vijay’s fans. Cinema influencer Amutha Bharathi posted on X, saying, “A 400-500Cr\$ film recently was leaked overnight! most difficult period for the distributor, producer, and entire team. Given that the movie has already encountered significant issues, they ought to have exercised greater caution. Now, assuming they have a censor certificate, the only and best option is to distribute Jana Nayagan in theaters as soon as possible. Jana Nayagan, which is directed by H Vinoth and produced by KVN Productions, has Pooja Hegde, Bobby Deol, and Mamitha Baiju in addition to Gautham Vasudev Menon, Prakash Raj, Narain, and Priyamani. The political thriller, which was supposed to be released in January but had to be rescheduled when the CBFC failed to certify it in time, was billed as Vijay’s last movie before he enters politics.

Singer Armaan Malik emphasizes patience and presence in his relationship with dog Tofu



Mumbai: On National Pet Day, singer Armaan Malik reflects on his special bond with his dog Tofu, whom he shares with his wife, Aashna Shroff. Armaan ex-

plains that they chose the name ‘Tofu’ because it felt right upon meeting him, as it captures both his soft and quirky personality. He also shares a delightful experi-

ence of Tofu barking along when he first played the guitar, indicating the dog’s engagement with Armaan’s music. Armaan humorously muses that Tofu might be his most honest listener, reacting especially to upbeat and energetic songs. Through his relationship with Tofu, Armaan notes that he has learned valuable lessons in patience and presence, emphasizing the importance of consistency in caring for a pet.

He highlights the need to be fully attentive and reliable, as dogs depend on their owners entirely. Despite his demanding

schedule with city and global tours, which leaves him missing Tofu, Armaan mentions trying to keep in touch through FaceTime to ease the separation, even if Tofu doesn’t entirely understand.Armaan also offers advice for potential pet owners, urging them to consider the responsibilities involved in pet ownership beyond just enjoying the cute moments.

He stresses that it’s a long-term commitment, but insists that when approached with readiness, the relationship brings unparalleled joy and unconditional love.

After a cyst recurrence, Dipika Kakar admits she is constantly nervous

Mumbai: After a 1.3 cm cyst resurfaced in March, actor Dipika Kakar, who has been fighting liver cancer, had another operation. The actor acknowledged that the relapse has affected her emotionally and that she now worries about her health all the time. Dipika added that she is really distressed since the continuous fight has made it hard for her to spend meaningful time with her newborn kid.A while back, Dipika used her YouTube vlog to discuss her continuous health issues and how her disease has affected her day-to-day activities. She added that despite attempting to manage her condition, she has been having trouble spending enough time with her son, Ruhaan. Dipika expressed the challenges she faces due to her illness, particularly how it affects her ability to spend time with her child, Ruhaan. She described moments of fatigue that lead to her needing rest and sometimes being in the hospital, which alters her daily routine and priorities. Dipika emphasized the importance of strength and positivity while dealing with her health issues and the unexpected rapid recurrence of a cyst, which



has caused her anxiety. She acknowledged the overwhelming nature of her situation but recognized the resilience of women in coping with bodily complexities and hormonal changes. Despite her health challenges impacting her vlogging consistency, she strives to maintain her efforts when possible and has sought support from others experiencing similar health issues. On February 23, Dipika Kakar had surgery to remove a stomach cyst after experiencing a health scare. For the past few months, Dipika has been fighting stage 2 liver cancer. As part of her continuous care, the Sasural Simar Ka actress had surgery to remove a tumor in June 2025.Since then, Dipika

has been sharing her experiences with chemotherapy, her emotional highs and lows, and her slow progress toward recovery on her YouTube channel. She and Shoaib keep their fans informed and in close contact by posting updates on their individual vlogs on a daily basis. Dipika’s most well-known performance was as Simar Bhardwaj in the popular television series Sasural Simar Ka. She became well-known over the six years that the show ran. Later, she participated in a number of reality series, winning Bigg Boss 12, Nach Baliye 8, and Jhalak Dikhhla Jaa 8. Her most recent appearance was on Celebrity MasterChef, but she had to leave the program because of health issues.

Rashmika Mandanna’s father gives her a serene bungalow, for her 30th birthday

Mumbai: On April 5, actor Rashmika Mandanna celebrated turning thirty with a family get-together that featured a surprise gift from her father. She celebrated her 30th birthday this year, shortly after getting married in her hometown of Coorg, according to information provided by the portal Nakkheeran. Rashmika celebrated her 30th birthday quietly in Coorg (Kodagu), spending the day with her husband, Vijay Deverakonda, and close relatives. The newlyweds combined tradition with a private celebration when they went to the Padi Sri Igguthappa Temple. Images from the temple visit, which showed Rashmika in a calm and happy moment with her loved ones, swiftly went viral on social media. Fans have showered social media with birthday greetings, honoring her significant age as well as the kind way she spent the day. In front of close friends and family, Rashmika wed actor Vijay Deverakonda in a secret ceremony on February 26 in Udai-

pur. Members of the film industry attended a reception that Vijay and Rashmika hosted on March 4 in Hyderabad. A few days later, the birthday party was held close to Virajpet, her hometown. Her father revealed at the occasion that he was giving her a cottage near the town. “Serenity” is the name given to the property. During the event, the announcement was characterized as an emotional occasion. Local residents and family members attended the celebration, which took place in a convention center.

