

In Brief

BNHS holds awareness session

Guwahati: The Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) conducted an awareness session on January 28 in Assam, educating schoolchildren about the need to protect endangered vultures. Led by biologist Githartha Borah, the event highlighted the ecological importance of vultures and the threats they face, particularly from veterinary medicines like non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) that can be fatal to them. The interactive program included visuals and encouraged student participation, fostering discussions about wildlife conservation. Over the past year, BNHS has engaged with 160 schools in Assam, aiming to create a more informed generation. In addition to educational efforts, BNHS operates Vulture Breeding Centres and has successfully released 34 vultures into the wild.

Grand statue of Swargadeo Chaolung Su-Ka-Pha

Guwahati: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma unveiled a statue of Swargadeo Chaolung Su-Ka-Pha in Guwahati during the Me-Dam-Me-Phi festival, honoring the founder of the Ahom dynasty. Sarma highlighted Su-Ka-Pha's legacy of unity and good governance and announced Rs 2 crore for developing Sukapha Kshetra, emphasizing the importance of preserving Assam's cultural heritage. The event was attended by dignitaries and community members who celebrated Su-Ka-Pha's contributions to Assam's civilization.

Dibang Valley hydropower projects

Itanagar: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu reviewed major hydropower projects in Dibang Valley, emphasizing the state's commitment to clean energy and local welfare. The review included key projects like the 3,097 MW Etalin and 680 MW Attunli Hydroelectric Projects, as well as planned projects totaling 5,097 MW capacity. Discussions with developers addressed timelines, clearances, and community benefits, underlining the importance of balancing timely development with local interests and national energy security. Khandu emphasized the need for infrastructure support and alignment with India's energy goals.

Rimpu Bagan farmhouse raid cases

Shillong: The Meghalaya Human Rights Commission (MHRC) has recommended a compensation of Rs 50,000 to each of the 15 complainants in cases of alleged human rights violations from a police raid on Rimpu Bagan in West Garo Hills, which took place on July 22, 2022. The raid was conducted under suspicions of the premises operating as a brothel. Out of 30 cases filed regarding the incident, 15 were later withdrawn. The farmhouse in question is owned by a BJP leader previously linked to militant activities.

India-AI Impact Summit

Agartala: India is advancing its focus on artificial intelligence (AI)-driven governance, exemplified by a regional workshop organized by the Directorate of Information Technology, Government of Tripura, on January 30 in Agartala. This initiative is part of the outreach for the upcoming India-AI Impact Summit 2026, aimed at educating stakeholders on AI applications in governance and public services. The program supports India's digital transformation efforts, with AI central to administrative reforms. Major initiatives include the IndiaAI Mission and the National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence, which aim to position AI as a vital factor for inclusive growth. The summit, slated for February 19-20 in New Delhi, will mark India's leadership in the global AI discourse.

Arunachal Minister supports providing more authority to Municipal bodies

Agartal, Feb 01: On January 30, Balo Raja, the minister of urban affairs for Arunachal Pradesh, promised to fully support the state's Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) and promised to resolve their issues in order to guarantee successful devolution of powers in accordance with the 74th Constitutional Amendment. Chairing a coordination meeting with the newly elected Mayor and Deputy Mayor of the Itanagar Municipal Corporation (IMC) and the Chief Councillor and Deputy Chief Councillor of the Pasighat Municipal Council (PMC), the minister said issues raised by the municipal bodies would be placed before the chief minister to address existing shortcomings. Urban development initiatives and the structural strengthening of municipal organizations were the main topics of discussion, according to an official release. Urban planning, land use regulation, water supply,

public health, sanitation, urban poverty alleviation, environmental protection, and civic amenities are just a few of the eighteen functional areas listed in the 12th Schedule of the Constitution, which IMC and PMC officials urged the state government to transfer to ULBs during the discussions. More devolution, they claimed, would enable ULBs to become more self-sufficient and responsive to public demands. The municipal bodies also requested better municipal funding, pointing out that existing revenue sources like trade licenses, birth and death certificates, garbage collection fees, and hoarding charges are limited. This included a dedicated budgetary provision akin to that available for Panchayati Raj Institutions. Officials further highlighted that certain subjects devolved to ULBs under the 74th Amendment continue to be handled by line departments un-



der the Government of Arunachal Pradesh (Allocation of Business) Rules, 2021, and need rectification to ensure smooth functioning of municipal institutions. Advising the newly constituted ULBs to work diligently for public wel-

fare, Itanagar MLA Techhi Kaso proposed a joint site inspection involving the Capital Deputy Commissioner, the IMC Mayor and other stakeholders to restore the burial ground at Nirjuli/Karsingsa. Reiterating the govern-

ment's commitment to democratic decentralisation, the minister said the state would continue working to empower ULBs in accordance with constitutional provisions.

SpiceJet will connect Imphal to Kolkata, Guwahati, and Mumbai from February 10

Guwahati, Feb 01: On January 30, low-cost airline SpiceJet announced its arrival in Imphal. This was the airline's first visit to the capital of Manipur and a major increase in air connectivity to the Northeast. The airline would use Boeing 737 aircraft to fly daily flights to Imphal from Kolkata, Guwahati, and Mumbai starting on February 10. The action is being taken at a time when Manipur still has few aviation connections to important Indian cities. The airline

claims that although travelers from Mumbai would be able to take a single aircraft trip with a quick layover in Kolkata, eliminating the need to switch planes, travelers from Kolkata and Guwahati will have access to nonstop flights. For both business and leisure travelers, the airline anticipates that the new routes will offer "seamless and reliable connections" to the area. According to SpiceJet, the launch is especially significant for Manipur, where there are still few options for air travel. In



addition to providing much-needed capacity and choice on routes to and from the state, the daily services are anticipated to increase accessibility for residents, students, medical travelers, government officials, and enterprises.

Beyond direct links with Kolkata, Guwahati and Mumbai, the new flights will also allow passengers to connect onward to multiple domestic destinations and select international points through SpiceJet's wider network.

Meghalaya's decreasing springs are noted in the Economic Survey

Shillong, Feb 01: Meghalaya is facing significant water security challenges, with nearly half of its springs experiencing reduced discharge, as reported in the Economic Survey 2025-26. This decline affects both rural and urban communities, prompting a shift to a community-centric, ecosystem-based adaptation strategy encapsulated in the MegARISE project. The initiative aims to enhance water availability through the protection of sensitive catchment areas via sustainable forest management, including plans for plantations over 8,430 hectares and targeted treatment of critical catchments like Umiew and



Ganol. Advanced GIS tools have mapped over 55,000 springs to facilitate timely interventions. Additionally, over 500 community-driven climate-adaptive water harvesting projects are underway to bolster local water

management amidst shifting rainfall patterns. Meghalaya's approach has gained national attention, with Chief Minister Conrad Sangma emphasizing the importance of community leadership in these initiatives.

Tripura wants to become the center for data storage in the Northeast

CM Manik Saha

Agartal, Feb 01: On January 29, Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha stated that the state's improving academic infrastructure and rising economic activity will propel it to become a significant data storage hub in the Northeast. According to the chief minister, Tripura presently has three data centers, but their combined 1,800 terabyte storage capacity frequently isn't enough to meet growing demand. Saha addressed the problem by laying the groundwork for Airtel's ₹200-crore data center in Chandmari, West Tripura district, which will have a five-megawatt storage capacity. Saha called the project important and timely. According to him, the new facility will contribute to the development of an ecosystem that will support the expansion of IT and IT-enabled services in the state. Saha stated, "Tripura has several advantages to become a hub for the data storage industry, with substantial investment proposals and fast-paced business reforms."

The chief minister emphasized the national viewpoint by stating that Mumbai presently holds approximately half of the nation's data storage capacity. He continued by saying that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "Viksit Bharat" initiative aims



to raise India's data storage capacity from 1.5 gigabytes to 8 gigabytes by 2030. He stated that although India produces roughly 20% of the world's data, its storage infrastructure only makes up 3% of the world's capacity, highlighting the need for quick growth. According to Saha, the planned data center will also help Tripura's IT workers who are employed locally and overseas in places like Bengaluru, Mumbai, Chennai, and Hyderabad. The chief minister claimed that Tripura creates a sizable pool of educated individuals each year, making it the third most literate state in the nation behind Goa and Mizoram. He pointed out that Tripura now boasts seven universities, six engineering and medical schools, and prestigious establishments like IIIT, NIT, and the National Forensic Science University.

Neiphiu Rio, the chief minister of Nagaland, begins digitizing historic birth and death certificates

Kohima, Feb 01: Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio launched the digitization of old manual birth and death certificates on January 31, aiming to modernize the state's civil registration system and enhance public service delivery. He highlighted that this initiative will streamline service delivery, improve data management, and facilitate easier access to essential documents, thereby assisting the government in informed decision-making. The digitization aligns with directives from the Office of the Registrar General of India and follows the introduction of online registration for births and deaths in April 2022. Officials noted that this significant step towards efficiency and transparency will eliminate manual certificates and transition fully to an online registration system. This process is crucial for integrating vital records into a new, authentic, and accessible online format, with the department encouraging the public to utilize the ORGI portal to help create a comprehensive database of vital records for Nagaland. The launch event included several officials from the Department of Economics and Statistics.

Amit Shah initiates a Rs 1,715 crore campaign to establish Dibrugarh as the second administrative center of Assam

Guwahati, Feb 01: A significant step in the state government's plan to decentralize administration and improve flood management infrastructure was taken on January 30 when Union Home Minister Amit Shah inaugurated construction projects worth Rs 1,715 crore in Dibrugarh, Assam. The foundation stone for a second legislative assembly complex and MLA hostel, both of which would cost Rs 284 crore, was the focal point of the announcement. By establishing Dibrugarh as Assam's second administrative capital, the proposal hopes to improve governance in higher Assam and relieve strain on Dispur. A three-story assembly structure, a nine-story legislative hostel, an auditorium with 800 seats, and special housing for security staff are all part of the proposed complex. Senior officials, MPs, MLAs, Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal, and Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma attended the ceremony. Additionally, Shah placed the foundation stone for the second phase of a multidisciplinary sports complex, which is anticipated to cost Rs 209 crore, and inaugurated the first phase, which was constructed at



a cost of Rs 238 crore. The finished building will feature a central playground, an athletic track, and seats for up to 30,000 people. A football field, indoor stadium, swimming pool, many courts, and hostel facilities are all part of the first phase. Another key project announced was the Rs 292 crore Wildlife Health and Research Centre, aimed at improving treatment facilities for wild animals and strengthening coordination among forest officials, veterinari-

ans and researchers. The centre will house advanced laboratories, training units, a clinical block, museum and auditorium. Significantly, Shah launched a Rs 692 crore wetland restoration initiative under the National Disaster Mitigation Fund. The project will focus on reviving 15 wetlands across nine districts to improve water retention, reduce urban flooding and strengthen flood management in the Brahmaputra river basin.

Bhutan’s Queen Mother has been chosen to receive the 22nd Upendra Nath Brahma Soldier of Humanity award



Guwahati, Feb 01: Her Majesty Gyalum Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck, Queen Mother of the Kingdom of Bhutan, has been named the 22nd Upendra Nath Brahma Soldier of Humanity Award, 2025 by the Upendra Nath Brahma Trust (UNBT). Her lifetime and outstanding contributions to rural development, cultural preservation, and social welfare are recognized with this honor. The Jwhlwao Nileswar Brahma Auditorium of Bodoland University in Kokrajhar will host the award presentation ceremony on February 3, 2026. The Chief Guest will be Assam Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya, while the Special Guest will be

Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) Chief Hagrama Mohilary. Since 2004, the Soldier of Humanity Award has been given out every year in honor of Bodofa Upendra Nath Brahma, the renowned Bodo leader, social reformer, and peace architect. The award honors people who have broken down barriers of geography, religion, nationality, and identity to provide exceptional service to humanity. The honor includes a citation, a souvenir of Bodofa U. N. Brahma, and a financial award of Rs 2 lakh. Her Majesty Gyalum Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck’s compassionate vision and unwavering dedication to inclusive

development have earned her admiration on a worldwide scale. As the Tarayana Foundation’s founding president, she has spearheaded ground-breaking projects meant to improve underprivileged and isolated villages around Bhutan. Her work spans key areas such as poverty alleviation, women’s empowerment, education, healthcare, and sustainable livelihoods, with a strong emphasis on preserving indigenous culture and traditions. A renowned author and a patron of arts and culture, the Queen Mother has also played a pivotal role in nurturing Bhutan’s literary heritage and safeguarding its cultural identity

Manipur University hosted a workshop and research colloquium on AI applications

Imphal, Feb 01: On January 28, the Manipur University Department of Computer Science hosted a two-day Workshop-cum-Research Colloquium on “Advances in Computer Science and Applications,” with a focus on the theme Applications of AI in Multidisciplinary Research, at the Vice-Chancellor’s Secretariat Court Hall in Canchipur, Imphal. In advance of the India AI Impact Summit 2026, which is set to take place in New Delhi from February 19 to 20, the program is being organized as a pre-summit academic event. The workshop’s objectives are to discuss new AI opportunities and challenges, encourage innovation in AI-driven research, strengthen industry-academia cooperation, and investigate long-term AI solutions to challenging societal and infrastructure problems. Prof. N. Lokendra Singh, vice-chancellor of Manipur University, was the chief guest at the first session. Prof. Sumitra Phanjoubam, dean of the School of Mathematical and Physical Sciences, Prof. Ch. Ibohal Meitei, director of the Research and Development Cell, and Prof. M. Premjit Singh, registrar, were honored guests at the event. The head of the computer science department, Dr. Khumukcham Robindro Singh, presided over



the meeting. Speaking to the audience, Prof. N. Lokendra Singh stated that the Indian government envisions the nation’s development through a balanced focus on people, planet, and progress. He highlighted the transformative impact of artificial intelligence across sectors and stressed the importance of proper human training, governance, and oversight to ensure

responsible and beneficial use of AI technologies. He also reflected on the evolution and growth of the Department of Computer Science at Manipur University. In his presidential address, Dr. Khumukcham Robindro Singh said the workshop forms part of the preparatory academic initiatives for the India AI Impact Summit 2026, which will be the first global AI

summit hosted in the Global South. He noted that the summit is a flagship initiative of the Government of India under the IndiaAI Mission, aimed at strengthening the national AI ecosystem, promoting ethical, responsible, and inclusive AI, and positioning India as a global hub for artificial intelligence in line with the vision of a developed nation by 2047.

Tripura invests Rs 5,000 crore annually



Agartala, Feb 01: According to a top official on January 28, Tripura, which has become a “preferred investment destination” in the Northeast, has successfully landed investments worth Rs 5,000 crore across several sectors over the past year. The state got investment offers totaling Rs 19,600 crore during the Tripura Investors’ Conclave and the Raising Northeast Business Summit in 2025, according to Industries and Commerce Department Secretary Kirtan Gitte. Projects totaling Rs 5,000 crore have already been put into action out of the entire anticipated investment. Speaking at a news conference, Gitte stated that during the next few months, the state anticipates receiving investments of over Rs 9,000 crore, or almost 40% of the total proposals. When compared to the national average of 20 to 30 percent in actual investment realization, he pointed out that this conversion rate shows significant investor trust. According to the secretary, the government reviews investment ideas made at business summits and conclaves on a monthly basis to track their development into actual projects. Encouraged by the positive response from investors, the state government is considering organising another investment conclave after the budget session of the Tripura Assembly. Gitte also highlighted policy measures introduced to attract investors, including subsidies in sectors such as transport and solar energy. He said transport subsidy provisions were introduced for the first time to support industries, while incentives for setting up solar-based industries were also rolled out, areas that were not adequately highlighted in previous business summits. To further support industrial growth, the government has initiated steps to acquire additional land at the Bodhjungnagar industrial estate in West Tripura district. Gitte said the existing industrial areas are nearing capacity and the expansion is necessary to accommodate new industrial units.

Nagaland-Japan Connect 2026 creates new global job pathways

Kohima, Feb 01: On January 28, the Government of Nagaland launched Nagaland-Japan Connect 2026, a flagship initiative aimed at establishing institutional partnerships, skill development, and structured overseas employment with Japan, as part of a major push towards global workforce integration and international economic collaboration. The program was held at the Integrated Business Hub & Innovation Centre (IBHIC), Dimapur, by the Investment and Development Authority of Nagaland. With human capital development, international mobility, and people-to-people linkages at the center of the State’s economic goal, the program represents a significant turning point in Nagaland’s global engagement strategy. The event, which was attended by hundreds of aspirant youth, industry executives, academic institutions, senior officials from the Nagaland government, and representatives from Japan’s Kochi Prefecture, demonstrated the increasing alignment between Nagaland’s workforce potential and Japan’s labor market demands. I. Changsang, NCS, who chaired the program, emphasized the initiative’s long-term goals by characterizing Nagaland-Japan Connect as an organized and ongoing platform rather than a one-time interaction. According to him, the program’s objective is to establish long-lasting institutional ties with Japan while methodically preparing Naga youngsters for global jobs. In his welcome address, Abu Metha, Advisor to the Chief Minister and Chairman of IDAN, highlighted Nagaland’s evolving global outlook. Emphasising the importance of aspiration backed by effort, he urged youth to gain international exposure, acquire best practices, and return to contribute to the State’s development, assuring continued government support for such global pathways. Representing Kochi Prefecture, Japan, Kunitoshi Hojo highlighted Japan’s demographic challenges and increasing demand for skilled foreign workers. He noted that the number of Naga workers in Kochi has grown from zero to 19 in just two years, expressing confidence that many more success stories will follow as cooperation deepens.

