

Mizoram Secures ₹800 Crore ADB Loan to Strengthen Universal Health Care Scheme



Aizawl, Feb 11: The Government of Mizoram has signed a landmark loan agreement with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to bolster the state's healthcare infrastructure under the Mizoram Universal Health

Care Scheme (MUHCS). The agreement, finalized on January 23 at ADB Headquarters in Manila, secures funding worth USD 108 million (approximately ₹800 crore). According to the State Finance Department, the loan

is categorized under Externally Aided Projects (EAP). Under this arrangement, the Central Government will bear the primary repayment responsibility, while Mizoram will repay only 10 percent (₹80 crore) as a soft loan to the Centre. The loan

carries a Secured Overnight Financing Rate (SOFR) of about 3.6% per annum. Officials stated that the funds will be directed toward strengthening healthcare delivery systems, expanding medical facilities, and ensuring wider access to essential health services across the state. The initiative is expected to significantly improve the quality of healthcare, particularly in rural and underserved areas. The signing ceremony was attended by representatives from the Ministry of Finance, Government of India, and ADB officials. The agreement reflects Mizoram's commitment to achieving universal health coverage and aligns with national priorities for inclusive healthcare development. This financial support marks a major step forward in Mizoram's efforts to provide equitable, affordable, and quality healthcare to its citizens.

Mizoram to Present 2026–27 State Budget on February 26



Aizawl, Feb 11: Chief Minister Lalduhoma will present Mizoram's annual budget for the financial year 2026–27 on February 26, marking his third budget since the Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) assumed office in December 2023. The budget session of the Mizoram Legislative Assembly is scheduled to run from February 17 to March 16, 2026. During this period, legislators will deliberate on financial allocations, development priorities, and welfare initiatives aimed at strengthening the state's economy and public services. Officials have indicated that the upcoming budget will emphasize growth-oriented policies, social welfare programs, and infrastructure

development, reflecting the government's commitment to inclusive progress. The session is expected to witness detailed discussions on healthcare, education, connectivity, and rural development, in line with the administration's long-term vision. This announcement comes shortly after Mizoram secured a ₹800 crore loan from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to reinforce its Universal Health Care Scheme, underscoring the government's focus on welfare and public service delivery. The forthcoming budget is anticipated to set the tone for Mizoram's economic and social agenda in the coming year, balancing fiscal responsibility with developmental aspirations.

In Brief

CM Khemchand flags off media team to Vietnam

Imphal: Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh today flagged off a 30-member media delegation on an external media tour to Vietnam, sponsored by the Department of Information and Public Relations (DIPR), at Yumnam Leikai, Imphal West. The team comprises 25 members from the All Manipur Working Journalists' Union (AMWJU) and 5 officials from DIPR. Secretary (IPR) Hungyo Worshang, along with officials of the department, is also part of the delegation.

Three more UG cadres involved in Lilong Chajing blast arrested

Imphal: Three more cadres of KCP (Apunba) who were involved in causing a bomb blast at Lilong Chajing area under Singjamei-PS have been arrested by Manipur Police from different locations yesterday. The arrested cadres have been identified as Laimayum Nelson Sharma (20) of Nagamapal Kangjabi Leirak under Lamphel-PS, Imphal West district, arrested from his residence; Chingkhainganba Wahengbam (20) @Chingkhel of Sagolband Wahengbam Leikai, Imphal West district, arrested from Imphal airport, and Laithangbam Robert Singh (32) @Abu of Uripok Sorbon Thingel, Imphal West district, arrested from Minuthong area, Imphal West district. From their possession, two mobile phones, two Aadhaar cards, one wallet with a sum of Rs. 260 and two number plates bearing MN 01AK 3615 were seized. With today's arrests which follow the arrest earlier of three cadres of the proscribed group, all involved in the bomb blast case have been arrested.

Ink Attack Plot on Gaurav Gogoi Foiled, Says Assam CM

Guwahati, Feb 11: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has alleged that certain elements within the Congress party were planning to stage incidents of violence involving their own leaders in an attempt to generate public sympathy ahead of the upcoming Assembly elections.

He said police have already taken preventive action, including making an arrest, in connection with the alleged plan. Addressing reporters at a press conference in Guwahati, Sarma said that city police received information from a Congress "whistle-blower" about a purported strategy to throw ink at Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi and shape a political narrative favourable to the opposition party. Based on these inputs, police have registered a preventive FIR against three individuals — Sunil Kanagole, Saksham Marwah, and Adrita Das — over an alleged conspiracy to create political unrest and shift the blame onto the BJP, the Chief Minister said.