The occasion was very meaningful to the family because it was her first birthday following marriage. In keeping with her cultural heritage, Rashmika wore traditional Kodava clothing at the ceremony. Her family organized meals for the locals, gave them candies, and announced student scholarships, turning the event into a community-focused celebration.

Vikrant Massey shares a heartfelt moment with his son that prompted him to declare a hiatus



Mumbai: Fans were taken aback when Vikrant Massey announced a leave of absence from work back in 2024. The actor has now disclosed that a really touching event with his son was crucial in influencing that choice. On Parineeti Chopra’s program Mom Talks, Vikrant and his wife Sheetal Thakur talked candidly about their experience becoming parents. He revealed that balancing professional obligations with Vardaan’s birth exhausted him both mentally and physically, which ultimately forced him to slow down and put family time first. “You know how much we give of ourselves emotionally, physically, and mentally,” he remarked. I was constantly focused on my home as a first-time father. I didn’t even think about what I was doing or why. All I wanted to do was complete my obligations and spend as much time as I could with Sheetal Thakur and Vardaan. I was feeling a little lonely, as I’ve mentioned before. There was nothing.”He has this dad guilt,” said his wife Sheetal Thakur, echoing his sentiments. Vikrant continued by remembering a time when his son tried to say “papa” for the first time while visiting his

grandmother. The memory has stuck with him even though he was unable to form the word and just blew air. “That’s when it struck me—it was time to go back home,” he remarked. I announced it two months later. I’ve earned more than I ever could have imagined, and this has turned into the largest income of my life. However, many fathers feel uncomfortable leaving their infant behind, just like new mothers do. We are pushed out of the house by the conditioning that men must be the breadwinners. Envy for the one who gets to remain back is understandable. In order to view the baby’s face, we wind up calling every thirty minutes. I simply want to let new dads know that it’s acceptable to feel weak and long to return home. Vikrant’s social media post from 2024 became viral. The actor, who received his first Filmfare Award for his role in 2023’s 12th Fail, declared that he will see audiences “one last time” in 2025, “until time deems right.” Vikrant made the announcement a few weeks after The Sabarmati Report, his most recent film, was released. “The last few years and beyond have been phenomenal,” he wrote in an Instagram post. I want to express my gratitude to all of you for your unwavering support. However, as I proceed, I come to the realization that it’s time to adjust and return home. As a husband, a father, and a son, as an actor as well. We would so have one final encounter in 2025. Until the timing is right. Many years of recollections and the last two films. Once again, thank you. For everything and everything in between. Perpetually indebted.In 2024, Vikrant and his spouse, Sheetal Thakur, welcomed their son, Vardaan, into the world. His most recent roles were in Vishal Bhardwaj’s O Romeo and the romance drama Aankhon Ki Gustaakhiyan.

Delnaaz Irani claims that throughout her divorce from Rajeev Paul, she prioritized peace over alimony



Mumbai: Actor Delnaaz Irani recently talked about her divorce with actor Rajeev Paul, revisiting a difficult period in her life. She disclosed that she decided against pursuing alimony, stressing that she valued harmony over a legal dispute.In the most recent episode of The Male Feminist, Delnaaz reflected on her divorce and discussed if she was impacted by cultural expectations during the process.The per-

former claimed that although there were numerous newspaper announcements of the divorce in 2010, her relationship had ended much earlier. “As a couple, we had a lot of conversations about what wasn’t working,” she continued. However, people tend to take each other for granted in relationships, and I think that was the case with me. My boyfriend continued to take advantage of me; it’s possible that he was unaware that things would get serious. Divorce didn’t exist in my dictionary. My parents, along with my nana-nani, came from a middle-class Parsi family and were together for a very long time. Despite being liberal and open-minded, we were never introduced to that idea. This does not imply that we would treat divorce lightly. For a very long time, the emotional upheaval was a battle. Delnaaz added that she decided not to tell her parents about the situation. The actor discussed a challenging time in her life and disclosed that her father died in 2011 after

suffering a heart attack in 2010.She stated, “I never got anything,” in reference to alimony. Because one party desired the divorce and the other did not, it was a messy process. I put my tranquility above anything else. You must rebuild your life after picking up the pieces. Before they divorced in 2010, Delnaaz and Rajeev were wed for more than ten years. They got married in 1998 after meeting on the sets of Parivartan in 1993. In 2012, their divorce was finalized. Only a few months after their divorce, they took part in the reality series Bigg Boss 6.Delnaaz relocated and fell in love with DJ Percy, her fiancé. Delnaaz stated that a new chapter in her life began on her 50th birthday in an interview with Hindustan Times. DJ Percy Karkaria, her lover, asked her to marry him. But instead of asking her to marry him, he asked her to grow old with him. As a pair, she said, they have decided on a different course and are excited to pursue it together.