Arunachal CM urges Panchayat leadership to be disciplined and ideologically clear

Itanagar, Feb 01: The integrity of the voter list updating process during an orientation program for newly elected zilla parishad chairs, zilla parishad members, and gram panchayat chairpersons on January 28, Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu emphasized the importance of discipline, ideological clarity, and grassroots empowerment in panchayat leadership. Khandu praised the BJP organization and its members for the party’s performance in the most recent panchayat elections, saying that the outcomes demonstrated the public’s faith in the BJP’s goal of development and administration. He said that persistent grassroots involvement and organizational discipline were responsible for the party’s expanding influence throughout the state. The chief minister congratulated the newly elected delegates and stated that the state’s panchayati raj system has been reinforced by the growing number of first-time representatives, including graduates and postgraduates. He claimed that the quality of grassroots governance and decision-making will be improved by this injection of youthful, educated leadership. According to Khandu, the orientation program’s goal was to give elected officials a thorough grasp of party doctrine, duties, behavior, and coordination with governmental institutions.



In order to further improve the panchayat representatives’ administrative capabilities, he added, the relevant department would hold separate training programs for them in the upcoming days. Highlighting the BJP’s ideological framework, the chief minister said the party functions on the principle of “nation first” and is driven by ideology rather than power. He contrasted this approach

with other political parties, asserting that the BJP prioritises service to the nation and society over individual or partisan interests. Referring to Arunachal Pradesh’s democratic journey, Khandu said the state is relatively young in democratic processes, having been formed in 1972. Despite historical neglect after Independence, he said Arunachal Pradesh has witnessed significant transformation over the past decade, particularly after the BJP assumed power under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Stressing that development is a continuous process, the chief minister said the pace and efficiency of governance determine its quality. He maintained that the difference in governance over the past ten years is clearly visible on the ground and urged panchayat representatives to play an active role in strengthening democratic institutions at the grassroots and ensuring effective implementation of development programmes.

Elephant discovered shot dead close to the border between India and Bhutan



Guwahati, Feb 01: A recent incident in Assam has raised alarms within conservation circles after a wild elephant, shot and with tusks removed, was found in the Karaibari forest area. Preliminary investigations suggest poachers are involved, potentially linked to a sophisticated network. The alleged shooting occurred between January 20 and 23. Additionally, it has been claimed that the Forest Department attempted to conceal the incident, prompting concerns over transparency in wildlife crime reporting. This case adds to past controversies involving elephant deaths in the area, leading to increased demands for an independent investigation, enhanced anti-poaching actions, and greater surveillance near the India-Bhutan border.

CoMSO wants a central investigation into the Garo community’s potential ISIS-K danger

Shillong, Feb 01: On January 28, the Confederation of Meghalaya Social Organizations (Confederation of Meghalaya Social Organizations) demanded a central-level probe into an alleged threat made against the indigenous Garo people in the name of ISIS-K, threatening them to leave their ancestral territory by 2027. CoMSO chairman Roykupar Synrem called for the “immediate involvement of central counter-terror and intelligence agencies” and a “comprehensive investigation into the origin, intent, and networks behind the threat” in a memo to Prime Minister Narendra Modi. In order “to reassure the public,” he also



advocated for increased intelligence collection and the visible presence of security personnel in high-risk areas. Synrem called for zero tolerance for anyone “aiding, abetting, or shielding extremist activities” and demanded the “swift arrest and prosecution

of all individuals involved under relevant anti-terror and national security laws.” The statement also called for monitoring and destroying extremist propaganda networks, protecting indigenous land and demographic integrity, and reviewing border security measures.

The invocation of a globally recognized terrorist group like ISIS-K “cannot be treated lightly under any circumstance,” according to Synrem, who described the statement as a direct threat to indigenous rights, communal harmony, and internal security. “The Garo people will not vacate their land — in 2027 or at any time,” he said, asserting that Garo Hills is integral to Meghalaya and inseparable from India. He added that the organisation expects “immediate, firm, and visible action in the interest of national security, constitutional values, and the protection of indigenous peoples”.

Tripura starts a paddy procurement campaign, and under the BJP administration, MSP would increase annually: Minister

Agartala, Feb 01: Food, Civil Supplies, and Consumer Affairs Minister Sushanta Chowdhury announced that as long as the BJP-led administration is in power, paddy procurement from farmers will continue throughout the state and the Minimum Support Price will be raised yearly. During the opening of the paddy procurement drive in Dhammanagar, North Tripura district, the minister said these things. According to Chowdhury, the state government has officially started the process with the North District and has once again chosen to purchase paddy from farmers at the Minimum Support Price. He said that the current season will see the acquisition of around 18,000 metric tonnes of paddy, which will be done in each of the state’s eight districts. The minister informed that the MSP for paddy has been fixed at Rs 23.69 per kg for this procurement season. He added that the

Tripura Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Minister Sushanta Chowdhury on January 28 said paddy procurement from farmers will continue across the state and the Minimum Support Price will be increased annually as long as the BJP-led government remains in power.

process will be conducted through 50 paddy procurement centres across Tripura and that the drive was inaugurated in the presence of officials and stakeholders concerned with its implementation. Expressing gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chief Minister Dr Manik Saha and Agriculture Minister Ratan Lal Nath, Chowdhury said their support helped resolve administrative issues related to procurement. He said the state government is continuously working for public welfare and that strength-



ening the economic condition of farmers remains a priority, which is why the procurement process is being continued. Highlighting the rise in MSP since the BJP-led government

came to power in 2018–19, Chowdhury said the MSP for paddy at that time was Rs 17.50 per kg, which has now increased to Rs 23.69 per kg.

Notice from the Supreme Court regarding protests directed at a High Court judge

Deepam row

New Delhi, Feb 01: In response to Justice GR Swaminathan of the Madras High Court’s orders regarding the lighting of the Karthigai Deepam at the Thiruparankundram hill shrine in Madurai, protesters allegedly made defamatory and inflammatory remarks. The Supreme Court on Wednesday issued notice on a public interest litigation (PIL) seeking action against protesters. In order to get their opinions on the plea, a bench made up of Justices Aravind Kumar and PB Varale sent notices to the Chief Secretary of Tamil Nadu, the Home Secretary, the Director General of Police, and the Commissioner of Police, Chennai. Advocate GS Mani, vice-president of the Tamil Nadu BJP legal cell, filed the PIL, claiming that following Justice Swaminathan’s rulings, demonstrations were held during which the judge was accused of bias and other personal, caste, and religious offenses. In order to maintain judicial independence,



the petition asks the state authorities to start criminal procedures against the perpetrators of what it describes as “defamatory and hate-driven attacks” on a sitting constitutional court judge. It further claims that despite the petitioner’s claims, the police did nothing. Justice Swaminathan’s December 1 order allowing the lighting of the traditional Karthigai Deepam on the Deepa

Thoon atop the Thiruparankundram hill, where the Subramaniya Swamy Temple is situated, is the cause of the protests.

The hill is regarded as a sacred site by both Hindu and Muslim communities, with a historic dargah situated nearby, making religious practices on the hill a long-standing sensitive issue. In his ruling, the judge held that the

Deepa Thoon was historically linked to the temple ritual and that lighting the lamp did not infringe upon the religious rights of any other community. After the state expressed difficulty in implementing the order, Justice Swaminathan issued a subsequent direction allowing devotees to light the lamp with security cover provided by the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF). The orders triggered protests and political backlash, with the DMK and its allies accusing the judge of disturbing communal harmony.

Impeachment notices have since been moved against Justice Swaminathan in Parliament. The Supreme Court, however, is not examining the merits of the temple-related order at this stage. The present proceedings are limited to the plea seeking action against alleged defamatory protests targeting the judge. The matter is expected to be heard next after the state files its response.

Himanta Biswa Sarma pushes women-led growth in Demow



Guwahati, Feb 01: On Wednesday, January 28, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma addressed a sizable public gathering in the Demow Assembly constituency of Sivasagar district, revealing welfare benefits, announcing new programs, and highlighting significant infrastructure advancements in the area, intensifying the Assam government’s push for women-led economic empowerment and grassroots development. At a public gathering at the Borbeel playground in Bakchu Kataki village under Khelua Gaon Panchayat, the Chief Minister gave out Rs 10,000 checks as part of the first phase of the Mukhyamantri Mahila Udyamita Scheme, a flagship program designed to encourage women entrepreneurs. The program

is being carried out under the National Urban Livelihood Mission (NULM) and the State Rural Livelihood Mission (SRLM). Dr. Sarma also used digital technology to lay the foundation stones for four development projects in Dimow at the event, highlighting the government’s emphasis on expediting the delivery of public services and infrastructure. Demow MLA Sushanta Borgohain, Sivasagar Guardian Minister Dr. Ranaj Pegu, former MP Tapan Gogoi, the Sivasagar Deputy Commissioner, and high-ranking district officials attended the Chief Minister. The audience responded favorably to CM Sarma’s casual interactions with female attendees during his speech, asking about their arrival to the venue and making light of their sleep the night

before. He stated that the Mukhyamantri Mahila Udyamita Scheme is the only program in the nation that is only focused on empowering women through business and that outreach sessions under the program have already been finished in 95 of. He described the Mukhyamantri Mahila Udyamita Scheme as the only initiative in the country exclusively dedicated to empowering women through entrepreneurship, adding that outreach meetings under the scheme have already been completed in 95 of the state’s 126 Assembly constituencies. Highlighting Dimow’s performance, the Chief Minister said self-help groups in the constituency are among the most active in the state, and women beneficiaries will collectively receive ₹31 crore in government assistance. “While women are often assured 30 or 33 per cent reservation, entrepreneurship ensures 100 per cent participation and leadership by women,” he said. CM Sarma asserted that the government’s welfare initiatives are not election-driven, but expressed confidence that the people of Demow would once again repose faith in Sushanta Borgohain in the upcoming Assembly elections.

The Arunachal Frontier Tribal Front initiates a campaign

Guwahati, Feb 01: A fresh debate on employment rights in Arunachal Pradesh has emerged, initiated by the Arunachal Frontier Tribal Front (AFTF), which is advocating for the complete elimination of the 80:20 job reservation ratio in government recruitment. The AFTF’s campaign kicked off with an Awareness-cum-Signature Campaign at the Tennis Court of Indira Gandhi Park in Itanagar, led by chairman Tadak Nalo.

This initiative aims to garner public support for a revision of the current recruitment policy that allocates 80% of government jobs to Arunachal Pradesh Scheduled Tribes (APST) and 20% to non-tribal applicants. Nalo argued that this existing framework negatively affects the indigenous youth, exacerbating the state’s high unemployment rates. The AFTF is pushing for a proposal that would enforce 100% job reservation for indigenous residents, stipulating that ap-



plicants must possess Scheduled Tribe (ST) status and a Permanent Resident Certificate (PRC) for positions administered by the Arunachal Pradesh Public Service Commission (APPSC) and the Arunachal Pradesh Staff Selection Board (APSSB). Furthermore, AFTF leaders reference the recruitment policies of neighboring Northeastern states that prioritize local residents for governmental job opportunities. They assert that Arunachal Pradesh, being predominantly tribal, should adopt a similar strategy to preserve its demographic uniqueness and enhance employment op-

portunities for its indigenous populace.

This campaign represents the initial phase of the AFTF’s broader initiative, known as the “Pan Arunachal Movement”, which aims to champion the rights, identity, and future of the state’s native population. Ebo Mili, a noted anti-dam activist, lent support to the AFTF’s objectives yet emphasized that the movement does not seek to exclude outside individuals. He stated, “We are not against anyone. But sons of the soil must come first,” drawing comparisons to employment practices in states like Nagaland, Mizoram, and Manipur.

Wildfire in Nagaland’s Dzukou Valley

Kohima, Feb 01: More than thirty hikers had to be evacuated due to a wildfire in the southern portion of Dzukou Valley in Nagaland’s Kohima district, which prompted authorities to halt all trekking operations in the region. The hikers were successfully rescued from the high-altitude valley after being stranded due to the fire, according to officials. To prevent the fire from spreading, the Southern Angami Youth Organization (SAYO) and the district administration together initiated containment measures. Although officials were only informed on Tuesday, the Kohima District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) stated that the fire is thought to have started on Monday. The wildfire’s actual origin and cause are still unknown. Deputy Commissioner B Henok Buchem has constituted a team for reconnaissance and rescue



operations. “All available resources shall be mobilised to contain the further spread of the fire,” he said, adding that more personnel would be deployed if needed. A DDMA official said an emergency meeting was scheduled on Wednesday afternoon to decide on further steps. SAYO president Zaisitsole Beio said the organisation was alerted on Monday afternoon after volunteers shared videos and photographs from the site. He said priority was given to evacuating trekkers and enforcing precautionary measures. Trekking has been temporarily suspended from both the Jakhama and Viswema entry points to Dzukou Valley.

Arunachal Congress raises alarm over “dilution” of MGNREGA

Itanagar, Feb 01: The Arunachal Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) has criticized the Union government’s weakening of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), warning that recent policy changes threaten tribal and rural communities in Arunachal Pradesh.

As part of their “MGNREGA Bachao Sangram” outreach on January 18-19, the APCC interacted with local leaders and stakeholders, highlighting MGNREGA’s role in providing employment and supporting rural economic stability. The APCC is concerned about the scheme’s dilution, including changes that reduce work periods, diminish local planning powers, and introduce intrusive



surveillance measures. They argue these actions undermine federalism and threaten livelihoods, calling for the restoration of MGNREGA’s original provisions and rigorous local governance. APCC president Bosiram Siram emphasized that their efforts aim to defend socio-economic security and the dignity of rural India, pledging to continue their advocacy “from villages to Parliament.”

Dhubri in Assam erupts as the AIUDF objects to “fake notices”

Dhubri, Feb 01: A recent incident in Assam has raised alarm within conservation circles following the discovery of a wild elephant carcass with bullet wounds in the Karaibari forest area, situated in the Runikhata Range of Chirang district, near the India-Bhutan border. This event has revitalized serious concerns regarding poaching and the efficiency of wildlife protection efforts in the region, known for its ecological sensitivity. Preliminary investigations suggest that the elephant was shot by poachers who subsequently removed its tusks using a mechanized saw, indicating the likely involvement of an organized poaching group well-equipped for such crimes. Forest officials believe the killing and tusk removal occurred between January 20 and January 23. Compounding the severity of this case are allegations that the Forest Department attempted to conceal the incident, delaying communication with the media. This has sparked discussions about the need for transparency and account-



ability in reporting wildlife crimes. Furthermore, this case has rekindled memories of previous controversies surrounding the forests of the Runikhata Range, particularly since these areas were designated as the new Raimona National Park. There have been numerous past accusations related to the poisoning and killing of wild elephants, which have received substantiated criticism from conservationists and wildlife activists. In light of the recovered elephant carcass, there is increasing pressure for an independent investigation, implementation of robust anti-poaching strategies, and enhanced surveillance along the India-Bhutan border to deter wildlife crimes in one of Assam’s most vulnerable ecosystems.

Arunachal cabinet clears hydropower incentives

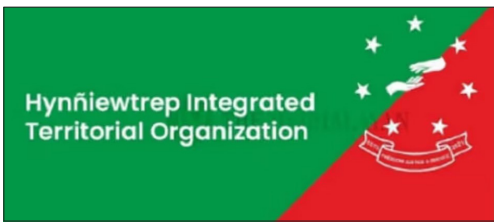
Itanagar, Feb 01: The Arunachal Pradesh Cabinet approved a series of decisions on January 31 aimed at enhancing hydropower development, recruitment reforms, and overall governance. Chaired by Chief Minister Pema Khandu, the meeting focused on removing administrative hurdles and fostering economic growth. Key decisions included replacing an ordinance with a bill for the appointment of a retired officer as chairperson of the Arunachal Pradesh Staff Selection Board (APSSB) to improve recruitment processes. The cabinet sanctioned GST reimbursement for major hydropower projects with significant local employment reservations and benefits for affected families. Further educational initiatives included creating special teaching posts and streamlining information commission

rules. The introduction of an Electronic Inner Line Permit (e-ILP) system and amendments to recruitment rules across various departments were also approved to enhance institutional capacity. In a significant governance reform, the cabinet approved the Arunachal Pradesh Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2026, decriminalising minor offences under select state laws and replacing imprisonment with rationalised monetary penalties, aimed at improving ease of doing business and reducing regulatory burden. The decisions underscore the state government’s focus on administrative reforms, economic expansion and inclusive development, with hydropower and transparent governance emerging as key pillars of Arunachal Pradesh’s growth strategy.