According to Sarma, authorities were informed that the trio was allegedly planning to throw ink at Gogoi and attribute the act to the ruling party. Following this information, police initiated preventive measures

to avert any untoward incident.

Police sources said the three individuals would be summoned to the police station and asked to submit written undertakings. They have reportedly been told that they could be held accountable if any such incident takes place. Saksham Marwah is said to be associated with the organisation Inclusive Minds and to have studied at Cambridge University. All three individuals are currently in Guwahati, and police said the situation is being closely monitored to maintain law and order.

The Chief Minister also alleged that two officials from the political consultancy firm Inclusive Minds — which he claimed has been engaged by the Congress — were involved in planning political activities for the party. "Two officials of Inclusive Minds plan everything, and Congress executes it," Sarma alleged.

He further claimed that one of the individuals allegedly involved in the plan approached the police, stating that he could not support such actions. "He said that being an Assamese, he could not support this and therefore came forward," Sarma stated. Police have reportedly arrested one person early Tuesday morning in connection

with the case, while another individual has been served a notice. The investigation is ongoing. "Investigation has started. We will reveal more in four to five days," the Chief Minister said. Sarma's remarks came a day after Assam Pradesh Congress Committee president and MP Gaurav Gogoi alleged lapses in his security cover. Gogoi had claimed he was not being provided the level of protection usually extended to state Congress presidents and said he had been warned by well-wishers about a possible attack. Following these concerns, the state government enhanced Gogoi's security, deploying additional personnel and escort arrangements.

The allegations surface months before the Assam Assembly elections, intensifying the political rivalry between the ruling BJP and the opposition Congress. While the Chief Minister has framed the issue as one of law and order and political ethics, Congress leaders have earlier accused the state government of politicising security matters.

Police have not yet issued a detailed official statement, and the Chief Minister's claims remain part of an ongoing investigation.

Three more UG cadres involved in Lilong Chajing blast arrested

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rested from Imphal airport, and Laithangbam Robert Singh (32) @Abu of Uripok Sorbon Thingel, Imphal West district, arrested from Minuthong area, Imphal West district. From their possession, two mobile phones, two Aadhaar cards, one wallet with a sum of Rs. 260 and two number plates bearing MN 01AK 3615 were seized. With today's arrests which follow the arrest earlier of three cadres of the proscribed group, all involved in the bomb blast case have been arrested. Meanwhile, security forces arrested another active cadre of KCP (Apunba), namely Sagolshem Johnson Singh @ Pandum @ Nongshaba (32) of Langjing Achouba Awang Leikai, Imphal West district from Narankonjin Makha Leikai area under Wangoi-PS, Imphal West district. The arrestee was involved in intimidating the authority of Catholic Schools located in Imphal area to admit students. From his possession, inter alia, three mobile phones, and one side bag were recovered.

MSP procurement for 60,500 MT rapeseed approved for Assam

Guwahati, Feb 11: Union Minister for Rural Development and Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, today said that the Union Budget 2026-2 is historic and futuristic and will bring positive change to the nation as well as to the Northeastern region.

Addressing a press conference on the Union Budget in Guwahati today, the Union Minister asserted that the Budget reflects the vision of a Viksit Bharat and lays a strong foundation for a self-reliant, empowered and prosperous India by 2047. He emphasized that the budget focuses on inclusive growth and social prosperity, ensuring benefits reach every section of society. Highlighting the Centre's commitment to the Northeast, the Union Minister informed that Rs. 6,812 crore has been allocated to the Ministry of Development of Northeastern Region (MDoNER), which is Rs 897 crore more than the previous budget. This enhanced allocation, he said, clearly demonstrates the Union Government's priority towards accelerating development in the region.

Speaking about Assam he said that for FY 2026–27, Rs 49,725 crore has been budgeted towards tax devolution. Since 2014, Assam has received approximately Rs 3.12 lakh crore through tax devolution. Among the healthcare initiatives announced in the Budget is Biopharma SHAKTI (Strategy for Healthcare Advancement through Knowledge, Technology and Innovation), with an outlay of Rs 10,000 crore over five years, aimed at strengthening domestic capabilities in biologics and biosimilars to address the

growing burden of non-communicable diseases. As part of this initiative, existing institutions such as NIPER Guwahati will be upgraded, contributing to research, innovation and skilled manpower development in the region. The Union Minister further informed that the agriculture budget has been increased to Rs 1,32,561 crore this year, reinforcing the government's commitment to farmers' welfare. A provision of Rs 9,967 crore has been made for agricultural education and research to strengthen innovation and scientific advancement. To ensure the availability of affordable fertilisers and reduce production costs for farmers, a fertiliser subsidy of Rs 1,70,944 crore has been provided.