On Anant Ambani’s 31st birthday, Salman Khan gives him a strong hug and Shah Rukh sends him love

Mumbai: On April 10, Anant Ambani had a magnificent celebration in Jamnagar to mark his 31st birthday. Bollywood stars Salman Khan and Shah Rukh Khan spearheaded the effort, showering the rich scion with love, affection, and well wishes as midnight approached.Salman referred to Anant as his younger brother and posted some candid, joyful photos of the two of them on his Instagram account. In one picture, Anant is shown being showered with love by Salman as they give each other a close, playful hug. Salman is spotted wearing jeans and a black top in a relaxed manner. Anant smiles broadly and closes his eyes as he leans in for a warm embrace. “Happy birthday to the most selfless, kindest human and an inspiration to many... my younger brother Anant,” Salman wrote after sharing the pictures.In an Instagram Stories post, Shah Rukh wished Anant Ambani a very happy birthday. May you never stop doing good deeds

and upholding all that is right and good. Continue doing a great job and making people smile with your work. May God constantly grant you good health and pleasure. Additionally, Ranveer Singh wished Anant a happy birthday via his Instagram account.

Ranveer commented, “Happy birthday bhai (kiss emoji),” beside a silly photo of Anant.While wishing Anant well, actor Sanjay Dutt also posted a photo of the two of them. “Anant, my brother, you are the sweetest and kindest brother anyone can have,” he wrote. I offer up prayers to Mahadev for continued health and success in all of your endeavors. Remain joyful at all times and continue to be the devoted brother you are to me. God bless you and happy birthday! Har Har, Mahadev. On April 10, Anant Ambani turned 31. In Jamnagar, Anant Ambani, the youngest son of Mukesh and Nita Ambani, is commemorating his birthday.

After SIR, 84 lakh voters were added to the final UP list, bringing the entire electorate to 13.39 crore



New Delhi, Apr 10: After a state-wide revision operation, more than 84 lakh voters were added to the Uttar Pradesh voter list, bringing the total electorate to over 13.39 crore, according to the final electoral roll announced on Friday. The update follows the 166-day Special Intensive Revision (SIR) that took place between October 27, 2025, and April 10, 2026. According to news agency

PTI, the exercise included all 403 assembly constituencies and all 75 districts in the state. Chief Electoral Officer Navdeep Rinwa told reporters during a press conference at the Lok Bhawan Media Center that personnel from all levels, including District Election Officers, Electoral Registration Officers, and Booth Level Officers, were involved in the process. He pointed out that in addition to voters, several booth-level representatives from reputable political parties also took part in the process. During the exercise, print, electronic, and digital media platforms helped raise awareness. There are 13,39,84,792 voters in the state, according to the official electoral roll released on April 10. Of these, 7,30,71,071 votes are men, or about 54% of the total, and 6,09,09,525 voters are women, or 45.46%. There are 4,206 voters of the third gender. There is an aggregate rise of 84,28,767 voters when comparing the draft and final rolls. There are an extra

42,27,902 male voters, 42,00,778 female voters, and 87 voters of the third gender. When the draft roll was made public on January 6, 2026, 12,55,56,025 voters were listed. The number of voters in the 18–19 age range has significantly increased. They now make up 1.32 percent of the electorate, up from 3,33,981 in the draft roll to 17,63,360 in the final list.

Additionally, the gender ratio has improved. In the final list, there are 834 female voters for every 1,000 male voters, up from 824 in the draft roll. With 3,29,421 new voters, Prayagraj had the most in any district. Lucknow, with 2,85,961 new voters, came next. Other districts that experienced significant gains were Jaunpur with 2,37,590, Ghaziabad with 2,43,666, and Bareilly with nearly 2,57,000 additions. According to Rinwa, the state's citizens, political parties, and election authorities worked together to complete the reform process.

A two-year-old toddler in Ujjain, MP, slips into a borewell



New Delhi, Apr 10: In the Ujjain district of Madhya Pradesh, a two-and-a-half-year-old boy fell into an open borewell on Thursday night, sparking a massive rescue effort.

The event happened on April 9 at approximately 8 p.m. in Jhalaria village, which is part of Badnagar tehsil. Ujjain is 75 kilometers from Badnagar. Bhagirath, the toddler, arrived a few days ago from the Pali district of Rajasthan with his family. The incident occurred as his family, who are shepherds, were grazing sheep nearby. Soon after learning of the incident, local police under the command of Badnagar SHO Ashok Patidar arrived on the scene. Rescue equipment has also been sent by teams from the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF). The SDRF crew has started a rescue effort with six Pocklain and JCB equipment, and they are excavating a parallel pit next to the borewell. The boy, who is thought to be stranded at a depth of about 70 feet, is being securely rescued by administrative and police teams, with Ujjain collector Roshan Singh and SP Pradeep Sharma present. The borewell is receiving oxygen, and a camera has been lowered to keep an eye on the child and support rescue operations. According to the story, residents are helping with the operation while officials try to get in touch with him. A stone covering the borewell lid was pushed off by a sheep, according to SP Sharma. Then the child peered inside, opened the lid, and fell in. Bhagirath is the youngest of three sons of Praveen Devasi, a shepherd from Rajasthan's Pali area who traveled to the Malwa region with his group to graze sheep. Bhagirath's two older brothers, Hitesh (8) and Kuldeep (6), are studying in Pali, where his father is currently residing. In another incident on Saturday, a 54-year-old lady was killed and five members of her family—including a child—were hurt after their vehicle struck a divider and fell into a 40-foot-deep ditch on the Guna bypass road, according to police. The family was on their way back after a pilgrimage to Ujjain. According to Anoop Bhargava, the head of the Cantonment police station, the family was involved in the accident at around seven in the morning, according to a report.