A pressure group in Meghalaya asks the state government for the status of the 1948 Khasi accord

Shillong, Feb 01: Regarding the status of official correspondence pertaining to the implementation of the Instrument of Agreement and the Annexed Agreement signed by the Government of India and the Khasi States on August 17, 1948, the Hynniewtrep Integrated Territorial Organization (HITO) has requested clarification from the Meghalaya government. The organization requested information about the state government’s response, if

any, to a November 27, 2014, Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) communication in a letter dated January 28, 2026, written to Chief Secretary Shakil Ahamed, IAS. The MHA letter came after several complaints about the agreements governing the Khasi States’ political and constitutional status not being implemented. The issue, according to HITO, is fundamental to the “national solemn commitments” that were made at the time of accession. It con-



tends that the failure to fulfill these commitments has put traditional Khasi institutions in a constitutional limbo for many years. The organization stated that persistent representations by Khasi chiefs and organizations, such as the Federation of Khasi States under Bah

John F. Kharshiing and the Grand Council of Chiefs of Meghalaya, had previously prompted interventions by constitutional authorities, citing studies conducted by its education and research wings. Among these were letters sent in 2014 to the Union home ministry by the

National Commission for Scheduled Tribes, which suggested that the Annexed Agreement and the Instrument of Agreement be completed and its mandate inserted in the Constitution. The letter also cited a National Human Rights Commission communication from June 16, 2012, which stated: “The Commission has examined the petition carefully and we find that the matter within the Legislative competence of Parliament. The petitioner

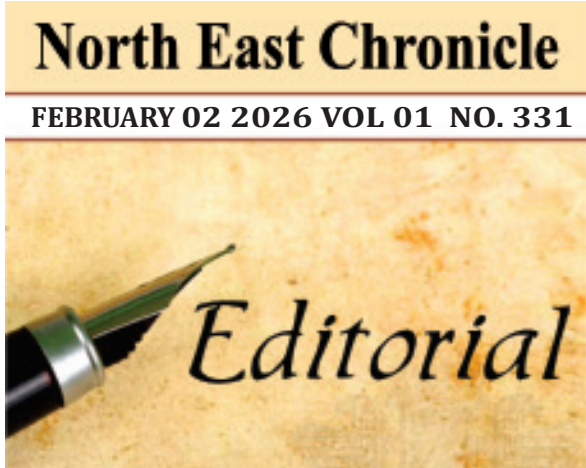
may approach the Government for redressal of their grievance.” The organisation questioned why stakeholders such as Dorbar Shnong, Dorbar Kur, Dorbar Raid and Dorbar Hima are not directly represented in the autonomous district councils, despite these bodies forming the backbone of traditional governance. It also criticised what it described as excessive party political influence in institutions meant to function outside party lines.

Supreme Court consents to hear a suit contesting the caste bias UGC equity norms

New Delhi, Feb 01: A plea for an urgent listing of petitions contesting the recently announced Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions Regulations, 2026 on the grounds that it has adopted a non-inclusionary definition of caste-based discrimination and excludes specific categories from institutional protection was granted by the Supreme Court on Wednesday.

A lawyer’s request for an expedited hearing of the plea was noted by the bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi. The attorney representing one of the petitioners stated, “There is a possibility of discrimination against general class students.” “We are aware of the situation. Ensure that flaws are fixed. During the morning mentioning time, CJ Kant stated, “We will list it.” Two PILs have been filed in the Supreme Court challenging the UGC regulations for defining caste-based bias

strictly as discrimination against members of the SCs, STs and OBCs. They said that by limiting the scope of “caste-based discrimination” only to SC, ST and OBC categories, the UGC had effectively denied institutional protection and grievance redress to individuals belonging to the “general” or non-reserved categories who may also face harassment or bias based on their caste identity. Students have been protesting in different parts of the country seeking either the withdrawal of the legislation or the inclusion of all other castes in the proposed mechanism. The separate petitions filed by advocate Vineet Jindal and a PhD scholar from Banaras Hindu University, Mritunjay Tiwari, had sought directions to the Centre and the UGC to desist from implementing the regulations as they violate Articles 14 (right to equality), 15 (non-discrimination) and 21 (life and personal liberty) guaranteed by the Constitution.



Pakistan army chief Munir’s existential threat

Pakistan Army Chief Syed Asim Munir has been promoted to field marshal following Pakistan’s defeat in the recent conflict with India. His deep-seated hostility towards India intensified post-Operation Sindoor, which has been linked to an increase in terrorist activities against Indian civilians, including a deadly attack in Pahalgam. Munir’s provocative speeches, notably the “jugular vein” address, reflect a commitment to jihadist rhetoric and threats against India, suggesting that Pakistan would respond aggressively to any future hostilities. Munir’s past reliance on U.S. military aid, compounded by damaged legacy equipment and ongoing conflicts, adds to the complexity of Pakistan’s position in a shifting global power dynamic.

How Munir’s delusions risk Pakistan’s future

Asim Munir, the chief field marshal of the Pakistan Army, is still misleading Pakistan about the outcomes of India’s Operation Sindoor, which was carried out in May against terrorist organizations in Pakistan and subsequently its military installations. His speech at the October 18 passing out ceremonial at the Pakistan Military Academy in Kakul demonstrated this once more. Munir stated, “Our collective success has reenergised and strengthened the proud and illustrious memories of our earlier successes,” according to Radio Pakistan. He said that Pakistan had once again triumphed over a “treacherous” foe who was full of hubris and hyperbole about its erroneous imperial ambitions, as well as strategic blindness and naivety. It is noteworthy that Munir does not catalogue the Pakistan Army’s “earlier successes”. That is simply because, in no instance of India-Pakistan conflict, has Pakistan succeeded in gaining any territorial or operational advantage against India. Consider: In 1947-48 and 1965, Pakistan wanted to gain full control of Jammu and Kashmir but it could not. Both these military operations were begun by it. In 1971, Pakistan finally began the war with the bombing of Indian airbases. By the time hostilities concluded, 93,000 of its soldiers had surrendered to the Indian Army and East Pakistan had seceded to become Bangladesh. In 1984, it had hoped to gain the Salto Range and the Siachen Glacier.

Timely action by the Indian forces prevented that, and the Indian Army has held the Salto heights ever since. Pakistan’s 1999 Kargil gambit ended in complete humiliation. Finally, it had hoped, as it began the present continuing round of terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir in 1990, that the state would achieve ‘azadi’ soon. That has simply not happened. In these past three and a half decades, Pakistan has suffered terribly economically; its society has become increasingly imbued with extremist Islamic theologies, and its polity has remained unstable. The only institution that has continued to prosper has been the Pakistan Army. Hence, the only tenable explanation for Munir’s use of “earlier successes” can relate to the Pakistan Army, which has used every round of armed hostility to enhance its own power and capture more state resources at the expense of the people. It has been able to do so because it has indoctrinated the Pakistani people with two ideas: (i) India is a permanent enemy that is out to undo Pakistan, and (ii) only the Pakistan Army can keep such an enemy at bay; hence, the people have to endure sacrifices for maintaining the army as a viable institution and for the comfort and economic and commercial well-being of the soldiery, especially its senior officer class.

In respect of Operation Sindoor, Asim Munir has sought to perpetuate the belief that Pakistan got the better of India. This is completely wrong. The record shows that the Indian Air Force (IAF) was successful in targeting terrorist bases deep in Pakistan as well as those in Pakistanoccupied Kashmir (PoK) on May 7. These included Bahawalpur, Muridke, and Muzaffarabad. By the time India agreed to the cessation of hostilities on May 10, the IAF had demonstrated its ability to strike at all Pakistani airbases throughout the country by passing or destroying its air defences in the process. This showed that it had virtually gained mastery over Pakistani airspace.

Whatever Munir may say about Pakistan’s success against some Indian aerial platforms—and the Indian Chief of Defence Staff has accepted that there were some initial losses—he cannot deny the events of May 10. India’s overall success in Operation Sindoor was recalled by its Director General of Military Operations (DGMO), Lt Gen Rajiv Ghai, in a media briefing on October 14. He said, inter alia, “Eighty-eight hours is what it took for the enemy to come and ask for a cessation of hostilities... For that call to be made by my counterpart then. We achieved our political and military aims. We hit nine targets across the breadth of Pakistan. This is a maturing of India’s doctrine beyond the binaries of peace and war.

This was a fusion of military precision and diplomatic agility, informational superiority and economic leverage. I’m speaking of the Indus Water Treaty of 1960 being put into abeyance the moment the terror attack was perpetrated at Pahalgam... Our military actions were targeted, controlled, non-escalatory, and we openly acknowledged them to maintain our credibility. We also made sure that we put into place critical and significant conventional measures to apply pressure. We carried out some significant and telling forward deployment, extending our punitive reach to unprecedented levels.” In its response to Lt Gen Ghai’s briefing, Pakistan’s Inter-Services Public Relations issued a press release on October 15. It was, as can be expected, full of anti-Indian invective but did not cover any of the points made by Lt Gen Ghai. The ISPR is generally professional, but this time around it clearly could not refute the factual statements made by the Indian DGMO. This is significant, for it has to be linked to a major point made by Munir at Kakul. Radio Pakistan reported that point thus: “Asim Munir, however, advised and cautioned the Indian military leadership that there is no space for war in a nuclearised environment. He said India should settle the core issues with Pakistan as per international norms on the basis of equality and mutual respect.”

Munir’s remark is based on Pakistan’s traditional view that India should not respond militarily to any terrorist attack undertaken by the Pakistani Army through its terrorist proxies. This has been its stand since both countries undertook nuclear tests in 1998. What it has always overlooked, as this writer has sometimes pointed out in his writings, is that no other nuclear state has used terrorism against another state with nuclear weapons. Pakistan has been the only exception. In doing so, it has been irresponsible. Pakistan has always wanted India to absorb its terrorist attacks. It was the Modi government that decided, after the Uri terrorist attack of 2016, to use kinetic force whenever an attack became unacceptable. That occurred when one crossed a red line and roused public sentiment to great heights. India used kinetic force after the Pulwama and the Pahalgam attacks. Naturally, the major powers get deeply concerned when armed hostilities take place between India and Pakistan, and their attempt is to seek to end them quickly. What the great powers have to do is to impress upon Pakistan that the so-called “core issue” can only be settled with Pakistan vacating Indian territory in the UTs of J&K and Ladakh. Till then, Pakistan should adhere to the Simla Agreement and the Lahore Declaration.

Increasing poverty in the UK: a horrific Tory legacy has thrown millions adrift

The most recent assessment on poverty in the UK, released this week by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, should be viewed primarily as a critique of all Conservative governments from 2010 to 2024. According to the JRF, there was absolutely no improvement in the overall levels of relative suffering over nearly 15 years of Tory control. Perhaps not surprising. Ministers deliberately attempted to make life more difficult rather than easier for many of the poorest people by implementing extensive, politically motivated welfare cuts. According to the most recent data-set available, around one in five people lived in relative poverty in 2023–2024, which is defined as earning less than 60% of the median income. This is a dismal legacy of that method. In 2022, almost 3.8 million people lived in poverty. According to Peter Matejic, principal analyst at the JRF, “poverty in the

UK is still not just widespread, it is deeper and more damaging than at any point in the last 30 years.”-George Osborne, the chief Tory austerity, and his followers have a lot to answer for. However, Mr. Matejic’s cautionary remark also clearly relates to the political discussions of today. Much of the Westminster bubble appears to be in thrall to the notion that Britain’s welfare budget must be cut drastically in the age of Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump, in order that the nation’s resources might be devoted towards security spending. As this report starkly underlines, millions of the poorest people in the country – many of them in work – would not be in any position to weather such a storm. They are already being forced to go without food, deep in debt and unable to pay their bills. The moral bankruptcy of “guns versus butter” arguments will not stop the likes of Kemi Badenoch and Nigel Farage

making them, supplemented by bogus talk of fostering “personal responsibility”.

But having belatedly scrapped the two-child benefit cap, it ought to become the Labour government’s vocation to make a different socioeconomic case between now and the next election. After being plunged into penury by spiralling food, energy and housing costs, a substantial section of the population is unable to do more than live from day to day. Subsistence-level basic benefits and prolonged wage stagnation have compounded the crisis. A shaming number of families are routinely hungry, tired, stressed and isolated, and in no position to make a bigger contribution to the rest of society. This is a scandal, of course. But in solely economic terms, the doom loop of despair is also a colossal waste of available human capital. Such squandered potential will not be accessed through wel-



fare cuts that circumscribe impoverished lives even further. Nor will rearming at the expense of the least well-off do anything for social cohesion at a time when far-right forces are successfully exploiting a crisis of faith in politics. From the great crash of 2008 to the cost of living

crisis triggered by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, Britain’s economy stagnated and its poorest citizens got even poorer. As the JRF points out, a more adequately resourced welfare state would act as a catalyst for growth by restoring economic agency to those who need it most

Why Deoband should be kept away from India-Taliban engagement

While visiting India last week, Afghanistan’s Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi held a friendly meeting with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar. Due to the Taliban’s close relations to Pakistan, New Delhi was never able to consider contacting them. Indians were worried about the effects of the Taliban’s return after Americans departed Afghanistan, particularly considering its strong connections to terror organizations focused on Kashmir. Contrary to popular belief, however, Pakistan and the Taliban soon began vying for each other’s lives. The Taliban’s current outreach to New Delhi serves as more evidence that in geopolitics, there are only enduring interests rather than enduring allies or adversaries. However, this emerging engagement with the Taliban may face challenges ahead due to underlying ideological differences. During the recent visit, these fundamental divergences also became apparent; however, it seems that geopolitical analysts either failed to notice them or chose to ignore them. Muttaqi’s visit to the Deoband seminary in Saharanpur made it am-

ply clear where the Taliban stand in the ideological realm. This position has historically been detrimental to India’s security interests and is likely to be more so in the future. Several geopolitical experts are enthusiastic about Muttaqi’s visit to the Deoband seminary.

In examining the Deoband movement, it is positioned as a vital platform for India to influence the Taliban, particularly in the context of its relationship with Pakistan. Proponents claim that Deoband has a history of peaceful coexistence and intellectual depth; however, such assertions overlook the movement’s foundational ideology and its consequential implications in global Islamism. Established in 1866 by Maulana Mohammad Qasim Nanautwi and Abdul Rashid Gangohi, the Deoband movement was a response to Western influences and an attempt to revitalize traditional Islamic knowledge, grounded in the Hanafi school of jurisprudence. The movement’s ideology finds its roots in the teachings of Shah Waliullah, a Sufi saint who criticized Islamic practices perceived

as corrupt and emphasized Islamic purity and orthodoxy. Consequently, the Deoband movement has starkly opposed the Bareilvi school of thought, which is representative of Sufi traditions in India, advocating for exclusion from Hindu practices and a stricter adherence to Islamic practices.

This ideology aligns with Wahhabism and has significantly influenced the religious landscape in South Asia, particularly in Pakistan, where Deobandi seminaries have led to the decline of Sufi Islam and the rise of jihadi extremism. Research indicates a direct correlation between the proliferation of Deobandi seminaries in Pakistan post-1947 and the escalation of Jihadi extremism. Deobandi groups have played pivotal roles in the Islamization of Pakistan, exemplified by their involvement in anti-Ahmadi riots and garnering state support during Zia-ul-Haq’s regime, which was compounded by financial backing from the Arab world. Prominent terrorist organizations like Jaish-e-Mohammad and Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan subscribe to

Deobandi ideology, contributing to widespread violence against various communities, including Shias, Ahmadiyas, and Hindus. The Tablighi Jamaat, a prominent Deobandi offshoot, has been scrutinized for its proselytization activities and links to terrorism. Various intelligence assessments have associated Tablighi Jamaat with radicalization, indicating that many extremists across the globe have been connected to its networks. In regions like Jammu & Kashmir, Deobandi institutions are emerging and are significantly radicalizing the youth. Despite claims from Indian Deobandi scholars distancing themselves from their Pakistani counterparts and denouncing terrorism, the fundamentalist and orthodox beliefs remain consistent across both. High-profile interactions, such as those involving Taliban leaders returning to Deoband, underscore the seminary’s enduring influence on jihadist organizations. This relationship poses a risk of inspiring Indian Muslim youth to adopt Taliban-like ideologies, potentially destabilizing India’s social fabric amid an already polarized society.