Speaking about the Ministry of Rural Development, the Union Minister informed that the budget has been increased by 21 per cent this year. Within this a provision of over Rs 1.51 lakh crore, has been made for the 'VB - G RAM G' Act as compared to Rs. 86,000 crore only under the previous MGNREG Act.

On the occasion, the Minister also announced that Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare has approved the proposal of Government of Assam for the procurement of 60,500 MT Rapeseed/ Mustard for Rabi 2026 season at Minimum Support Price under Price Support Scheme in the state. This will ensure remunerative prices to the farmers and prevent them from resorting to distress sale. He further informed that Rs 104.17 crore have been allocated to Assam for the FY 2026-27 under the Mission for Aatmanirbharta in Pulses.

Guwahati to host CRPF Raising Day Parade for first time

Guwahati, Feb 11: The CRPF Raising Day Parade will be held in Guwahati for the first time on February 21. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma today said that the 87th edition of the parade, which will be held at the Sarusajai Stadium, will be attended by Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

• Researchers at IIT-Guwahati have developed a cost-effective electrocoagulation system that removes 99% of arsenic from contaminated water in just minutes.

Guwahati, Feb 11: Indian Institute of Technology-Guwahati (IIT-G) researchers have developed a new system that can effectively remove 99 percent arsenic from contaminated water at a low cost.

The electrocoagulation system has demonstrated the ability to remove contaminants within a few minutes, making it suitable for use in regions with limited access to complex water treatment infrastructure.

Owing to rapid industrialisation and urban growth, global reliance on groundwater has increased significantly.

In many regions, groundwater contains arsenic released from natural rock formations or human activities such as mining and agriculture.

IIT-Guwahati researches develop low-cost system to remove arsenic from groundwater

Long-term exposure can cause serious health problems, including organ damage and cancer. Around 140 million people globally are exposed to unsafe arsenic levels, with India, Bangladesh, and parts of South America among the worst affected.

To address this, many conventional methods have been developed, and while some have been successful, these are difficult to implement in uncontrolled environments. Most methods rely on the addition of chemicals, extensive treatment periods, and sophisticated equipment. Moreover, the methods need to be performed on site and have the potential to create surplus sludge, increasing the time and energy costs to disposal.

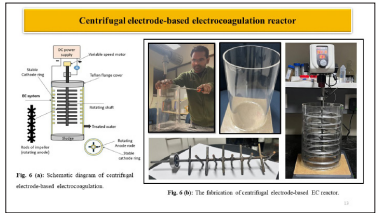
Electrocoagulation offers a different approach. Instead of adding chemicals from outside, it uses an electric current to release metal ions from electrodes placed in the water. These ions attach to arsenic and other contaminants, allowing them to

clump together and be removed from the water through settling or flotation. The process is relatively simple to operate and reduces the need for chemical handling.

Traditional electrocoagulation systems use stationary electrodes, which can slow the process and cause deposits to form on the electrode surface over time, reducing efficiency.

To overcome many of the noted system inefficiencies, the IIT Guwahati team, under the guidance of Prof. Mihir Purkait, Professor, Department of Chemical Engineering, IIT Guwahati, configured an electrocoagulation system with a rotating anode and a stationary cathode.

Speaking on the application of the technology for arsenic mitigation, Prof. Mihir K. Purkait from the Department of Chemical Engineering, IIT Guwahati said, "Electrocoagulation, combined with a rotating electrode system, offers an efficient solution for arsenic-contaminated water.



In this process, a controlled electric current dissolves a sacrificial iron electrode while its rotation enhances mixing and mass transfer, leading to uniform generation of iron coagulant species that effectively bind arsenic present in the water."

Simultaneously, fine gas bubbles formed during the process attach to the arsenic-laden flocs and lifts them to the surface for easy separation.

According to Prof. Purkait, the use of rotating iron electrodes significantly improves removal efficiency while maintaining low operational cost, making the technology well suited for arsenic removal under optimised conditions."

NE/EAST

Gangtok's farmer-focused organic market is opened by the Sikkim chief minister



Sikkim, Feb 11: Sikkim Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang on February 8, inaugurated a fully organic, farmer-oriented market at Reshithang in the Upper Burtuk constituency, aimed at providing a platform for local farmers to sell their homegrown produce directly to consumers.

The market, named "Hamro Gauley Bazar," was established through voluntary contributions from villagers under the 'Shram Daan' initiative, without any

government expenditure. The inauguration was attended by local MLA Kala Rai and other community representatives. Speaking at the event, CM Tamang expressed gratitude to all villagers who contributed to the market's establishment. He emphasised the government's vision to develop the market into a hub of rural economic activity while highlighting the importance of verification mechanisms to ensure that stallholders are genuine agricultural landowners.