5.72 lakh homes have used the self-enumeration capability thus far in the first phase

New Delhi, Apr 10: The Registrar General of India reported on Friday that over 5.72 lakh households had used the self-enumeration option thus far during the first round of the Census 2027. It stated, "This reflects the increasing participation in the Census's digital initiative." In a post on X, the RGI stated, "These families have embraced a faster, smarter, and more convenient way to contribute to nation-building by choosing to provide their details online." Citizens of states and Union territories that will begin conducting a physical Houselisting and Housing Census on April 16 are eligible for the self-enumeration facility. With a 15-day self-enumeration window—a first for the huge exercise—



the Census 2027 began on April 1 in eight states and Union territories, including New Delhi Municipal Council and Delhi Cantt parts of the nation's capital. For the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Goa, Karnataka, Sikkim, Odisha, Lakshadweep, Mizoram, and regions under the NDMC and the Cantonment Board of the national capital, a special-

ly designed self-enumeration webpage has been launched where residents can respond to the following questions. The citizens will create a unique ID, which they will give to enumerators who visit their homes during the HLO process for verification, after supplying the required information and responding to inquiries. The eighth census

since independence is being carried out in two stages: the population census and the HLO census. In order to create a solid framework for the population enumeration, the HLO Census will methodically catalog all buildings, homes, and households across the nation. In the first, the exercise will be entirely digital, and enumerators will gather data using a unique mobile application. The enumerators will physically visit each home and building throughout the housing listing process, asking each person 33 questions about basic amenities in their homes, details about the head of the household, including name and sex, and ownership status, among other things. Next year, the Census's second phase will begin.

Arjun Tendulkar Forewarned the IPL About Mukul Choudhary

New Delhi: When Mukul Choudhary, the wicketkeeper batter for the Lucknow Super Giants, arrived at the Eden Gardens hoping to revive his team's pursuit of 182 runs, the writing was already on the wall. As LSG chased down the target against KKR on the last ball of the game, Mukul went crazy with the bat after a cautious start, blasting an undefeated 54 off 27 balls. Mukul Choudhary's LSG teammate Arjun Tendulkar had alerted the Indian Premier League (IPL) ahead of time about the 22-year-old's six-hitting ability, despite the fact that many would argue that Choudhary came straight out of the syllabus. Arjun described his amazement at Mukul's 360-degree hitting abilities in an interview with Shubhankar Mishra. Amazing sixes are hit by Mukul Choudhary. I witnessed his sixes during a practice match yesterday. I was quite impressed. He hits in many directions, including square-leg, point, upper cut, and behind the



bowler. In an interview with Shubhankar Mishra, Arjun Tendulkar stated, "I was really impressed by his batting." Mukul was the only known batsman in the middle, and KKR needed 54 runs from the last four overs to win. The hitter used his 360-degree abilities and hit sixes all over the park despite having to deal with several well-known bowlers in the final overs, including Cameron Green, Kartik Tyagi, and Vaibhav Arora. Even LSG captain Rishabh Pant said after the match that he was at a loss for words

over Mukul's performance. "Words cannot express how amazing this effort is. Trust is something I personally ensured, and a player may achieve great things when you have faith in them. With every match like this, the character demonstrates that something is developing. Regarding the young wicketkeeper batter's performance, Pant remarked, "We don't want to talk much about it, but something is cooking inside." The Rajasthanian hitter was also praised by LSG coach Justin Langer, who said he chases totals like MS Dhoni and runs like Virat Kohli. "His true athleticism is what I adore most about him. Like Virat, his running between the wickets is exceptional. However, his game sense is another factor. He seems to have played 300 games already based on the way he discusses the game during our practice sessions. He is graceful, powerful, and an excellent athlete. That's a fairly nice combo, as we both know."

While attempting to take a photo at the Andhra waterfall, three females drown

New Delhi, Apr 10: Three young girls in the Alluri Sitharama Raju district of Andhra Pradesh perished under a waterfall while attempting to take a picture during a summer vacation expedition. The event happened on Thursday close to Moolagummi hamlet in the Ananthagiri district, according to the police. According to news agency, the girls, who are all from the same hamlet, went together to see the waterfall, a location that frequently draws residents during the holiday season. When the group went into the water to take pictures, what had started off as an enjoyable excursion swiftly became tragic. Four girls were present at the time, according to officials. Three of them allegedly lost their balance and fell farther while attempting to capture pictures in the water. The three couldn't keep afloat once they fell in because none of them could swim. Even with a fourth female present, she could not save them. According to the story, she is still receiving therapy after surviving the assault. Despite its small size, the waterfall can be rather dangerous, according to the police, especially for anyone who are not familiar with the area or are not proficient swimmers. Visitors are frequently put in greater danger by slick rocks and abrupt dips in water depth.

The girls' ages and identities are yet unknown. Since schools were closed for the summer, which is when these places often see greater foot traffic from children, the four of



them had gone out. Authorities are registering a case and have started legal proceedings. This follows an uncannily identical tragedy that happened in the same state a few days prior: three young guys drowned on Sunday night while filming a short film in the Pennar river in the Kadapa district of Andhra Pradesh. The victims were a part of an eight-person crew that had assembled in Pushpagiri hamlet to film under the "Frontline Press" banner.

Five members moved toward the river, while others waited behind. Three of them entered the water, apparently not realizing how deep it was, and were carried into a deeper area. After receiving a tip, police conducted a search and found two bodies late on Sunday night and a third early on Monday. They sent the remains for a post-mortem and filed a case of accidental death.