Trump’s threats against Iran: military action won’t alleviate state violence against civilians

It is nearly impossible to comprehend the savagery of Iran’s suppression of demonstrators. It is evident that a regime never hesitant to shed the blood of its citizens has done so with unprecedented zeal, sensing an unprecedented threat from unrest throughout the nation that challenges not only its policies but also its very existence, despite the authorities cutting off communications and destroying evidence. Human rights organizations have counted many more deaths than the 3,000 that officials have claimed, and a network of medical experts has calculated that 30,000 may have perished. Doctors who assisted the injured are being arrested by security officers, who also shot and killed victims as they fled a fire. Alongside the fury at this vengeful regime is anger at another leader: Donald Trump, who urged Iranians to keep protesting and promised them that “help is on its way” – then played down the slaughter. Now the US president has warned via social media that “a massive Armada is heading to Iran”, and that “the next attack will be far worse” than Operation Midnight Hammer, the US strike on nuclear sites last summer. Iran’s muted response, and its weakening over the last year, has emboldened him, as has his seizure of Venezuela’s Nicolás Maduro, referenced in his post. But protesters were forgotten: instead his demand was “NO NUCLEAR WEAPONS”. Mr Trump is notoriously unpredictable: in his first term, he called off an attack on Iran 10 minutes before it happened. But his newfound interventionism



has wrenched the spotlight from the Epstein files, and Iran threats distract from Immigration and Customs Enforcement brutality at home and his climbdown over Greenland. Iran is a far more popular target than Denmark among his base. Many Iran analysts now see a “zombie state” – unable to ensure even a basic standard of living or to defend its sovereignty; apparently unable to renew itself; but as tyrannical as it is frail. However, military intervention could come at huge human cost and would not bring democracy – even if that were Mr Trump’s aim. More likely would be the emergence of a strongman, perhaps from the Revolutionary Guard, or regime

collapse and chaos. If he were serious about non-proliferation, the best hope – albeit now harder than ever – would be to seek a revised version of the JCPOA deal which he did the most to destroy. Israel sees a weakened, chaotic Iran as in its interests. Turkey, Saudi Arabia and others are trying to hold the US back because they fear a strengthened Israel, a surge in migration and instability in a region attempting to sell itself as a dependable investment. As weakened as it is, a cornered regime could still do damage – particularly in the strait of Hormuz, a critical artery for global trade – if it believes that inaction would only make it look an easier target. Economic concerns seem

more likely to shift Mr Trump than humanitarian considerations. The EU on Thursday designated the Revolutionary Guard as a terrorist entity – a largely symbolic measure given the extent of existing sanctions. Governments can and should press for a moratorium on executions, support attempts to reconnect Iranians with the internet, and fund NGOs documenting abuses. In the longer term they should consider how to support civil society and help to strengthen it. They should also provide safe passage to activists whose lives are in danger. Military intervention is not the answer – but neither is indifference to the suffering of Iranian civilians.

SaaS major Zoho launches ERP platform

Tap SME market in India

New Delhi: In order to address the sizable and neglected market among India’s small and medium-sized firms (SMEs), SaaS giant Zoho has introduced a new enterprise resource planning (ERP) platform. According to the Chennai-based company, ERP is still one of the most important software systems for businesses today. However, adoption among smaller Indian businesses has been hampered by high costs, lengthy installation cycles, and a strong reliance on consultants. Sivaramkrishnan Iswaran, CEO of Zoho Payment Technologies and global head of finance and operations BU at Zoho, feels that when organisations outgrow their current systems, there are no simple solutions and they must invest a significant amount of money to go to the next logical step. “One of the aspects is affordability, but even if they are able to invest, there are issues. Most of the ERP systems that are available in the market are heavily consultant dependent. Small businesses don’t have the luxury of paying for expensive consultants, long rollouts, or complex deployments. There is a huge gap in the market, and that is what we are trying to solve,” Iswaran said in an interview to Business Standard. Zoho will roll out the product first in India, where it sees a large opportunity driven by the rapid formalisation and digitisation of businesses as well as a growing push to adopt domestically-built software. It will eventually be taken to global markets. Iswaran estimates the addressable opportunity in India alone runs into hundreds of millions of dollars. Interest is also coming



from government departments and public sector units that are increasingly evaluating Indian alternatives to global software products. While Zoho already has tens of thousands of customers using its accounting, inventory, and operations software, the new ERP brings these modules together into a single, integrated product. Customers that were earlier using individual applications will now be offered a full ERP suite, with the ability to expand functionality as their businesses scale. Migration from existing ERP systems will be phased rather than abrupt. Companies can run Zoho modules alongside their current platforms and gradually shift workloads over time. “In many cases, ERP systems will coexist initially, and migration will happen over a period. Ease of adoption has always been our focus,” the executive said. The ERP solution from Zoho is yet another example of how talent in rural India can also create globally competitive products. “ERP is the culmination of the last 17-18 years of effort that we have put into creating a suite of products,” he added. About the pricing, Iswaran said, “The focus is on increasing the market share and hence it will be affordable. Historically too, Zoho’s products are always better than rivals, for instance, Zoho Books.” Zoho has embedded AI across automation, reporting, audits, workflow creation, and anomaly detection. Users will be able to generate invoices, extract insights from financial reports, set up workflows through prompts, and flag irregularities without needing specialist support.

WeWork India Q3FY26 results:

Net profit of Rs. 16.78 crore



New Delhi: Realty company WeWork India announced a consolidated net profit of Rs 16.78 crore for the third quarter of this fiscal year, attributed to increased sales. The company had posted a net loss of Rs 83.11 crore in the year-ago period. Total income rose to Rs 643.81 crore in the October-December period of this fiscal from Rs 508.37 crore in the corresponding period of the preceding year, according to a regulatory filing. During the first nine months of this fiscal, the company’s net profit fell to Rs 9.04 crore from Rs 91.45 crore in the year-ago period. Total income rose to Rs 1,775.07 crore during April-December period of this fiscal from Rs 1,469.13 crore in the corresponding period of the preceding year. Established in 2017, WeWork India has presence across 8 cities --

Chennai, New Delhi, Gurugram, Noida, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Pune, and Hyderabad. The company has 73 operational centres, covering 8.2 million square feet area. Karan Virwani, Managing Director & CEO of WeWork India, said the company’s focus remains on profitable growth, technology-led differentiation, and sustainable portfolio expansion. “With a robust supply pipeline, diversified enterprise client base, and improving unit economics, WeWork India is well-positioned to sustain growth momentum and continue delivering long-term value to its stakeholders,” he added. During the 2024-25 fiscal, the company posted a net profit of Rs 128.18 crore on a revenue of Rs 2,024 crore. Bengaluru-based real estate firm Embassy Group is the promoter of WeWork India, which got listed on the stock exchanges last year after a successful launch of its Initial Public Offering (IPO).

DLF yet to recognise over Rs. 55,000 crore revenue



Mumbai: Realty major DLF Ltd is yet to recognise over Rs 55,000 crore revenue in its financial accounts from the total sales bookings done till December quarter of this fiscal. In its latest investors presentation, DLF Ltd said that the company has sold properties, primarily housing worth Rs 79,885 crore across its existing projects. Till December quarter of this fiscal, the company has recognised revenue of Rs 24,460 crore. The balance revenue to be recognised from sales booked stood at Rs 55,425 crore, the presentation said. DLF is developing residential projects mainly in Delhi-NCR, Mumbai, Tri-city (Chandigarh). The revenue gets recognised after the completion of construction of projects or on the basis of percentage of completion method. DLF, the country’s largest realty firm in terms of market capitalisation, reported a 16 per cent decline in sales bookings to Rs 16,176 crore in the first nine months of this fiscal on lesser new homes supply. DLF sold properties worth Rs 19,187 crore in the year-ago period. DLF has given guidance of achieving sales bookings of Rs 20,000-22,000 crore during this fiscal. During 2024-25 financial year, DLF Ltd achieved record sales bookings of Rs 21,223 crore mainly on the back of successful launch of its ultra-luxury housing project ‘Dahlia’s on Golf Course Road, Gurugram..

IFB Industries shares plunge over 17% post Q3 results

Mumbai: IFB Industries’ share price plunged over 17 per cent in Tuesday’s session to the lowest level since March, 2025 as the net profit declined in the third quarter of the current financial year (Q3FY26). The scrip fell as much as 17.69 per cent to the low of ₹112.20 on the National Stock Exchange (NSE). IFB Industries saw a trade of 0.68 million shares on the NSE so far. As of 2:50 PM, IFB Industries’ share price was trading 16.78 per cent down at ₹1,127.60, as against a 0.24 per cent advance in the Nifty 50 index. The market capitalisation of the company was at ₹4,573.6 crore. IFB Industries’ share price slumped as the company reported that its consolidated net profit declined 22.6 per cent Year-on-Year (Y-o-Y) to ₹24.5 crore in Q3FY2 from ₹34.4 crore in the same quarter of the previous financial year. IFB Industries incurred an exceptional loss of ₹13.38 crore during the third quarter and the nine months ended in December, 2025 due to the changes in the new labour code, the company said. Meanwhile, the total revenue from the operation advanced 12 per cent on year to ₹1,375.13 crore in the third quarter from ₹1,227.95 crore in the same quarter a year ago, according to an exchange filing. The board of IFB Industries approved the appointment of Sreedevi Pillai as an independent director for a second term, with effect from January 28. The board of directors also confirmed the appointment of Saurav Adhikari and Subir Chakraborty as additional directors in the category of non-executive independent directors of the company, according to an exchange filing. IFB Industries’ board also approved Ashok Bhandari’s appointment as a non-executive, non-independent director of the company with effect from January 30, after completion of his second term as an independent director, the company said in the exchange filing. The company appointed Mani and Co Cost Accountants as the cost auditors after Shome and Banerjee Cost Accountants resigned from the post. The resignation will come into effect from March 31. IFB Industries has suffered a decisive structural breakdown after losing its major support near ₹1,273. The move was accompanied by an extreme volume spike and a large bearish marubozu candle, with the price collapsing more than 17 per cent in a single session. This combination signals aggressive long liquidation and a clear trend breakdown rather than routine volatility, said Anshul Jain, head, research, Lakshminiree. However, the overall trend remains weak.

HPCL is looking for Venezuelan crude to increase refineries’ processing of heavy oil

New Delhi: According to Chairman Vikas Kaushal on Tuesday, India’s state-run Hindustan Petroleum Corp Ltd is looking for Venezuelan crude for the first time as the refiner intends to enhance heavy oil processing in the new fiscal year beginning in April. Following Washington’s abduction of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro earlier this month, Vitol and Trafigura are offering Venezuelan crude to Indian refiners under a US-mandated sale. On the fringes of Indian Energy Week, Kaushal told reporters, “We are trying to build more flexibility in our system as we have two new facilities, so we can raise heavy crude processing,” alluding to the Barmer refinery and its residue upgradation facility at Vizag. “We are looking for Venezuelan oil, something we have not touching sanctioned Rus-



firm hopes to start crude processing at its 180,000 barrels-per-day (bpd) Barmer refinery in Rajasthan by the end of the month, making it India’s second-largest state-run refiner, behind Indian Oil Corp, replacing Bharat Petroleum Corp. HPCL recently bought Brazilian Tupi crude and increased its processing of West African oil, Kaushal added. “We are not touching sanctioned Rus-

sian crude,” he said. HPCL operates a 190,000 bpd Mumbai refinery in western Maharashtra state and a 300,000 bpd Vizag refinery in southern Andhra Pradesh. It also holds 48.99% stake in HPCL-Mittal Energy Ltd, which operates the 226,000 bpd Bathinda refinery in northern Punjab state. HPCL Mittal is raising the Bathinda refinery capacity by 10,000 bpd, it said.

Adani Group and Embraer will establish a regional aircraft manufacturing facility in India

Adani Defence & Aerospace Director Jeet Adani said with the Embraer collaboration, a regional aircraft manufacturing facility will be set up in India

New Delhi: Adani Group and Brazilian major Embraer on Tuesday announced a strategic collaboration that aims to set up a regional aircraft manufacturing facility in India, a significant boost for the country’s indigenous manufacturing capabilities. India is one of the world’s fastest growing civil aviation markets and the partnership will look to help enhance air connectivity to Tier 2 and 3 cities. Officials of Adani Defence & Aerospace and Embraer inked the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the strategic collaboration on regional transport aircraft in India at a function at the civil aviation ministry in the national capital on Tuesday. Both companies will also set up a Final Assembly Line (FAL) for the regional aircraft of Embraer in the country. Adani Defence & Aerospace Director Jeet Adani said with the Embraer collaboration, a regional aircraft manufacturing facility will be set up in India. Embraer makes commercial jets with up to 150 seats.



Details about the investments and the location of the proposed facility were not disclosed. Civil Aviation Secretary Samir Kumar Sinha said the collaboration is not just about assembling a regional aircraft but also about progressive technology transfer, skilling, having robust supply chain as well as making India a trusted manufacturing hub for regional aircraft. With the partnership, Adani Group, which already has a good presence in the fast-growing Indian aviation space, will be making its foray into building aircraft in India. Jeet Adani said a couple of sites are being looked at for the

manufacturing facility and things would be finalised in the next couple of months. Civil Aviation Minister K Ram Mohan Naidu said this is the time to be in India as he highlighted the manufacturing and growth potential of the country. The need for regional transport aircraft has never been strong before and will help in providing solutions for many problems. The collaboration can also have manufacturing aircraft for the larger South Asian market, Naidu said. The venture with the Adani Group will be a major fillip for the Brazilian major in India’s civil aviation space

where it aims to provide cost-competitiveness with its regional jets. Adani Defence & Aerospace President & CEO Ashish Rajvanshi said the collaboration is a “watershed” in Aatma Nirbharata (self-reliance) of the country. Currently, Embraer, whose E-Jets began operations in India in 2005, has nearly 50 aircraft in the country serving the Indian Air Force, government agencies, business jet operators and commercial airline Star Air. The Indian market is expected to require at least 500 aircraft in the 80 to 146 seat range over the next 20 years, Embraer said in a release on January 21.

PhonePe aims for a \$15 billion value and receives Sebi permission for its IPO

New Delhi: PhonePe has obtained authorisation from the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) to advance with its initial public offering, overcoming a significant obstacle for one of the nation’s most awaited fintech listings. The Bengaluru-based company is now expected to move closer to the market with an IPO that could value it at around \$15 billion, reported moneycontrol.com. The Walmart-backed digital payments firm is likely to raise about Rs 12,000 crore through an offer for sale (OFS), with existing shareholders expected to pare a portion of their holdings. If it goes ahead as planned, the listing would rank among the largest fintech IPOs in India, second only to Paytm’s public debut in 2021. PhonePe has emerged as a dominant player in India’s digital payments ecosystem, processing billions of transactions every month and commanding a significant share of UPI volumes. While payments remain its core business, the company has expanded into adjacent areas such as stockbroking, insurance distribution and lending as it looks to build a broader financial services platform. Major investors including Walmart and other early backers are expected to participate in



the share sale. PhonePe has been working with multiple investment banks to prepare for the offering and position itself for a public listing amid improving sentiment for technology stocks. The regulatory approval comes at a time when India’s primary markets are seeing renewed activity, with several technology and startup firms lining up to go public. PhonePe’s listing is seen as a key test of investor appetite for large consumer internet companies after a period of volatility in the sector. With Sebi’s nod now in hand, PhonePe is expected to take the next steps toward launching the IPO, potentially making it one of the most closely watched market debuts in the Indian fintech space.

Startups pursue tax clarification following the SC verdict that unsettles investors regarding Tiger Global

New Delhi: A group of 60 Indian startups has requested that the Delhi government clarify that a recent Supreme Court decision on tax evasion will not be used to investigate past investments. This follows the court’s ruling that Mauritius-based entities, used by Tiger Global to sell its \$1.6 billion stake in Flipkart to Walmart, were deemed “conduits” for tax evasion under the India-Mauritius treaty. Tiger Global refutes any wrongdoing. The decision challenges previous aggressive tax strategies employed by investors to channel funds into India through Mauritius, raising concerns over

the potential implications for global investors, particularly given that the ruling suggests domestic tax laws may override incorrectly claimed treaty benefits. The ruling “risks sending mixed signals to foreign investors and may have longer-term implications for India’s startup ecosystem,” Shweta Rajpal Kohli, CEO of Startup Policy Forum, said in a letter to the finance ministry dated January 20 and reviewed by Reuters. The startup group has asked the government to reassure global investors of a stable investment environment, asking it to issue a clarification that pre-2017 investments would not face taxes, in line with



a commitment made in 2017 when the India-Mauritius treaty was last updated.