The market will operate twice a week, providing both villagers and visitors the opportunity to access fresh organic produce. Tamang also directed the Tourism Department to include the market as a key tourist point, allowing visitors to experience local cuisine and engage with the community-driven initiative. Officials described the market as a model of sustainable, community-led development, reflecting Sikkim's commitment to organic farming and rural entrepreneurship.

BJP likely to appoint new Manipur unit President formation of popular

Itanagar, Feb 11: A new president of the BJP Manipur Pradesh may be elected soon following the installation of a popular government in the state under Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand and the recent election of Nitin Nabin as BJP national president. Party sources said the process of appointing a new state unit chief had been delayed due to the prolonged violent crisis that began on May 3, 2023. BJP central leaders were reportedly waiting for the restoration of relative peace and the formation of an elected government before initiating the change in leadership. With the popular government now in place, discussions on replacing incumbent BJP Manipur Pradesh president Adhikarimayum Sharda have gained momentum. Sharda has been serving as the party's state president since June 26, 2021. Although no official announcement has been made, sources indicated that the BJP central leadership is keen on selecting a capable leader who can steer the party into the 2027 Manipur Assembly elections

and consolidate its organisational strength. Speculation is rife within party circles. From unelected name such as BJP general secretary L Deven Singh and former general secretary Samurailatpam Premananda Sharma are being discussed as they have been rooted with BJP for such a long time. While from elected MLAs Sapam Ranjan Singh and Th Basantakumar are expected. The highly placed source also stated that cabinet expansion has become a very challenging task now even though government was formed. However it will be held between February 12 to 15 by central leaders through proper allocation of cabinet berth. Meanwhile, sources said that lobbying for the post has already begun, with several party leaders reaching out to the BJP's central leadership. Notably, the All India Congress Committee recently appointed former chief minister and current CLP leader Okram Ibobi Singh as the president of the Manipur Pradesh Congress Committee, adding to the political churn in the state.

Ahead of TTAADC polls, Amit Shah likely to visit Tripura on February 20

Itanagar, Feb 11: Union Home Minister Amit Shah is likely to arrive in Tripura on February 20, ahead of the upcoming elections to the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC), according to sources within the state BJP. Highly placed party sources said the Union Home Minister is expected to undertake a one-day visit to the state, which is being viewed as politically significant in the run-up to the council polls. "Although the final itinerary is yet to be officially communicated, we have learnt that Amit Shah will be arriving in Tripura on February 20," a BJP source said. During the visit, Shah is likely to attend a government programme highlighting key developmental initiatives undertaken by the Centre in Tripura. He is also expected to chair an important meeting with the BJP's state leadership, where organisational matters and strategies for the upcoming TTAADC elections may be discussed. The proposed visit is being seen as a major boost to the BJP's campaign, particularly in tribal-dominated areas. Party leaders believe Shah's presence will



energise workers and strengthen outreach efforts ahead of the crucial polls.

Corporal punishment persists in Dibrugarh schools despite legal ban

Guwahati, Feb 11: A recent academic study has revealed that corporal punishment remains widespread in schools in Upper Assam's Dibrugarh district, despite being legally banned under the Right to Education Act, 2009. The findings raise serious concerns about children's safety, mental health, and the failure of enforcement mechanisms. Mizoram followed closely at 90.86 per cent, while states such as Rajasthan reported lower figures, highlighting sharp regional disparities. Despite clear legal prohibitions, implementation remains weak. The absence of strict monitoring, a lack of teacher training in positive discipline, and social acceptance of physical punishment have allowed the practice to persist, the researchers observed. The study strongly recommends urgent reforms, including regular inspections, awareness programmes for parents and teachers, a reduction in teacher workload, improved teacher-student ratios, and compulsory training in non-violent classroom management. It also calls for greater student participation in school decision-making to create safer and

more inclusive learning environments. The findings underscore ongoing concerns about the use of corporal punishment and its implications for children's dignity and mental well-being. Amid renewed debates on school safety following the death of a Class VIII student this week, allegedly linked to corporal punishment by a teacher in a private school in neighbouring Tinsukia district, the study contributes additional evidence indicating the need for review and action by education authorities. The impact on children is severe and multidimensional, the study notes. Students subjected to physical punishment showed higher levels of anxiety, depression, fear, low self-esteem, and disengagement from learning. Academically, such children were more likely to perform poorly, develop behavioural issues, and face an increased risk of dropping out of school altogether. The study also challenges the justification often offered by educators. While many teachers argued that corporal punishment is necessary to maintain discipline in overcrowded classrooms with limited resources, the study found



that such practices damage teacher-student relationships and create a culture of fear rather than trust. The study, published in 2025 in the International Journal of Environmental Sciences, examines teachers' perceptions and students' experiences across public and private schools in the Shankardev cluster of Lahoal block. punishment in the country, with 99.56 per cent of children acknowledging its presence in schools.