In Mysuru, two people with special needs were detained for the murder of a peer



New Delhi, Apr 10: After a months-long investigation into a rare case involving both the victim and the accused being specially-abled, police found the body of a 32-year-old man with speech and hearing impairments in Mysuru district on Wednesday. The investigation relied on sign language experts, police said on Thursday.

The victim, Swami, lived with his wife, Savita, who also has speech and hearing impairments, and their three-year-old daughter in Devarammanahalli Palya, Nanjangud taluk, according to the police. Four years ago, the pair got married. Investigators said that the main suspect, Srinivas, a 37-year-old man from Kunigal in the Tumakuru district, was likewise deaf and hard of hearing and had gotten to know the couple. After growing fond to Swami's wife over time,

Srinivas allegedly plotted the man's murder alongside two other colleagues with unique abilities. According to Mallikarjun Baladandi, superintendent of police, the investigation started with a missing person complaint. Based on the complaint, we first filed a missing case. It became evident during the inquiry that it was a murder case. We've detained two suspects thus far, and we've assembled teams to apprehend the third," he stated. According to police, the victim was enticed on February 12 to Ammattur village in Kunigal taluk, where the accused reportedly led him to a wooded location while pretending to have a drink.

They are thought to have attacked and killed him during the event. The accused then tried to destroy evidence, according to investigators, by attaching stones to the body and tossing it down a well. Unaware of the crime, the victim's wife first thought he had left for work. On March 4, she filed a missing complaint after he did not return. According to Baladandi, the inquiry gained traction

after police saw irregularities in the lead suspect's actions during sign language video conversations with the victim's wife.

A police investigation took a pivotal turn when it emerged that the suspect had given the victim's mobile phone to his wife the day after the disappearance. Communication challenges arose as all three suspects were speech and hearing-impaired, prompting police to consult experts from the All India Institute of Speech and Hearing (AIISH) in Mysuru. Using interpreters, interrogations led to a confession, revealing the body had been disposed of in a well. After two months, the decomposed body was recovered and identified by the victim's mother. The investigation resulted in the arrest of the prime suspect and another individual, with efforts underway to locate a third suspect.

This case underscored the complexities of crime investigations involving specially-abled individuals, demonstrating the effectiveness of collaboration with AIISH experts.

After losing to LSG on the final ball, KKR spoke out about their controversial catch



New Delhi: The Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026 saw an exciting match that concluded on the final ball of play for the second consecutive day. Mukul Choudhary scored seven runs off two balls to help the Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) win. The batter completed the 182-run chase by hitting a six on the penultimate ball and then taking a single on the final ball of the game. But looking back, the KKR team still regrets the "umpiring blunder" that resulted in their star batsman Finn Allen being dismissed. When questioned about the controversy surrounding Allen's boundary rope catch at the

post-match news conference, KKR's foreign star Rovman Powell didn't hold back. Powell referred to the ruling as an umpiring "blunder" and questioned why the officials failed to examine several perspectives to see whether Digvesh Rathi's foot had made contact with the boundary rope cushion during the catch. "Definitely (more perspectives ought to have been considered)." When he came off, we discussed that. We believed that we had witnessed umpires in the IPL going upstairs for minor infractions that weren't that close. In the press conference following the game, Rovman told the media, "Maybe it was

a mistake on their part, but we're not going to look into that and say that is what cost us two points tonight." The Knight Riders would have added six runs to their score if Allen had hit a six rather than being caught on that delivery. The hosts might have won the game in such a circumstance. When LSG needed 30 runs in the last two overs to win, KKR appeared to have positioned themselves to win the game. At this point, Mukul Choudhary came through with an incredible effort that won the game. It's really disappointing. You wish to establish Kolkata and Eden Gardens as your stronghold. With your supporters at your side, it's your home. Therefore, winning at home always feels fantastic. Unfortunately, though, we were unable to do so tonight," Powell remarked.

The lads deserve a great deal of praise. I think we thought we could have won the game after scoring 181. However, the young player deserves praise for his excellent batting performance," he continued. With the loss, the Knight Riders have yet to record a victory in the 2026 Indian Premier League. They have lost three of their games thus far, while one was cancelled because of the rain.

IPL 2026 will not feature Wanindu Hasaranga, and the LSG are getting ready to select a replacement

New Delhi: The Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) announced on Thursday that Sri Lankan spinner Wanindu Hasaranga will not play in the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026. Tom Moody, the team's director of cricket, made the announcement during Thursday's match at Eden Gardens against the Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR). The team that defeated KKR by three wickets is "preparing" to designate a replacement, and an official announcement is anticipated within the next 24 to 48 hours.

Hasaranga was purchased by LSG for INR 2 crore during the mini auction, however an injury prevented him from joining their team. He played for the Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) from 2021 to 2023 and the Rajasthan Royals (RR) the previous season. Since hurting his hamstring during



Sri Lanka's opening T20 World Cup 2026 match in February, the 28-year-old has not played. Additionally, it has been revealed that he skipped earlier this week's required fitness test administered by Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC). In the past, the SLC required centrally contracted players to pass the required fitness test in order to receive an IPL NOC. Moody stated, "We

are preparing for the fact that he isn't going to be able to join us," on Thursday during LSG's match against the Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) in Kolkata. He continued, "We are looking at replacements that should be announced in 24-48 hours."