Alembic Pharmaceuticals gets USFDA nod

The approval granted by USFDA is for the Abbreviated New Drug Application (ANDA) Difluprednate ophthalmic emulsion of strength 0.05 per cent

New Delhi: Alembic Pharmaceuticals Ltd on Tuesday said it has received final approval from the US health regulator for its generic version of Difluprednate ophthalmic emulsion used to treat eye inflammation and pain due to surgery. The approval granted by the US Food & Drug Administration. (USFDA) is for the Abbreviated New Drug Application (ANDA) Difluprednate ophthalmic emulsion of strength 0.05 per cent, Alembic Pharmaceuticals said in a regulatory filing. The approved ANDA is therapeutically equivalent to the reference listed drug product, Durezol ophthalmic emulsion, 0.05 per cent, of Sandoz Inc, it added. Difluprednate ophthalmic emulsion is indicated for the treatment of inflammation and pain associated with ocular surgery and also indicated for the treatment of endogenous anterior uveitis, a type of disorder of the eye.

INTERNATIONAL

Texas is looking at the use of H-1Bs in the state’s colleges and public schools

Texas: Texas Governor Greg Abbott has initiated an enquiry regarding the employment of H-1B visa holders in public schools, universities, and associated institutions within the state of Texas. The focus of this investigation is to determine if taxpayer money is being utilized to fund foreign workers in positions that might otherwise be available for Texas residents. On January 26, during an interview with conservative radio personality Mark Davis, Abbott discussed the ongoing issue and disclosed that his administration has formally requested various public education entities to provide information concerning their employees who are under H-1B visas. He indicated that an “action plan” will be forthcoming, contingent on the analysis of the data collected, as reported by The Texas Tribune and Houston Chronicle. Internal emails obtained by Quorum Report, which were cited in both The Texas Tribune and Houston Chronicle, showed that the governor’s office specifically directed the Texas A&M University System to provide detailed information including job roles and countries of origin for all H-1B visa holders by the close of business on Monday, January 26. Abbott expressed clear scepticism

about the necessity of such hires in public education settings. Abbott told Mark Davis he does not “see any reason why we need any H-1B visa employees in our public schools in the state of Texas”, though he left open the possibility that some individuals might possess unique skill sets justifying their employment, reported The Texas Tribune and Dallas Morning News. He further suggested that certain visa holders admitted during or before the Biden administration might have overstayed their authorised periods, tying the matter to broader federal enforcement efforts under the Donald Trump administration, according to The Texas Tribune. This review was prompted in part by The Dallas Express, which pursued public records on Texas A&M University’s H-1B visa usage for months and eventually filed a complaint with the Texas attorney general to obtain the requested information. According to its report, the university has expended over \$3 million since 2020 to pay for the costs of hiring from the H-1B programme. The H-1B visa is a federal programme that permits employers to sponsor foreign workers for speciality occupations that typically require at least a bachelor’s degree. In Texas,



public universities, academic medical centres, and certain school districts rely on the programme to recruit professors, researchers, physicians, and teachers. Like most of the US, Texas has long suffered from a crippling shortage of specialised teachers, forcing schools and universities to resort to hiring from the H-1B programme. According to US Citizenship and Immigration Services data (USCIS) cited by The Texas Tribune, Texas state’s largest education-sector employers of H-1B visa holders include Dallas ISD as well as academic medical centres, such as UT Southwestern Med-

ical Centre and UT MD Anderson Cancer Centre. The Dallas Independent School District sponsors the most H-1B visa holders in Texas, with 230, followed by the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Centre in Dallas with 228, according to the Houston Chronicle. Other institutions that have larger numbers of H-1B visa holders include the Texas A&M flagship with 214, the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Centre in Houston with 171, and the University of Texas at Austin with 169. Texas A&M University itself has drawn attention for spending more than \$3.25 million

on H-1B visa processing and related costs since 2020, according to coverage by The Dallas Express. Higher education leaders and immigration advocates have warned that limiting access to international talent could undermine Texas’s innovation pipeline and economic competitiveness. Miriam Feldblum, CEO of the Presidents’ Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration, told The Texas Tribune that the ability to attract the world’s top minds has been central to the strength of US higher education, and recent federal changes, including the \$100,000 fee for new H-1B hires, already pose significant challenges to universities’ global standing. Governor Abbott’s enquiry aligns with heightened national debate over the H-1B programme’s integrity under the Trump administration, which was recently highlighted in an investigative video by journalist Sara Gonzales on BlazeTV. Gonzales’s report alleged potential misuse by some Texas-based companies sponsoring visas while listing residential addresses with little visible business activity. As Abbott’s review moves forward, Texas’ public institutions might have to prioritise local hires against their dependence on global talent, upon which classrooms, research labs and medical centres have long relied on.

Gregory Bovino, a top US border patrol official, was removed as “commander at large”



Washington, D.C.: Gregory Bovino has been removed from his role as the “commander at large” for the US Border Patrol and will return to his former job in El Centro, California, where he is expected to retire soon, The Atlantic reported on Monday, citing a Homeland Security official and two people with knowledge of the change. The US Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and the White House did not immediately respond to requests for comment. Earlier on Monday, President Donald Trump and Minnesota Governor Tim Walz struck a conciliatory tone after a private phone call about immigration enforcement, signalling efforts to resolve the standoff over a deportation operation that has claimed the lives of two U.S. citizens in Minneapolis. According to a person familiar with the matter who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity, Bovino is among the federal agents expected to depart Minneapolis on Tuesday. The expected departure coincides with a broader leadership reshuffle announced by Trump. The president said he was placing

his border czar, Tom Homan, in charge of the Minnesota mission, with Homan reporting directly to the White House. White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt later confirmed that Homan would serve as “the main point of contact on the ground in Minneapolis” during continued federal immigration operations. Despite these developments, confusion persists over Bovino’s status. While some reports suggested he had been demoted after federal agents were directed to leave Minneapolis, the Department of Homeland Security publicly disputed that characterisation. Tricia McLaughlin, the department’s assistant secretary, wrote on social media: “Chief Gregory Bovino has NOT been relieved of his duties. As @PressSec stated from the White House podium, @CMDROPAtLarge-CA is a key part of the President’s team and a great American.” No formal announcement has confirmed Bovino’s removal or reassignment, leaving open questions about whether his departure from Minneapolis represents a temporary redeployment or a broader shift in his responsibilities. Bovino’s sudden removal is seen as the

clearest sign yet that the Trump administration is reconsidering its most aggressive tactics following the killing Saturday of 37-year-old Alex Pretti by Border Patrol agents under Bovino’s command. Earlier on Monday, Trump appeared to signal a tactical shift in the administration’s mass-deportation campaign. He noted that he spoke with Governor Walz—whom the White House has blamed for inciting violence—and that the two men are now on “a similar wavelength.” Trump added that Tom Homan, the former ICE chief designated as “border czar,” will head to Minnesota to assume command of the federal mobilisation there. “For the past seven months, Bovino has been the public face of a travelling immigration crackdown on cities governed by Democrats. Noem and other Trump officials gave Bovino the ‘commander’ title and sent him and his masked border agents to Chicago, Charlotte, New Orleans, and then Minneapolis,” The Atlantic reported. “Bovino became a MAGA social-media star as he travelled the country with his own film crew and used social media to hit back at Democratic politicians and random critics online. Veteran ICE and CBP officials grew more and more uneasy as Bovino worked outside his agency’s chain of command and appeared to relish his role as a political actor.” In Minneapolis, Bovino acted as the administration’s lead spokesperson, holding daily press conferences where he defended agents’ rough tactics and cast blame on protesters and local officials. Border Patrol commanders typically avoid engaging in political arguments with elected officials. Bovino’s fall comes two days after Border Patrol agents in Minneapolis fatally shot Pretti, an intensive-care nurse who worked with veterans. Hours after the shooting, Bovino appeared at a press conference and echoed statements by DHS alleging Pretti sought to “massacre” the federal agents. Bovino repeatedly claimed that Border Patrol agents, not Pretti, were the victims. Officials close to Bovino, including DHS Secretary Kristi Noem and adviser Corey Lewandowski, are also reported to be at risk of losing their positions, The Atlantic noted.

Doctors are alarmed by the US vaccine panel chair’s questioning of polio recommendations



Washington, D.C.: The chair of a U.S. government vaccine advisory panel, Kirk Milhoan, has raised concerns regarding broad vaccine recommendations for polio and other childhood diseases. During a recent episode of the podcast “Why Should I Trust You?” Milhoan emphasized that promoting individual choice should be the primary objective of the panel rather than focusing solely on public health. His remarks have elicited criticism from leading medical organizations, including the nation’s top doctors group, indicating a significant divide in perspectives on vaccination policy and public health priorities. Vaccination against some diseases, like polio, could be reconsidered given advances in medical care, said Milhoan, who joined the committee after Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr, a longtime anti-vaccine activist, fired all previous members in June. “Our sanitation is different, our risk of disease is different. And so those all play into the evaluation of whether this is worthwhile, of taking a risk for a vaccine or not,” he said. Milhoan did not respond to a request for comment. Polio, a disabling and life-threatening disease, has been eradicated in many parts of the world but still circulates. The CDC currently recommends that all children receive the vaccine. The American Medical Association said

in a statement that it was “deeply alarmed” by Milhoan’s comments. “This is not a theoretical debate – it is a dangerous step backward,” the group said. President Donald Trump and Health Secretary Kennedy have moved quickly to overhaul federal vaccine policy, despite a lack of scientific evidence for the changes. Experts have said the efforts could expose more children to harmful viruses. Milhoan said the committee aims to prioritise “not public health, but individual autonomy” and that vaccine decisions should be made by patients and doctors, not by mandate. US schools require vaccination against certain illnesses, including polio and measles, based on state requirements. Most states have typically aligned those with the CDC’s broad recommendations. Dr Peter Hotez, dean of the National School of Tropical Medicine at Baylor College of Medicine and co-director of the Texas Children’s Hospital Center for Vaccine Development, said most medical experts now disregard the committee’s opinions. “It’s a discredited committee,” he said. Milhoan is listed as a senior fellow on the website of the Independent Medical Alliance, which backed Kennedy for health secretary and has promoted controversial and unproven medical treatments, like using the anti-parasitic drug ivermectin to treat COVID-19.

Europe is funding its own “war” by purchasing Russian energy products from India : Scott Bessent



Washington, D.C.: The US imposed 25 per cent tariffs on India for buying Russian oil, but the Europeans signed a trade deal with New Delhi, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said as he em-

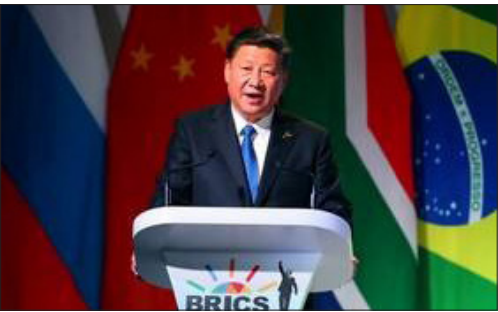
phasised that Europe is financing the “war” against itself by purchasing refined Russian oil products from India. President Donald Trump has worked to negotiate a settlement on the Rus-

sia-Ukraine conflict, Bessent said, adding that the US has made much bigger sacrifices than the Europeans. “We have put 25 per cent tariffs on India for buying Russian oil. Guess

what happened last week? The Europeans signed a trade deal with India,” Bessent told ABC News Sunday. “And just to be clear again, the Russian oil goes into India, the refined products come out, and the Europeans buy the refined products. They are financing the war against themselves,” he said, adding that under Trump’s leadership, “we will eventually end” the Russia-Ukraine war. The Trump administration has imposed 50 per cent tariffs on India, including 25 per cent for Delhi’s purchases of Russian oil. India and the European Union are set to announce on January 27 the conclusion of negotiations and finalisation of a free trade agreement, aimed at boosting economic ties between the two regions amid disruptions in global trade due to US tariffs. The talks started in 2007. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, who is currently in India and was the Chief Guest at the 77th Republic Day celebrations in New Delhi, has termed the EU-India FTA as the “mother of all trade deals”.

Africa owes China more money than it gets in new funding

Johannesburg: China’s role as a leading financier to developing nations has shifted over the past decade, with new loans to poorer countries falling sharply while debt repayments continue to rise, according to analysis released by ONE Data. The inaugural report by the ONE Data initiative found that many low- and middle-income countries — particularly in Africa — are now transferring more funds to China in debt payments than they receive in fresh financing from the world’s second-largest economy. The swing has coincided with a surge in net financing from multilateral institutions, which have become the main source of development finance once debt-ser-



vice outflows are taken into account. Multilateral lenders increased net financing by 124% over the past decade and now provide 56% of net flows, equivalent to \$379 billion between 2020 and 2024, the analysis found. “The fact that there’s less lending coming in, but that previous lending from China still needs to be serviced — that’s the source of the outflows,” said David McNair, executive director at ONE

Data. In 2020-24, the most recent period for which data is available, Africa saw the largest impact, with an inflow of \$30 billion in 2015-19 turning to an outflow of \$22 billion. The data does not include cuts that took effect in 2025. The closure of the U.S. Agency for International Development last year and a drop in allocations from other developed countries has already hit developing economies, especially in Africa.

Magnificent places to visit in India

India all but overflows with one-of-a-kind experiences, cultures, landscapes, cuisines and religions. If you can think of it, chances are that India has it. In fact, some superlative version of it. A gigantic salt desert. The largest river island. The world’s largest floating park. A village that disappears in the monsoon and reappears in summer. A park with white tigers. A city of lakes. These are but some of the unforgettable places and experiences to be found here. It’s simply not possible to soak in the incredible scope of this continent-size country – where the culture, language and landscape changes every few miles – in just one trip. (Or, for that matter, just one lifetime.) So as a traveler, you’re best off picking a region or a state and dedicating time to exploring it for as long as you can stay. Unsure of where to start? Here are some of the top places to visit in India.

1. Delhi
India’s historic capital region is the starting point of India’s most popular tourist circuit: the Golden Triangle, linking Delhi, Agra and Jaipur. Both a major metropolis and a Union Territory of its own, Delhi comprises Old Delhi (aka Shahjahanabad) and British-built New Delhi, India’s capital. Centuries of major events have taken place in its streets, and if you walk almost anywhere in Old Delhi or New Delhi, you’re likely to come across a historic building, ancient monument, or time-worn tomb, mosque or fort. Topping the short list of must-sees are Mughal- and Delhi Sultanate-era buildings such as UNESCO World Heritage-listed Humayun’s Tomb in Nizamuddin; the Qutab Minar in south Delhi; the Jama Masjid and Red Fort in Old Delhi; and the Jantar Mantar observatory in New Delhi. Also make time for the 1980s Bahai House of Worship (Lotus Temple) and elegant, British Raj-era India Gate, at the heart of Delhi’s government district. Delhi is intense and chaotic but always interesting, and it’s home to some of the finest cuisine in the country.

2. Darjeeling, West Bengal
The former summer capital of the British Raj, the hill station of Darjeeling is nestled in the foothills of the Himalayas. Kanchenjunga (Khangchendzonga) – the world’s third-highest mountain at 8586m – looms benevolently over this lovely city, with its silver fir forests, meandering roads, lush tea gardens and plunging valleys. As well as seeing relics of British colonialism, you can take a camping trek to the Singalila National Park, check out the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute (where Tenzing Norgay was once director), climb up to Tenzing Rock, shop and promenade on the Mall and sample some of India’s finest brews at one of the city’s many tea estates. For a more spiritual experience, seek out peace at the Japanese Peace Pagoda; the Ghum, Dali and Bhutia Busty Buddhist monasteries; or the Mahakal Temple on Observatory Hill, where Hindu and Buddhist deities reside together.

3. Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh
Perhaps India’s most sacred city, Varanasi is where you go for a dose of spirituality. Located on the banks of the holy River Ganges (Ganga), the



city’s riverside ghats play host to thousands of pilgrims, who gather to bathe and seek redemption, cremate the dead and partake in rituals. In one day, you can observe the whole cycle of life and death play out on the banks of the river. The Ganga aarti ceremony, traditionally conducted at dusk, is an incredible visual spectacle. Many visitors also gather to watch – respectfully – the funeral services at Manikarnika Ghat. A walk through the city behind the ghats will introduce you to historic buildings such as Ramnagar Fort, the revered Kashi Vishwanath Temple, Alamgir Mosque and Man Mandir Observatory. The Buddhist pilgrimage site of Samath, where the Buddha preached his first sermon, is a short drive outside the city.

4. Udaipur, Rajasthan
Rajasthan doesn’t go light on the nicknames. If Jaipur is the Pink City and Jodhpur the Blue City, then Udaipur is the White City and the City of Lakes. There is so much to do in this vibrant city. Take in the view from the City Palace, then trek up to the Sajjan Garh Monsoon Palace overlooking Fateh Sagar Lake. Or take a boat ride on Lake Pichola to admire the city’s floating palaces – an experience that’s touristy, sure, but also highly recommended. Udaipur also has its own ghats, of which Gangaur is the most popular.

5. Goa
One of India’s smallest states, Goa is a top holiday spot thanks to its sun, sand, food and overall great vibes. Despite its tiny size, the state is a cultural powerhouse, with unique music, food, dance and architecture all influenced by four centuries of Portuguese colonial rule. Get a glimpse of this heritage at the ruined basilicas of Old Goa, at centuries-old Goan homes such as Figueiredo House and Palácio do Deão, and at concerts of fado and mando music. Goa is blessed with a long, sandy coastline, and activities from water sports to yoga are centered on its beaches. Yet step away from the sand, and the hinterland reveals quiet villages with interesting local customs and festivals. Goa

is also growing as a culinary destination, offering a taste of many different Indian and world cuisines and exciting new interpretations of local food.

6. Meghalaya
This “abode of the clouds” in India’s often-overlooked northeast bespeaks the country’s enchanting natural beauty. Meghalaya is blessed with thundering waterfalls, green hills and an extensive network of caves and lakes – and relatively few people. It’s a region ideal for those who love adventure, enjoy trying new and exciting cuisines, and want to understand India’s Adivasi (Indigenous) culture. Definitely make a stop at the village of Mawlynnong near the Bangladesh border, billed as one of Asia’s cleanest villages. The perpetually soaked village of Mawsynram, meanwhile, holds the record as the world’s wettest place.

7. Leh, Ladakh
High in the Himalayas, Ladakh is blessed with stunning vistas, clear skies and dramatically picturesque mountain valleys. Consider the region the ideal spot for anyone looking to slow down, digitally detox and connect with nature. Adventure aplenty lies in store in Ladakh. You can trek into the lofty Markham and Nubra Valleys, or attempt the climb up the highest trekkable peak in India, 6153m Stok Kangri.

Ladakh’s twisting roads offer a uniquely thrilling experience to those seeking an epic road trip – especially the crossing over the Khardung La pass on the highest drivable road in the world. Most visitors begin their journeys in Leh, a capital city blessed with a cool, dry climate and significant religious sites such as the Shanti Stupa and towering Leh Palace. You can learn about Tibetan and Buddhist culture at Ladakh’s many monasteries (try timeless Thiksey Gumpa near Leh) or warm up with some traditional Ladakhi food – a unique mix of Indian, Tibetan and Nepalese culinary traditions.

Indians may benefit from a BP threshold of less than 120/80 mm Hg

With the rise of hypertension cases in India, particularly among young adults, health experts advocate for the American Heart Association’s (AHA) updated blood pressure (BP) guidelines, which lower the BP threshold to less than 120/80 mm Hg. These changes aim to enhance awareness and promote early interventions in a country where nearly 200 million individuals are estimated to have hypertension. Dr. Mukesh Goel, a senior consultant in cardiovascular surgery, pointed out that this updated definition of normal BP is crucial, as it allows a larger segment of the population to be classified as hypertensive, thereby recognizing the condition earlier and preventing complications, often referred to as the “silent killer.” Dr. Rajeev Jayadevan, Chairman of the IMA Cochlin Scientific Committee, noted that hypertension often presents no symptoms in its early stages, leading to many individuals remaining unaware until serious complications occur. While the new guidelines push



for more rigorous control of blood pressure based on extensive research, he emphasized the need for individualized treatment approaches to avoid possible side effects from aggressive treatment, such as low blood pressure or kidney injury. The AHA guidelines also recommend potassium-based salt substitutes for home cooking, specifically tailored for Indian diets that typically include high salt levels, while cautioning against their use in patients with chronic kidney disease. Furthermore, Dr. Vivekanand Jha from The George Institute for Global Health highlighted the importance of team-based management involving community health workers and health professionals, particularly in rural and primary care contexts. In addition to managing high blood pressure, addressing additive cardiovascular risk factors is essential. This includes avoiding tobacco and excessive alcohol consumption, improving exercise habits, maintaining a healthy weight, and following a balanced diet with controlled salt intake.

Silencing a specific brain circuit can prevent and reverse chronic pain

A recent study from the University of Colorado Boulder has highlighted a crucial neural circuit located in the caudal granular insular cortex (CGIC), which is pivotal in the transformation of temporary pain into chronic pain that can persist for months or even years. This research, published in the Journal of Neuroscience, reveals that silencing the CGIC can effectively prevent or alleviate chronic pain, marking a significant advancement in the understanding of pain mechanisms amidst a growing wave of innovation in neuroscience, as described by lead author Jayson Ball. Utilizing advanced genetic manipulation techniques, neuroscientists are now able to identify precise targets for new therapeutic interventions. These include innovative approaches such as infusions or brain-machine interfaces,

which could serve as safer and more effective alternatives to traditional opioid medications. Ball emphasized the importance of this study, stating that it contributes substantially to the existing body of knowledge regarding chronic pain, particularly given that approximately 25% of adults experience some form of chronic pain, with nearly 10% reporting significant interference with daily activities due to pain. Chronic pain differs fundamentally from acute pain; while acute pain serves as a brief warning signal triggered by tissue injury, chronic pain results in ongoing pain sensations that persist long after the initial injury has healed. A notable aspect of chronic pain is allodynia, a condition characterized by extreme sensitivity where even light touches can result in severe pain. Previous research from Watkins’ lab indicated that the



CGIC, a small but critical cluster of cells located deep within the insula of the human brain, plays a significant role in the development of allodynia, with findings suggesting that patients with chronic pain often exhibit increased CGIC activity. Historically, the manipulation of the CGIC was limited to physical removal, an impractical strategy for human treatment. However, in this groundbreaking study, researchers employed novel fluorescent proteins to visualize neuronal activity following a sciatic nerve injury in rats.



Why skjoring is taking travellers off Colorado’s ski-resort circuit

With her skis clipped in, the skier grasps the rope as the horse in front of her bolts forward, hurtling down the snowy obstacle course propelled by sheer horsepower. Cheers ripple through the crowd as she clears a jump, hits her marker and crosses the finish line. A rodeo announcer calls out the time, and the crowd erupts. This is skjoring – a winter sport defined by speed, precision and horsemanship – and it’s drawing travellers far beyond Colorado’s lift lines and luxury lodges. Each winter, Aspen, Telluride and Vail prepare for their busiest and most lucrative season, attracting global crowds and eye-opening prices. But beyond the ski resorts lies another version of Colorado that has been shaped by ranching towns, mining history and outdoor culture. For travellers craving adrenaline without the ski-pass-plus-Champagne lifestyle, skjoring offers a way in. Equal parts rodeo and ski race, skjoring sits at the overlap of Colorado’s ranching and skiing cultures. Horses

sprint down snowy tracks as skiers hang on behind them, navigating jumps and gates at speed. The sport takes its name from the Norwegian word skjikjoring, meaning “ski driving”, and its roots are often traced to older snow-travel traditions in northern Europe and Central Asia where people travelled across snowbound terrain pulled by animals. In the American West, it has evolved into something distinctly local: a mash-up of snow sport and cowboy tradition. For visitors, the appeal is both the spectacle on the course and the setting around it. At skjoring events, cowboy hats sit alongside ski helmets and fringe jackets mix with puffer coats. Horses trot past spectators sipping hot drinks as announcers call races over loudspeakers. It’s a scene that feels far removed from lift queues and après-ski bars.

“People think you have to cross an ocean to experience a different culture,” says professional skier Jim Ryan. “In the US, we have these different cultures that are abutting on each

other... Skjoring is the perfect way to do it.” One of the clearest places to see this is in Ridgway, a small town in south-western Colorado that many travellers pass through on the way to Telluride or Ouray. Once a prominent railroad hub serving nearby gold and silver mines, Ridgway has long been shaped by ranching, its cowboy culture rooted in Spanish and Mexican vaquero horsemanship that travelled north with early cattle routes well before Colorado became a state. Each January since 2017, the town’s rodeo grounds have hosted San Juan Skjoring, drawing competitors and thousands of spectators. “Ridgway, a sleepy winter town, comes to life for a weekend,” says Richard Weber III, a founder of the event. He adds that skjoring brings visitors from as far afield as New York and Tennessee, transforming Ridgway into a travel destination in its own right. Similar scenes play out across Colorado and neighbouring states, with competitions held in small towns from Montana to New Mexico. Interest has surged in recent years, with some travellers planning entire winter trips around event weekends rather than ski passes. “[Skjoring is] a really cool vehicle to travel around the West,” says Madison Ostergren,

a professional big mountain skier from Michigan who tried it for the first time in Silverton, Colorado.

For most visitors, skjoring is best experienced as a spectator sport. Standing trackside as horses thunder past, skiers flying behind them, delivers an adrenaline hit that rivals steep alpine descents – without needing to strap in yourself. Events are generally ticketed but are usually lower cost than a day on the slopes, making them an accessible alternative to resort skiing. For curious newcomers, skjoring competitions are open registration, though they typically require advanced skiing. “There’s a whole amateur division,” notes professional skier Veronica Paulsen, “so anyone can sign up and try it.” However, there are other – easier – ways to dip your toe into the scene. Devil’s Thumb Ranch near Winter Park and several Nordic Centers offer beginner-friendly versions using dogs rather than horses, giving visitors a taste of the sport in a more controlled setting. Snake River Ranch in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, offers horse-led skjoring under close supervision, with structured sessions designed to make the experience accessible for newcomers. Animal welfare is central to the sport’s culture. Horses used in competitions are carefully trained and monitored, and riders stress that no horse runs unless it is healthy and willing. What skjoring ultimately offers travellers is a different way into Colorado’s winter landscape and a reason to slow down in places they might otherwise pass straight through. In a state where skiing increasingly funnels visitors into a handful of expensive resorts, skjoring is a reminder that Colorado’s winter culture has always lived well beyond the lift lines.



The term “female-centric” must end, according to Rani Mukerji



New Delhi: With Mardaani 3, Bollywood diva Rani Mukerji is making a comeback. Fans have been anticipating how Shivani Shivaji Roy will confront the crooks this time since the teaser was released. The actor isn’t quite impressed with the title,

despite the movie being hailed as Bollywood’s only successful female-led franchise. In an exclusive interview with India Today, Mukerji discussed how the narrative needs to be altered and how gender is no longer a defining factor in movies. “I believe that

the discussion about eliminating these labels of female-centricity needs to begin. A movie must be classified as either good or awful. They are simply instructors; we do not refer to them as male or female educators. In a similar vein, we do not categorize certain occupations based on a person’s gender, such as pilots or cooks. Therefore, I believe it’s time to start rewriting the story and refer to a movie as a movie and a franchise as a franchise. As an artist, it would be fantastic if that began to change,” she remarked. Students, instructors, and even some of her own professors were present at her alma mater, the SNDT College in Juhu, where the discussion took place. Speaking about her experience with Mardaani, Rani mentioned how more girls began enlisting in the police force following the movie. Rani Mukerji added that Mardani has always stood for empowerment and given women hope, and she wishes to continue doing that with her films, characters, and her choices.

A new animated series on Netflix aims to reimagine the plot of “Stranger Things”

Mumbai: After five seasons, the popular science fiction thriller Stranger Things came to an end earlier this month. However, fans expressed their dissatisfaction with the final chapter’s flaws and dull, expected conclusion, which caused a significant backlash on social media. Fans are now holding out hope for a new animated prequel series that supposedly offers a fresh interpretation of the narrative. The next Netflix series, Stranger Things: Tales From ‘85, takes place between Seasons 2 and 3 in the Stranger Things universe. The logline states that “the original characters must fight new monsters and unravel a paranormal mystery terrorizing their town in Stranger Things: Tales From ‘85.” The story takes place in 1985, during a very cold winter in Hawkins, and our heroes are about to set off on an epic journey. The upcoming series is expected to rewrite a portion of the franchise’s tale, which is expected to fill in gaps left incomplete by the live-action series. As per the synopsis, the animated prequel will take the audience on a journey back to Hawkins and to a time when the Upside Down was still a looming threat. The lead cast, Eleven, Mike, Will, Lucas, Dustin and Max, will all return in younger, animated form. However, the original cast members won’t be returning as the voice artists this time. Joining the Hawkins adventure are Brooklyn Davey Norstedt as Eleven, Jolie Hoang-Rappaport as Max, Luca Diaz



as Mike, Elisha “EJ” Williams as Lucas, Braxton Quinney as Dustin, Ben Plessala as Will, Brett Gipsen as Hopper, Odessa A’zion, Janeane Garofalo, and Lou Diamond Phillips. According to showrunners Eric Robles,

Matt and Ross Duffer, the prequel series will introduce more lethal giant creatures. The series, which is inspired by 1980s cartoons, blends nostalgic aesthetics with intense supernatural themes while preserving the show’s core emotional, character-driven storytelling. Much to the surprise of the fans, the animated series is set to introduce a new character named Nikki Baxter, who is described as ‘a tinker’, and has pinkish hair. Fans are speculating that since this character hasn’t been introduced in the original show, she might have met with a tragic end or have left Hawkins during the time gap of Seasons 2 and 3. Also, since the gate to the Upside Down has been closed by Eleven (Millie Bobby Brown) in Season 2, this animated series is expected to explore the other looming horrors, like new paranormal forces and unexplained monsters, and will offer a better understanding of the concept of the parallel world. Netflix recently dropped a new documentary, One Last Adventure: The Making of Stranger Things Season 5.

Kamal Haasan is grateful to Linkin Park for taking his khadi brand global

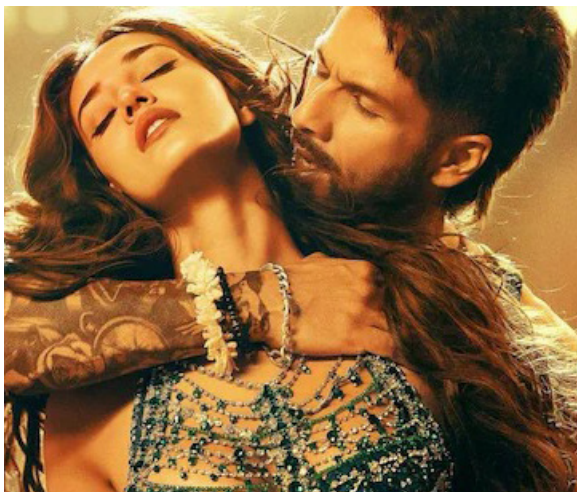


New Delhi: After the American band Linkin Park was spotted wearing his Khaddar/Khadi brand during their recent trip to India, actor Kamal Haasan expressed his appreciation to the group. In an Instagram post, Haasan acknowledged the band’s impact and thanked them for introducing Khadi to Western audiences. In India, Linkin Park is well-known for popular songs like “Numb,” “What I’ve Done,” “Somewhere I Belong,” and “In the End.” The band’s involvement in the Lollapalooza India festival further demonstrated their popularity and strengthened their bond with Indian audiences. Kamal Haasan posted a picture of Linkin Park members during an Indian concert on Instagram. He added, “Linking Khadi to the western world,” next to the image. I’m grateful. KHHK (sic).” Haasan’s message emphasizes how much he values the band’s gesture and how it can help promote Khadi as a worldwide cloth. Kamal Haasan’s House of Khaddar, or KHHK, is the actor’s label devoted to making Khadi fabrics more well known. Alongside his brand marketing, Kamal Haasan continues to engage in professional pursuits. Under his Raaj Kamal Films International banner, he is now producing a new movie starring Rajinikanth. Additionally, Haasan is backing an action-thriller directed by debutant filmmakers Anbariv, and discussions are ongoing for another film project with Rajinikanth. He is also expected to release a third installment in his Indian franchise, directed by Shankar, in the future.

Disha Patani, Shahid Kapoor add firepower to O’Romeo

New Delhi: Aashiqon Ki Colony, a new song from O’Romeo, was released by the film’s producers on Tuesday. Shahid Kapoor and Disha Patani are included in the dance performance. Madhubanti Bagchi and Javed Ali sing the song, which was composed by Vishal Bhardwaj, who also directed the movie. Gulzar, Bhardwaj’s frequent collaborator, wrote the lyrics. The song, which is intended to be a high-energy dance number reminiscent to Namak from Omkara, features Patani as a seductress. Kapoor, who is renowned for his extraordinary dancing abilities, matches her step for step, creating an exciting visual package. Aashiqon Ki Colony is the second song to be released from the film. Earlier, the makers unveiled a soft romantic

track titled Hum Toh Tere Hi Liye The. Sung by Arijit Singh, the song features Shahid Kapoor alongside Triptii Dimri. The lyrics were written by Gulzar, with music composed by Bhardwaj himself. The romantic number highlighted the strong chemistry between Kapoor and Dimri, capturing the early stages of their characters falling in love. Meanwhile, a notable aspect of O’Romeo is its rumoured inspiration. While the trailer, released last week, does not make this explicit, the film is reportedly based on the story of gangster Hussain Ustara from the book Mafia Queens of Mumbai by Hussain Zaidi. This connection suggests the film may draw from real-life crime narratives, adding an extra layer of intrigue for audiences familiar with Zaidi’s work.