After defeating KKR by three wickets, the Lucknow Super Giants are presently ranked fifth in the stand-

ings. Despite all the odds, Mukul Choudhary's lightning-fast hit of 54 off 27 balls helped LSG overcome Ajinkya Rahane's squad. In its three IPL 2026 games, the Rishabh Pant-led team has won two of them. The team won its next two games against Sunrisers Hyderabad and KKR after losing its first game against the Delhi Capitals.

Wanindu won't be missed much by LSG because they have a reliable and strong bowling assault. Shahbaz Ahmed, M Siddharth, and Digvesh Rathi are part of their spin attack. Prince Yadav has shown himself to be a notable pacer for the team in the first three games, while Mohammed Shami has been spearheading the attack. Moody confirmed on Thursday that Mohsin Khan, who was outstanding in LSG's inaugural game against Delhi, had not played since because of some "stiffness."

Aakash Chopra predicts in-form Virat Kohli might struggle against Rajasthan Royals

New Delhi: Former India cricketer Aakash Chopra has predicted a tough outing for Virat Kohli in Royal Challengers Bengaluru's Indian Premier League clash against Rajasthan Royals on April 10. Despite Kohli's strong start to the season, Chopra believes Rajasthan Royals will rely on Sandeep Sharma to dismiss the star batter and contain the team's opening partnership in the powerplay.

The contest gains significance with both RR and RCB sitting unbeaten at the top of the table, setting up a high-stakes encounter early in the Indian Premier League season. "Sandeep Sharma vs Virat Kohli again is a story because he doesn't have very good numbers against him," Chopra said on his YouTube channel. "The strike rate is decent, but the numbers aren't excellent. He doesn't like playing Sandeep Sharma because he doesn't provide pace." The numbers underline Chopra's assessment. In 18 innings against



Sandeep, Kohli has scored 132 runs at a strike rate of 150 while being dismissed seven times, suggesting a pattern the Royals could look to exploit. With Kohli opening the batting and Sandeep likely to take the new ball, another powerplay duel between the two is on the cards. While Kohli has been in decent touch with 97 runs in two matches, Sandeep has quietly remained one of Rajasthan's most economical and dependable bowlers despite a modest tally of three wickets so far. Beyond the Kohli-Sandeep face-off, Chopra highlighted several other match-ups that could

shape the outcome of the contest. Rajasthan's overseas pace duo of Jofra Archer and Nandre Burger are expected to challenge Bengaluru's in-form batting unit with the new ball. "Jofra Archer and Nandre Burger will ask tough questions with the new ball," he added. "Phil Salt scored a few runs in the last match, so the focus will be on him.

Devdutt Padikkal is in dream form, and most of his runs have come against Rajasthan Royals, so that will be worth watching." For RCB, Devdutt Padikkal has been a standout performer, smashing consecutive fifties

at a strike rate exceeding 200 and emerging as the team's leading run-scorer this season. In contrast, Phil Salt is still searching for consistency, having scored 54 runs in two innings. With multiple individual battles brewing, Friday's clash promises to hinge on how these key players handle pressure in crucial phases of the game. Virat Kohli has a challenging historical record against Sandeep Sharma, who is often used by the Rajasthan Royals to target the star batter during the powerplay. In 18 innings against the pacer, Kohli has scored 132 runs and has been dismissed seven times. While Virat Kohli maintains a decent strike rate of 150 against Sharma, his frequent dismissals suggest a specific vulnerability to the bowler's lack of pace. Analysts, including Aakash Chopra, suggest that Sharma's ability to bowl without high velocity makes him a particularly difficult match-up for Kohli.

Lalit Modi urges KKR to lure Gautam Gambhir back with stock options

New Delhi: Two years can transform fortunes in the Indian Premier League. In May 2024, Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) celebrated their third IPL title at the Chepauk. Today, the franchise finds itself at the bottom of the points table, grappling with a sharp decline in performance. The fall has drawn sharp commentary from former IPL Commissioner Lalit Modi. Responding to a social media query comparing Gautam Gambhir's importance to KKR with MS Dhoni's role at Chennai Super Kings, Modi urged the franchise to reinstate Gambhir as the team's 'Chief Strategist'. He emphasised that KKR must be prepared to offer Gambhir all possible incentives to bring him back. Gambhir's association with KKR yielded two titles in 2012 and 2014. He returned as mentor in 2024, a move that coincided with the team's third championship under Shreyas Iyer's captaincy. However, Gambhir left to coach the senior national men's team after Rahul Dravid's tenure ended, leaving a void in KKR's strategic leadership.

"That @GautamGambhir - without an iota of doubt in my mind - was the best person for @KKRiders. The team management needs to do whatever, and I say it again, whatever it takes to lure him back. Incentivise him, like Shane



Warne had equity options," Modi wrote on social media. He added, "Lock him in for a long, long term - give him stock options. I hope they are smart enough to do that. He does not fall within the player auction purse - get him to be the face of the team. There needs to be a player face of the team. Gautam should be KKR's main strategist globally. No one better." The decline since that 2024 triumph has been both swift and painful. Following Gambhir's departure, KKR's identity has blurred. The 2025 season was a disaster, with the team finishing 8th and failing to make the playoffs. The management's attempt to fix the rot by promoting Abhishek Nayar

to Head Coach for the 2026 season, replacing Chandrakant Pandit, has so far failed to yield results. While Nayar is credited with unearthing talents like Rinku Singh, the transition from assistant coach to chief strategist has proven difficult. Under his tenure, KKR has struggled to find a winning combination, looking tactically outclassed in high-pressure situations. The 2026 campaign has been further marred by a leadership crisis. Ajinkya Rahane, who took over the captaincy after Shreyas Iyer was not retained, is facing intense scrutiny. Criticism reached a fever pitch last week when Rahane opted to bat first in overcast.