Aamir Khan worries about the production of Mahabharata

New Delhi: In a recent speech, Aamir Khan discussed his long-held desire to adapt the epic Mahabharata for the big screen, characterizing the endeavor as more than just a movie. The 60-year-old discussed the scope of the project and the demands of translating a tale that is intricately woven into Indian culture in an interview with CNN-News18. “That’s my dream,” he declared. Let’s see if it ever comes to pass. Although it is a huge responsibility, I would truly want to have the chance to do it. It is ingrained in our blood that Indians are so closely related. Every Indian, in my opinion, has either read the Bhagwat Gita or at the very least heard it from their grandmother. The celebrity stated that he is worried about the adaption because he wants it to be successful. “Creating a movie, which is so important to all Indians, also carries a lot of responsibility. “You can let Mahabharata down, Mahabharata will never let you down” is something I frequently repeat. You’ll let it down if you do poorly. He stated, “I want to make sure that if I ever make this movie, I do it in a way that makes all Indians feel really proud.” The actor, who has been promoting Happy Patel, his most recent production, talked about how the Mahabharata is a cultural mission rather than just a personal goal. He stressed that the epic holds a special place for many people across generations in India, making any attempt to adapt it a delicate matter. According to Khan, the story’s universal values and moral dilemmas resonate widely, which increases the scale of responsibility for anyone taking on such a project.

Karan Wahi responds to reports that he and Jennifer Winget are getting married



Mumbai: For a while now, actors Jennifer Winget and Karan Wahi have been in the news. The internet is ablaze with rumors that the friends and former co-stars will shortly tie the knot. But the situation appears to be quite different in actuality. When we contacted Karan Wahi to inquire about the veracity of the rumors that he was getting married to Jennifer Winget, the actor simply responded, “Fake News,” which may disappoint those who were hoping for a romance. Jennifer and Karan share a strong friendship from their early days in the industry. They started together in one of their initial shows, Dil Mill Gaye, where Jennifer played Dr Riddhima Gupta while Karan Wahi was seen as Dr Siddhant Modi. After almost 14 years, the duo got to team up again on screen in 2024 when they starred opposite each other in the web

series Raisinghani vs Raisinghani. Their chemistry received a lot of appreciation from viewers and while their friendship remained strong, rumours around them dating also started swirling. While Karan has been single for a while, Jennifer was earlier married to actor Karan Singh Grover. They tied the knot in 2012, but separated after two years with them making the official announcement in November 2014. Jennifer will next be seen in a yet-untitled Netflix web series directed by Rensil D’Silva. It marks actor Parineeti Chopra’s web series debut and also stars Tahir Raj Bhasin and Sumet Vyas. Whereas Karan has teamed up with actor Surbhi Jyoti for a show titled Seven And A Half Dates. Apart from Raisinghani VS Raisinghani, he was recently seen in the web series Couple Goals Season 5, alongside actor Shivangi Joshi.

Ranbir Kapoor provides a significant update on the Animal Park filming

Mumbai: Animal Park, the eagerly awaited Animal sequel, is officially in the works, according to Ranbir Kapoor, albeit production is still a ways off. Filming on the sequel is not anticipated to begin until 2027, according to Kapoor, who recently revealed that director Sandeep Reddy Vanga is now working on another project. This development occurs when Kapoor juggles a number of significant undertakings in his career, such as parts in Love and War and Ramayana. Ranbir discussed the timing for the forthcoming sequel in an interview with Deadline Hollywood, stating,

“The director is right now making another film.” That movie should begin in 2027. It’s a little distance away.” The actor responded, “He (Reddy Vanga) just kind of flirted with what he really wants to do with the movie,” when asked if the script was already finished. He intends to divide it into three halves. Animal Park is the name of the second section.



Ranbir continued, “We have been sharing ideas from the first film itself,” to describe his role in the creation of the sequel. How he intends to continue the narrative. I get to play both the protagonist and the adversary, which is really exciting. I’m thrilled to be a part of this incredibly intriguing project with a highly creative director.” Sandeep Reddy Vanga’s hyperviolent action movie

Animal (2023) explores the complicated and compulsive bond between a father and kid. Ranbir plays Ranvijay “Vijay” Singh in the movie, whose actions are influenced by his tense relationship with his father (Anil Kapoor), setting the scenario for the subsequent plot. Ranbir is working on some of his most well-known projects right now. He is now working

on Sanjay Leela Bhansali’s Love & War, a 1960s historical drama starring Vicky Kaushal and Alia Bhatt that is slated for release in June 2026. He would play Lord Ram in Nitesh Tiwari’s Ramayana: Part One later that year. While anticipation for Animal Park continues to build, Ranbir’s comments confirm that fans will need to wait until at least 2027 to see the next chapter unfold.

The recent viral photo of Mrunal Thakur and Dulquer Salmaan creates a stir Sita Ramam 2

Mumbai: Many fans are wondering about the likelihood of a sequel to the critically acclaimed movie Sita Ramam after a recent photo of Mrunal Thakur and Dulquer Salmaan went viral. The two actors are seen together in the photo, which swiftly gained popularity on social media and has rekindled interest in their on-screen collaboration. The image of Thakur and Salmaan carrying an umbrella has gone viral. Many commentators are making analogies to their previous collaboration, Sita Ramam, which was widely praised when it was published in 2022. The image’s context is still unknown, which feeds these rumors even more. The actors and their representatives have

not made any announcements despite the hype. According to industry insiders, Sita Ramam’s production company, Vyjayanthi Movies, does not currently have any intentions for a sequel. Mrunal Thakur recently disclosed that she was working on a new Telugu film, which is likely why she recently traveled to Hyderabad. There has been no official news on a sequel to Sita Ramam, despite rumors of a sci-fi thriller and other projects. Due to the performers’ silence on the matter, viewers are left to make assumptions based on the hints that are now accessible. An official announcement is anticipated soon from either Thakur, Salmaan, or their representatives. Until such confirmation



is available, the speculation surrounding their potential reunion continues to engage audiences online.

Prabhas is all ready to film Spirit and Kalki 2 back-to-back in 2026

New Delhi: In February 2026, Prabhas will have a busy schedule as he gets ready to work on Kalki 2 and Spirit, two of his most eagerly awaited movies. The actor will split his time between these two big projects, with principal photography for Kalki 2 scheduled to start and his parts for Spirit anticipated to commence around the same time, according to a report in the Deccan Chronicle. Building on the popularity of the first movie, Nag Ashwin’s Kalki 2

will be released in the first part of the year. At the same time, Prabhas will return to the sets of Sandeep Reddy Vanga’s film Spirit. According to reports, regular filming for Spirit began in late 2018, and Prabhas will now continue to play the part. Fans are eager to watch Prabhas perform in both science fiction and action genres, so the next several months should be quite busy for him. Both movies have garnered a lot of attention, and

viewers all over India are interested in casting and production developments. After Deepika Padukone left the film, attention has also shifted to Kalki 2’s casting. There has been a lot of talk regarding potential replacements since the initial announcement in September 2025. Although the producers have not yet made an official announcement, Sai Pallavi is reportedly being considered as Deepika’s potential successor. The exit of Deepika Padukone

from Kalki 2 was made public through a statement on the film’s official X handle, which explained that Deepika is no longer attached to the project because a film like Kalki “deserves commitment.” Reports have suggested that issues around fees and working hours led to Deepika’s departure. The film is scheduled for a worldwide release on March 5 2027, making it one of the most eagerly awaited projects in Prabhas’s career.

The Clear Position of South Africa Great Regarding Sourav Ganguly’s SA20 Return Next Year

New Delhi: In the just finished SA20 campaign, Sourav Ganguly’s Pretoria Capitals experienced a “so close, yet so far” situation. The SunRisers Eastern Cape, the most successful team in competition history, destroyed the Keshav Maharaj-led outfit despite winning the league phase. However, following the former India captain’s bitter-sweet first season in charge, SA20 commissioner Graeme Smith retained high appreciation for Ganguly. After the Pretoria-based team had two unsuccessful seasons in 2024 and 2025, he thanked the legendary batter for reviving a winning mindset. “We have witnessed the results of having exceptional individuals and leaders in the game.

Dada is undoubtedly an idol in India and one of the greatest commanders. In



a conversation hosted by SA20, Smith stated, “I was really happy to see that things went well for him because he brings leadership across the board.” “I am aware that he is really sad that he was unable to cross the finish line, but he performed admirably both during the event and during the recruitment period. It was a significant season for

the Capitals after two subpar ones,” he continued. Smith also voiced optimism that Ganguly may stay with the Capitals for a minimum of one more season.

“I know he is a very proud and competitive man. I am sure he is disappointed, but we would love to have him back next year.” From Ganguly’s perspective, the saga of heartbreaking final losses

on South African soil continued. He previously lost the 2003 World Cup final as captain and has now suffered another setback as the first Indian head coach of an overseas T20 franchise. This trend extends beyond South Africa; his association with the Delhi Capitals has also seen final losses in both the IPL and the WPL during his tenure as Team Director.

Red Bull and Ferrari Continue F1 Testing Despite the Rain

New Delhi: Only Red Bull and Ferrari braved the inclement conditions on Tuesday’s second day of Formula One’s private testing in Barcelona. At the end of the day, Frenchman Isack Hadjar of Red Bull, who had posted the quickest time on Monday, was involved in a little off-track collision that caused minor damage to his car’s rear, according to multiple media reports. This week, Ferrari made their debut on the circuit with Monegasque driver Charles Leclerc. Despite the rain, Leclerc completed 64 laps in the morning before giving the wheel to seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton, who completed a solid 57 laps. “For now it’s all about trying to under-



stand if everything is working properly, which it kind of did,” Leclerc stated.

“It’s not the best conditions because it has been a little bit raining this morning but actually we did our programme anyway because we are not focused on performance whatsoever.” Max Verstappen, a four-time Dutch world champion who previously raced for Red Bull, beat Leclerc by more

than a second to post the quickest time of the day in dry conditions.

The two-time defending constructors’ champion McLaren announced that their vehicle would take to the track on Wednesday and is anticipated to run on Thursday and Friday, but they decided to fine-tune their settings on Tuesday. Williams chose not to participate in this session in Spain because

of difficulties in the development of their car, while Aston Martin confirmed on Monday that they would not be running until Thursday, missing one of their three authorized days of testing. Seven of the eleven Formula One teams—Alpine, Audi, the new American team Cadillac, Haas, Mercedes, Racing Bulls, and Red Bull—took to the Circuit in Barcelona-Catalunya on Monday for the first day of private testing, which was conducted behind closed doors without spectators or journalists. Teams are concentrating this week on the dependability of their vehicles rather than performance due to the change in technical restrictions that will take effect for the next season.

A plea contesting UGC’s new anti-discrimination regulations will be heard by the Supreme Court

New Delhi, Feb 01: On Wednesday, the Supreme Court approved the urgent listing of a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) contesting the University Grants Commission’s (UGC) recently announced anti-discrimination rules. A bench presided over by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant heard the plea. The petitioner claimed that General Category students are discriminated against by the new rules.

The bench replied, “We are also aware of what’s happening,” alluding to the public outcry over the controversial regulations. It is going to be listed. You fix flaws.” On January 13, all higher education institutions were required by new legislation to establish “equity committees” to investigate accusations of discrimination and advance equity. Members of the Other Backward Classes (OBCs), Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), people with disabilities, and women were also required to be on these committees. The UGC (Promotion of Equity in Higher Educational Institutions) Regulations, 2012, which were primarily advisory in nature, are replaced by the new regulations. Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan promised that there would be no discrimination against anyone and that the regulations would not be “misused” in the face of student protests over these restrictions in numerous states.



Elina Svitolina attributes her success in the Melbourne Semi-Finals to a mental health break

New Delhi: Elina Svitolina, a semi-finalist in the Australian Open from Ukraine, claims she would not have traveled to Melbourne last year if she hadn’t taken a vacation to refuel both mentally and physically. After defeating third-seeded Coco Gauff 6-1, 6-2, the 31-year-old will take on world No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka on Thursday to advance to the final. Svitolina has made it to three Grand Slam semifinals but has never advanced past that. After discussions with her team, family, and spouse, French veteran player Gael Monfils, she decided to terminate her 2025 season in September. The former world number three added, “It was a difficult decision on one hand,” after easily defeating the American Gauff on Tuesday. However, we also discovered a number of advantages. “(If I hadn’t stopped and would keep pushing last year, I think I wouldn’t start here, I would be exhausted and even



not sure if I would be injury-free.” Svitolina is on a 10-match winning streak after capturing the championship in Auckland this month in her comeback to professional action. “When you play at the highest level and you push yourself and you are on the edge,

this is where the injuries happen,” the revitalized 12th seed from Melbourne remarked. “Your body gives up at this point because the tension is simply too great. Therefore, it was crucial for me to take a step back. And I’m glad I did that.

President Murmu emphasizes “true social justice” as the Budget Session gets underway

New Delhi, Feb 01: On the opening day of the Budget Session 2026–2027, President Droupadi Murmu spoke to a joint session of Parliament on Wednesday. He outlined the Union government’s aim for social justice, inclusive growth, and a developed India. On the first day of the Seventh Session of the 18th Lok Sabha and the 270th Session of the Rajya Sabha, the President spoke to members of both Houses gathered in the Lok Sabha Chamber. President Murmu stated in her speech that she was “delighted to

address Parliament, recalling that the previous year was memorable for celebrating India’s rapid progress and rich heritage.” She mentioned that people honored Bankim Chandra Chatterjee by celebrating 150 years of Vande Mataram nationwide. “The nation commemorated Sri Guru Tegh Bhadur Ji’s 350th Shaheedi Diwas. The entire nation honored Birs Munda on his 150th birthday and commemorated his contributions to the tribal community. The celebration of Sardar Patel’s 150th birthday reinforced the idea of Ek

Bharat Shresht Bharat. The celebrations of Bharat Ratna Bhupen Hazarika’s birth anniversary brought music and a sense of solidarity to the entire nation. The next generation is inspired when the nation honors the contributions of its forefathers, which accelerates our progress toward Viksit Bharat,” she stated. Focusing on social justice, the President underlined that Babasaheb Ambedkar consistently emphasised equality and social justice, values enshrined in the Constitution. “Every citizen of the country should get their full rights



without any discrimination. My Government is committed to true social justice,” she said. As a result, she noted, nearly 25 crore people have come out of poverty in the last decade, with efforts to empower the poor being accelerated further in the government’s third term.

Liam Rosenior Dismisses Chelsea Exit

New Delhi: Cole Palmer’s departure from Chelsea was deemed “unrealistic” by manager Liam Rosenior, despite rumors that the England international was considering a move to Manchester United. Palmer, a native of Manchester, joined the Blues from Manchester City in 2023 and quickly rose to prominence during his first two seasons in London. According to reports, the 23-year-old would be eager to rejoin the team he grew up supporting in the north of England. Palmer has made 13 appearances in all competitions this season, but his effectiveness has been constrained by recurrent injury issues. He has five goals and no assists. Asked ahead of Chelsea’s Champions League trip to Napoli on Wednesday if Palmer remains “untouchable” and happy at the club, Rosenior replied: “Yes and yes. It’s simple.



Thailand Masters Super 300

Young Indian shuttlers aim for a solid start

New Delhi: When a group of young Indian shuttlers start their careers at the USD 250,000 Thailand Masters on Tuesday, they want to take advantage of an early-season opportunity. At the Super 300 level, which is the second-lowest tier in the main Badminton World Federation World Tour hierarchy, players like Priyanshu Rajawat, Kiran George, and Tharun Mannepilli can test themselves and try deep runs. Rajawat, a member of the Thomas Cup-winning squad and the 2023 Orleans Masters Super 300 champion, will start his campaign against fourth-seeded Brian Yang. After missing five months of competition due to a knee injury sustained in the Syed Modi India International Super 300 in November 2025, the 23-year-old from Dhar made a comeback. Seventh seed Kiran, a former Odisha Masters Super 100 champion and a quarterfinalist at the 2025 India Open Super 750, will face Malay-



sia’s Sholeh Aidil in the opening round. Mannepilli, a gold medallist at the 37th National Games in 2023 and a silver medallist at the 2023 Senior National Championships, along with former world junior No. 1 S. Sankar Muthusamy Subramanian, are also part of India’s next generation of singles players on the BWF Tour. While Mannepilli, who reached his maiden BWF Super 300 semifinal at the Macau Open last year, will take on Thailand’s Kantaphon Wangcharoen, 2022 World Junior Championships silver medalist Subramanian will face fifth seed Arnaud Merkle.

Delhi High Court: No urgency in hearing JKLF head Yasin Malik’s request for the death penalty

New Delhi, Feb 01: Yasin Malik, the leader of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) and a separatist leader, is currently serving a life sentence, and the National Investigation Agency’s (NIA) petition for the death penalty in a terror funding case is not urgent, the Delhi High Court ruled on Wednesday. The court gave NIA an additional four weeks to submit a counter to Malik’s response. After NIA’s attorney, Akshai Malik, and Khawar Saleem asked the court to provide more time, a bench of justices Navin Chawla and Ravinder Dubeja did so. Yasin Malik filed a 70-page response to the agency’s appeal in September, according to Akshai Malik, and it took longer to reply. Yasin Malik, appearing virtually, opposed the request. He said the agency had sought additional time during the last hearing on November 10 to file its reply. Yasin Malik added that he had been in limbo over the death penalty for three years, which he said amounted to trauma. NIA’s counsel opposed the contention, saying that Yasin Malik took a year to file his response and that the agency was seeking only two to three weeks to submit its reply, as the rejoinder had gone for vetting. “There is no urgency since Yasin is serving a life sentence. The agency just wants enhancement of the punishment,



that is why let the agency file its rejoinder,” the bench said, fixing April 22 as the next date of hearing. In May 2022, a trial court awarded life imprisonment to Yasin Malik after holding him guilty under the stringent Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) and the Indian Penal Code. He was convicted after pleading guilty to charges related to terror funding, spreading terrorism, and secessionist activities in Kashmir in 2017. Yasin Malik was convicted for waging war against the state, but the court at the time of his conviction noted that this case does not fall under the category of “rarest of rare crime”, warranting the death penalty. The NIA moved the high court seeking the death penalty.

In August 2024, Yasin Malik told the high court that he would argue in person and defend himself. In his 85-page reply in September last to NIA’s appeal, Yasin Malik claimed he met former Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and that successive Union governments honoured the ceasefire agreement with him following his decision to renounce violence in 1994. Yasin Malik said that he met Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) terrorist Hafiz Saeed at the behest of senior Intelligence Bureau officials in India. He claimed to have closed-door meetings with top government representatives and apparent interactions with prominent figures, including Reliance Industries founder Dhirubhai Ambani.

Suryakumar Yadav Rises Five Places to Seventh in the Most Recent ICC T20I Rankings

New Delhi: Suryakumar Yadav, the captain of India, moved up five spots to seventh position in the ICC men's T20I rankings on Wednesday after a strong performance in the current five-match home series against New Zealand, which India leads 3-0. Just ten days before the T20 World Cup, India dominates the upper reaches of the standings with Abhishek Sharma at the top and Tilak Varma in third place. The former No. 1 batter climbed the chart with scores of 32, 82 not out, and 57 not out. Shivam Dubey and Srinu Singh are two additional batters who have benefited from the top-ranked T20I team, while Ishan Kishan, who scored 76 off 32 balls in the second match in Raipur, has returned to the ranks in 64th place. Afghanistan opens Ibrahim Zadran and Rahmanullah have also made significant gains after a productive run during their 2-1 series win over the West Indies in Dubai. While Player-of-the-Series Darwish Rasooli has advanced 29 spots to 87th place after amassing 156 runs, Ibrahim has moved up two spots to 13th and Rahmanullah has



moved up three spots to 15th. South Africa captain Aiden Markram's 47-ball 86 not out in their first match against the West Indies has lifted him into the top 20, while the West Indies' Brandon King (up 15 places to 35th) and New Zealand's Glenn Phillips (up 18 places to 44th) have also made notable progress. In the T20I bowling rankings, Afghanistan spinner Mujeeb ur Rahman's haul of four for 21 in the second match against the West Indies sees him gain five places and reach ninth position, while India's Jasprit Bumrah (up four places to 13th) and Ravi Bishnoi (up 13 places to 19th) have progressed along with South Africa's Corbin Bosch (up eight places to a career-best 32nd). India's Hardik Pandya has surged 18 places to 59th position in the bowling rankings after taking four wickets in three matches. He is also up two places to 53rd among batters and inched up one slot to third among all-rounders. In the ODI rankings, England batters Harry Brook and Joe Root have gained after helping with their side register a 2-1 series win in Sri Lanka. Brook's 247 runs across the three matches have lifted him 17 places to 11th, while Root's 184 runs take him from 23rd to 17th spot. In the ODI bowling rankings, leg-spinner Adil Rashid has moved up six places to fifth with seven wickets in the series and Sri Lanka's left-arm spinner Dunith Wellalage has progressed from 43rd to 29th.

As Vizag prepares for a storm, Sanju Samson looks for a spark

New Delhi: An auto-rickshaw driver in Visakhapatnam spoke quietly proudly about the city's natural drainage system on the eve of the game. Locals are able to lessen the constant hazards of cyclones and excessive rainfall because to a geographical peculiarity. This port city is characterized by winding roads that rise and fall with the mountainous landscape, nestled between the rough Eastern Ghats and the undulating East Coast surf. He said, "This is not the season for a cyclone." On Wednesday, the coastal city is expected to experience a different type of tempest—possibly not meteorologically. In the fourth match of what has so far been a brutally one-sided five-match series, the rampaging Indian T20I machine is coming into town to take on New Zealand. India has raised the bar for T20I batting. On the other hand, New Zealand has been in a dark chamber looking for answers throughout the series. In just ten overs, totals of 154 have been overhauled, while targets of 209 have been brought down in 15.2 overs. The velocity at which the record books are being rewritten is terrifying. Once again, the hosts will try to unleash their impressive weapons. Before the T20 World Cup kicks off in ten days, the deck at the ACA-VDCA Stadium might serve as the ideal starting point for yet another record-breaking evening and a final, menacing warning to the chasing pack. Suryakumar Yadav's men will be looking to maintain their streak of brilliance. At the heart of this revolution is Abhishek Sharma, the designated enforcer. It is no surprise that he has rapidly become the poster boy of this new-look side. Abhishek's shirts were the hottest commodity outside the stadium on Tuesday, as fans flocked to witness a man currently capable of dismantling any bowling attack with nonchalant ease. "When you look at his strike rate, it's hard, first, to identify any real weakness in his game, and then, secondly, to execute a plan against him," admitted New Zealand's bowling coach, Jacob Oram. The team management is backing him to the hilt with bowling coach Morne Morkel dismissing dressing room unease because of the dip in form.



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Napoli is worried about losing to Chelsea in the Champions League

New Delhi: Napoli faces potential elimination from the Champions League as they prepare to play Chelsea amid a severe injury crisis and a struggling Serie A title defense. Currently positioned in the elimination zone with only eight points from seven matches following a 1-1 draw against FC Copenhagen, Napoli must secure a victory against Chelsea to have a chance at progressing to the play-offs. This match is particularly challenging as Chelsea, under Antonio Conte, also needs a win to maintain their top-eight status for direct qualification to the last 16. Compounding Napoli's difficulties is their recent 3-0 defeat to Juventus, which has left them nine points adrift of Serie A leaders, Inter Milan. Conte, reflecting on the match, emphasized the importance of fan support during this tough period. Under his leadership, Napoli aims to become the first team to win consecutive Serie A titles, but injuries have plagued the squad since the start of the season. Notably, Romelu Lukaku's hamstring injury sidelined him until late in the recent loss, and several other key players are also unavailable, including goalkeeper Vanja Milinkovic-Savic and winger David Neres, who is undergoing ankle surgery.

World No. 2 Iga Swiatek Stunned By 5th Seed Elena Rybakina

Australian Open 2026

New Delhi: In her most recent attempt to win a career Grand Slam, fifth seed Elena Rybakina shocked world number two Iga Swiatek to advance to the Australian Open semi-finals on Wednesday. The Kazakh, who was born in Moscow, overcame early serving difficulties to defeat the second seed 7-5, 6-1. She will play either Jessica Pegula or Amanda Anisimova on Saturday to get to the final. In 2023, Rybakina advanced to the Melbourne final but lost to Aryna Sabalenka in three difficult sets. Since then, she had only been in Melbourne for the last eight.



However, the 2022 Wimbledon winner has been one of the best players on the circuit lately, having won 18 of her past 19 games, with her sole defeat coming this month in the quarterfinals in Brisbane. She is in her first Slam semifinal since Wimbledon in 2024 and her fourth overall. "Really pleased with the win," the 26-year-old declared. We are fairly acquainted, and I was merely attempting to maintain my aggressiveness. "I think the first serve wasn't really working for either of us in the first set, so we were just trying to put pressure on each other by stepping in on the second serve. "I think in the second set I just started to play more freely and served better." Defeat denied Swiatek a career Grand Slam of all four majors.

She has won four French Opens, the US Open and Wimbledon, but a title at Melbourne Park remains elusive. Swiatek and Rybakina had met 11 times before, including five last season, with the Pole holding a narrow 6-5 edge. But Rybakina won the last encounter at the WTA Finals in Riyadh. Swiatek forged a break on Rybakina's opening serve, with the Kazakh getting only one of her first serves in, but she struck back immediately to keep the match level. Rybakina's serve was misfiring and the Pole worked another three break points in the next game, but all were saved as

the fifth seed hung on. The Kazakh made some adjustments and her serve finally started to hit the mark. There was little to split them until Swiatek served to stay in the set at 5-6 with Rybakina going for her shots and converted on the second set-point opportunity. The writing was on the wall for Swiatek with Rybakina winning her last 21 matches after taking the first set, and she pounced early with a sizzling forehand return earning a break to love. She consolidated for 3-0 and when two straight aces made it 4-1 there was no way back for the Pole.

Lorenzo Musetti confirms suspected tear after 'painful' mid-match retirement

New Delhi: Novak Djokovic's 2026 Australian Open campaign came dangerously close to ending. However, after winning the first two sets, Lorenzo Musetti was forced to withdraw due to an injury, thus Lady Luck had other ideas. Speaking following his abrupt retirement, a disgruntled Musetti disclosed that he had sustained a right leg injury. At the start of the second set, I sensed it. I sensed a weird sensation in my right leg. He remarked, "You know, I kept playing because I was playing really, really, really well, but I felt like the pain was getting worse and the issue was not going away." "I sat during the three-minute medical time-out at the conclusion, and when I resumed playing, the agony was becoming worse and worse. So, not much to say about that. "Well, to tape it, it was a little bit too high, so it was impossible to tape it," he stated, pointing out that he had a tear. And, no, I mean, I feel like I understand my anatomy and am somewhat confident that this is, regrettably, a rip. "I'm not a physician, but it seems to be on the—I'm not sure if it's the adductor or... I'm not sure. That's where it is.



However, naturally, I. "I'm not doctor, but it's kind of on the - I don't know if it's the adductor or... I don't know. It's over there. But, of course, I will do all the exams when I will come back home and, of course I will update you guys. "Honestly, I never imagined, you know, the feeling of leading two sets to zero against Novak and playing like that and have the lead of the match like that and be forced to retire is something that, of course, I will never imagine. Of course, it's really painful. "Honestly, I played almost all the second set like that, but I could play, because especially with the serve, it was helping me a lot, and I was trying a little bit to push from the baseline, which I was feeling the ball pretty well today.

The coach of Borussia Dortmund claims that Cristian Chivu has improved Inter Milan

New Delhi: The 2023 and 2025 finalists Inter Milan, whom Borussia Dortmund will play in the Champions League on Wednesday, are a superior squad under coach Cristian Chivu, according to Borussia Dortmund coach Niko Kovac. Chivu's Inter, who are already five points ahead in Serie A, have preserved the finest aspects of classic Italian football while presenting a "modern" danger, according to Kovac. Under Simone Inzaghi, Inter made an impressive run to the final last year, but they were destroyed by Paris Saint-Germain, losing 5-0 in Munich. "They used to be dominant, but they have now changed and introduced a very fast transition game. We must be conscious of this," Kovac stated.

In a modern context, Inter is characterized as dynamic and technical, contrasting with previous perceptions of Italian football as slower. As both Dortmund and Inter aim to secure direct qualification for the Champions League's last 16, Dortmund needs favorable outcomes in other matches. Notably, Dortmund was a runner-up two years prior, while Inter lost the final in 2023 to Manchester City.

ISL is expected to resume on February 14 with Mohun Bagan vs. Kerala Blasters



New Delhi: According to tentative fixtures released by the All India Football Federation (AIFF), the defending champions Mohun Bagan Super Giant will play Kerala Blasters at Salt Lake Stadium on February 14 to kick off the shortened Indian Super League 2025-26 season. Their main Kolkata derby match against East Bengal is set for May 3. As part of the explanations given to potential broadcasters vying for the league's media rights, the national federation released the tentative schedule on Monday. Before the formal contract is signed, the AIFF

stated that the fixtures are indicative and subject to change based on club feedback. "However, this schedule is indicative and may be utilised by interested bidders for informational purposes only. The schedule remains subject to change, based on inputs received from the participating Clubs, and a final schedule will form a part of the Contract," the federation said as quoted by PTI. The schedule was shared following a pre-bid meeting with interested bidders — reported to be four entities — held on January 23. The delayed season, featuring

all 14 clubs, will begin on February 14 and conclude with the 13th and final round scheduled tentatively for May 17, although the AIFF said final dates will be confirmed later. A total of 91 matches will be played on a home-and-away basis. The truncated season was finalised after prolonged negotiations between the AIFF and participating clubs, along with the intervention of the sports ministry. The AIFF had issued the Request for Proposal (RFP) for broadcast rights on January 18. The last date for bidders to seek clarifications is January 27, while bids

must be submitted by February 1. The bids will be opened on February 2. According to the tentative fixtures, double headers will be held on all Saturdays and Sundays, except for one Sunday. The high-profile Kolkata derby between Mohun Bagan Super Giant and East Bengal will be played at Salt Lake Stadium on Sunday, May 3, during Round 11. Most weekdays will feature one match each. Seven matches are scheduled on Mondays and Thursdays, four on Tuesdays and two on Wednesdays. Mohun Bagan are set to play seven of their 13 matches at home at Salt Lake Stadium. Debutants Inter Kashi, promoted as I-League champions, will use Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar as their home venue, hosting six matches there. Odisha FC will also play six home games at the same stadium. Mohammedan Sporting will play four of their home matches in Jamshedpur, which is also the home ground of Jamshedpur FC. Sporting Club Delhi and Punjab FC will share the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, with Delhi playing six home matches and Punjab hosting seven at the venue. Chennaiyin FC are also scheduled to play six home matches at the JLN Stadium.

Renee Noronha of India wants to change history

Hyderabad: Speaking with Renee Noronha makes you feel almost at ease. The athlete, who recently turned 20, speaks with such composure that it's easy to forget that she was the youngest Indian woman to finish an Ironman challenge at the age of 18 years and 49 days. Renee revealed in an exclusive interview with India Today that she enjoys spending time with her dog, Sky, and is a family person off the track. Being a "Swiftie" at heart, she claims that seeing Taylor Swift perform live was a dream come true. I enjoy spending time with my family when I'm not working out or competing. Additionally, I like going on walks with my dog, Sky. I enjoy listening to music and playing with him. I'm a big fan of Taylor Swift. Additionally, I went to a concert, which was a major event. Renee remarked, "It was like a dream come true, and listening to her perform was amazing." But don't let her serenity and smile deceive you. Renee never fails to deliver when she is on track, and she constantly strives to improve and outperform her own timings. Renee, who finished Ironman New Zealand in 2024 and Hamburg last year, wants to inspire other women to pursue triathlons in addition to setting a world record. Running, swimming, or even cycling weren't the first things Renee did. Actually, it has to do with gymnastics. The 20-year-old claimed that because she was a livewire as a child, her parents felt that gymnastics would be the greatest way to channel her energy. "As a child, I was always rather active. I was rushing around the house



and performing cartwheels all the time. I took gymnastics for ten years after my parents chose to enroll me in it, Renee stated. But when she was 16, the female Ironman athlete felt she could do more and actually push her limits. "At the age of 16, I felt I could do more. I wanted to try something different, and that's when I started running. I loved running, and I always felt I could do more, and that's when I started swimming and cycling, and I met my coach, and decided that I want to do an Ironman. And then in 2024, I did my first Ironman," said Renee. While she made the transition sound so easy, it was far from it. The 20-year-old admitted that before she started her swim in Ironman New Zealand, there was a bit of nerves as the weather conditions weren't ideal. Renee said that her Ironman training has actually helped her find the right balance between academics and sports.