Ayush Shetty stuns the third seed to reach semifinals, keeping India's title hopes alive



New Delhi: Ayush Shetty, India's lone representative in the men's singles draw at the Badminton Asia Championships 2026, stormed into the semi-finals with a stunning win over third seed Jonatan Christie on Thursday.

The 20-year-old, ranked World No. 25, defeated Christie in straight games in a 54-minute contest. After edging a tight opening game 23-21, Shetty took control in the second, sealing the quarter-final clash 21-17. This

marks the second major upset for Shetty in the tournament. In the opening round, he knocked out World No. 7 and Hong Kong Open 2025 champion Li Shi Feng in straight games, winning 21-13, 21-16. He followed that up with a victory over Chi Yu Jen in the second round. Shetty has long shown signs of breaking into the top tier of men's singles, and this result will significantly boost his confidence as he edges closer to the world's top 20.

The result comes as a welcome boost for Indian badminton fans, especially after early exits for Lakshya Sen and HS Prannoy earlier in the tournament.

Lakshya bowed out in the opening round, losing in straight games 12-21, 19-21 to Hong Kong China's Lee Cheuk Yiu. Prannoy, meanwhile, endured a far more frustrating exit. He went down to China's Weng Hongyang in straight games, 12-21, 19-21, in a match marred by controversy. The Indian shuttler later criticised the organisers, questioning the absence of the Hawk-Eye system on his court. Prannoy expressed his displeasure over several line calls on Court 2 at the Ningbo Olympic Sports Center Gymnasium, which he felt consistently went in favour of the Chinese players.

Vishvanath strikes gold as India finishes Asian Boxing with five

Ulaanbaatar: India capped off a memorable campaign at the Asian Boxing Championships 2026 with Vishvanath Suresh clinching gold in the men's 50kg category, defeating Japan's Daichi Iwai by a dominant 5:0 margin in the final. Sachin (60 kg) added to the tally with a hard-fought silver medal, rounding off a strong showing for the men's contingent, according to a press release. India finished second on the table with 5 golds, one fewer than Kazakhstan, but claimed the most medals overall, 16. The performance was headlined by a historic outing from the Indian women's team, who topped the medal charts with 10 medals, including four gold, two

silver, and four bronze, marking one of their finest showings at the continental level. Vishvanath's gold marks a significant milestone in his rapid rise through the ranks.

Having emerged through the national circuit with consistent performances, he has quickly established himself on the international stage. His campaign in Ulaanbaatar was particularly impressive, highlighted by his victory over a world number one en route to the final, underlining his temperament and ability to deliver against top opposition. Speaking on the team's performance, Boxing Federation of India President Ajay Singh said, "This has been a remarkable campaign for Indian box-



ing and for our women who have topped the medal charts with four gold medals. Our men's team was impressive again, especially young Vishva with his gold, whose performance shows the strength

of our pipeline. What stands out is the depth of talent coming through--despite changes from the previous World Championships, this team has shown tremendous character and promise while claim-

ing titles against some of the continent's toughest fighters. We are seeing a new wave of upcoming talent and multiple medal contenders stepping up on the big stage, which bodes extremely of Indian boxing."

Vaishali Takes Sole Lead In Women's Candidates While Praggnanandhaa Suffers A Tough Defeat



New Delhi: R Vaishali continued her impressive run in the women's Candidates, moving into sole lead after holding Anna Muzychuk to a composed draw in Round 10, even as Javokhir Sindarov tightened his grip on the open section with a commanding win over R Praggnanandhaa on Thursday.

Vaishali, who has shown remarkable consistency throughout the tournament, took her tally to six points to edge ahead of the field in the women's standings. Facing Muzychuk, one of the most experienced players in the lineup, the Indian was solid throughout and never allowed the game to drift out of control. She equalised comfortably and ensured there were no late complications, continuing a run that had steadily gathered momentum at a crucial stage of the event. Muzychuk now shares second place with China's Zhu Jiner, both on 5.5 points, keeping the title race finely balanced heading into the final four rounds. The chasing pack is not far behind either. Bibisara Assaubayeva registered a key win over Zhu to move to five points, joining Kateryna Lagno and Aleksandra Goryachkina in a tightly packed group that remains very much

in contention. It was, however, a mixed day for the InDIan contingent in the women's section, as Divya Deshmukh lost her chances in the endgame against Goryachkina and went down after a hard-fought battle. In the open section, Sindarov's march towards the title gathered further pace as he outplayed Praggnanandhaa to reach eight points, opening up a significant two-point lead at the top. The Uzbek has been the standout performer of the tournament and once again demonstrated his depth of preparation and control under pressure.

The game against Praggnanandhaa turned sharp early, with Sindarov opting for an aggressive approach that involved a piece sacrifice to complicate matters. The Indian held his own for a while in the ensuing tactical battle, but a critical error proved decisive. Praggnanandhaa lost his queen in exchange for two rooks and some pawns, an imbalance that tilted the position firmly in Sindarov's favour. From there, the Uzbek showed excellent technique to convert the advantage without giving his opponent any real chances to recover. The victory was Sindarov's sixth of the tournament and his second over Pragg-

nanandhaa, underlining his dominance in this event. With four rounds remaining, he now sits comfortably ahead of the field and firmly in Control of the title race. The 2026 FIDE Candidates Tournament in Cyprus reached a fever pitch in Round 10, delivering a day of contrasting fortunes for India's famous chess siblings. While Grandmaster R. Vaishali surged into the sole lead of the Women's section, her younger brother, R. Praggnanandhaa, suffered a devastating defeat that effectively ended his chances of becoming the challenger for the World Championship title. R. Vaishali's journey in this tournament has been nothing short of a rollercoaster, mirroring her heroic comeback in Toronto two years ago.

Entering Round 10 as a co-leader, Vaishali faced the formidable and highly experienced Anna Muzychuk of Ukraine. Playing with the black pieces, Vaishali exhibited a masterclass in defensive solidity and composure. The game remained balanced throughout, with Vaishali neutralizing Muzychuk's opening advantages. By the middle game, it was clear the Indian was content with a draw, ensuring she didn't overextend in a high-stakes position. The resulting half-point proved golden when her co-leader, China's Zhu Jiner, faltered in a marathon battle against Bibisara Assaubayeva. Zhu, who rejected a draw by repetition in hopes of a win, eventually "went down in flames," allowing Vaishali to sit alone at the top of the leaderboard with 6 points. Vaishali's resurgence—going from joint-last after five rounds to sole leader after ten—has been credited to her work with a sports psychologist. This mental edge was visible as she navigated the pressure of the final stretch in Cyprus, remaining unbeaten in her last five games.

Mukul Choudhary Unleashes Dhoni's Iconic Helicopter Shot To Dominate KKR In IPL 2026 Choudhary's Helicopter Shot Clinches KKR Heist

Kolkata: There are cricket shots, and then there are those which define a player. MS Dhoni's helicopter shot sits right there. First seen during that 2006 ODI series against England cricket team, it did not look textbook, and that was the whole point. It came with a bit of edge to it. Almost like Dhoni was saying, miss your yorker by an inch and it is going the distance anyway. Bowlers kept trying, and Dhoni kept whipping them away. Over time, it just became part of who he was at the crease, especially in chases. Years later, that shot still carries his stamp. Others have tried, a few have come close, but no one really owns it the way Dhoni does.

Which is why, when it showed up again at Eden Gardens, you could sense a familiar roar and amazement in the crowd. This time, it was Mukul Choudhary. With Lucknow Super Giants falling behind in the chase against Kolkata Knight Riders, the game was drifting. Vaibhav Arora went full at the stumps, but Mukul was ready. The wrists came through, the bat followed, and suddenly that familiar swing was back. Not just a shot, more like a signal. And then it just kept coming. From nowhere, the Chase flipped. What looked like a slow fade turned into a



proper finish, the kind where you do not leave anything for later. LSG got over the line, and Mukul had pretty much dragged them there. The nice bit is, it was not random. He has grown up watching Dhoni, picking up things, holding on to those visuals. "I have always looked up to MS Dhoni because I am a wicketkeeper myself. I've always watched him closely. That helicopter shot of his from the 2011 World Cup is something I still remember from my childhood. Those memories stay with you forever. He has always been my role model. I am a finisher too, and I want to become like him — someone who finishes games. That's why he is my role model," said Mukul to ESPN Cricinfo. Against KKR, for a few overs, Mukul played it exactly like Thala. There were many other moments which could have made our Play Of The Day

segment after the Eden thriller. You had KKR's issues in the middle overs and struggle to find momentum during that time as one. LSG were sensational on the field and their bowling in the second half was impressive. A special mention also to Sunil Narine, who almost changed the game with his stunning spell. But the day truly belonged to the 21-year-old Mukul Choudhary from Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan.

And it wasn't just the helicopter that made the throw-back feel complete. Mukul Choudhary has often spoken about looking up to MS Dhoni, and it goes beyond cricket too, with that shared pull towards the armed forces. But at Eden Gardens, it was the finishing that stood out. The last four overs belonged in its entirety to the 21-year-old. There wasn't much left around him. The batters were gone, the tail

was in, and Avesh Khan was at the other end. Usually at this point. Speaking about his son, Dalip said that the dream of making Mukul a cricketer began the day he was born. "I graduated in 2003, the same year I got married, and I had a dream that if I ever had a son, he would play cricket.

The next year, I was blessed with a son, and from a very young age I decided that I would do everything to make him a cricketer. When so many people make it, why can't my son?" he recalled. For several years, Dalip attempted to build a stable career to support that dream. He spent six years preparing for the Rajasthan Administrative Service examination but could not clear it. He then turned to real estate, which also failed to provide financial stability. In 2016, father and son reached SBS Crickhub in Sikar, around 70 km from their home, marking the formal beginning of Mukul's structured cricket training. "Once I enrolled him, I realised I did not have enough money. I decided to sell my house because I did not have a regular income. I got Rs 21 lakh. I asked the buyer to transfer the entire amount to my account so that everything was on record. The next year, I started a hotel and took another loan," Dalip said.