Mizoram health minister calls for behavioural approach curb HIV spread



Guwahati, Feb 11: Amid growing concern over rising HIV cases in the Northeast, Mizoram Health Minister Lalrinpuui on February 6, stressed the need for a behavioural approach as the first line of defence against new HIV infections. Addressing the North East Multimedia Campaign (Red Fest) in Aizawl, the minister called for renewed focus on the 'ABC' approach abstinence, being faithful to one partner, and correct and consistent use of condoms, which she described as the most effective method to prevent and control HIV transmission. "The ABC approach remains the core principle in our fight against HIV. Returning to these basics is essential to ensure a risk-free future for our youth," Lalrinpuui said.

The event was jointly organised by the Mizoram State AIDS Control Society (MSACS) and the National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO) to promote HIV/AIDS awareness across the Northeastern states. Lalrinpuui said the campaign aims to educate young people about HIV/AIDS, encourage healthy lifestyles and risk-free behaviour, ensure easier access to treatment for those affected, and eliminate stigma associated with the disease. Expressing concern over the high HIV

prevalence in the region, she urged Northeastern states to intensify collective efforts to halt the further spread of the infection. "The Northeastern states continue to record the highest HIV prevalence in the country. With unity, sustained effort and hope, controlling HIV/AIDS is an achievable goal," she said. Chief Secretary Khilli Ram Meena, who was also present at the event, said discrimination remains a major barrier to HIV testing and treatment. He stressed that collective responsibility and empathy are essential to building a society where people living with HIV can live with dignity and equal opportunity. Officials said Mizoram, Nagaland and Manipur are the only states in the country with HIV prevalence rates near or exceeding one per cent, making them the highest burden states nationally. Despite improvements in preventive measures, Mizoram continues to record the highest adult HIV prevalence rate at 2.73 per cent, compared to the national average of 0.20 per cent. However, the state has witnessed a steady decline in new HIV infections since 2018 and has improved its position in the national HIV prevention ranking, climbing from fifth place in 2024-25 to third in 2025-26, officials added.

Silchar Passenger Train Launched, Boosting Mizoram and Assam Connectivity

Guwahati, Feb 11: The service was inaugurated via video conferencing by Union Minister for Railways, Information & Broadcasting, and Electronics & Information Technology Ashwini Vaishnaw. The launch marks a major step in strengthening inter-state connectivity and improving passenger convenience in the region. The programme at Sairang Railway Station was attended by Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma, who described the new rail link as a significant milestone in expanding transport infrastructure and access to Mizoram's capital region. Officials said the Sairang-Silchar service is expected to provide affordable and comfortable travel for passengers, while also boosting tourism by improving access to Mizoram's scenic destinations. With Silchar serving as a key hub for higher education and advanced medical facilities, the new rail connection is also expected to benefit students, patients and traders travelling between the two states. The launch forms part of Indian Railways' broader vision to enhance regional connectivity and passenger-centric infrastructure across the Northeast.

In a parallel event, Vaishnaw also inaugurated upgraded passenger facilities at Guwahati Railway Station. The newly developed amenities include an air-conditioned lounge, secure sleeping pods equipped with lighting, ventilation and charging points, and a dedicated ladies' powder room. A restricted multi-cuisine catering service for paid users has also been introduced. Railway officials said the upgraded facilities reflect Indian Railways' ongoing push towards world-class station infrastructure and



improved passenger comfort, as efforts continue to modernise rail travel across the region.

Arunachal CM Pema Khandu Condemns 'Malicious' Claims Linking Dalai Lama to Epstein Files

Itanagar, Feb 11: Reacting to the controversy, Khandu voiced firm support for the Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama (OHHDL), which on February 8 issued an unequivocal denial rejecting any association with the late Jeffrey Epstein. The Chief Minister said attempts to drag the Dalai Lama's name into such narratives amounted to a deliberate misinformation campaign aimed at maligning a revered spiritual institution. Taking to social media, Khandu said the institution of the Dalai Lama stands for global peace, compassion, and moral integrity, and must not be targeted through unfounded allegations or sensationalist narratives. He termed the circulation of such claims as "deeply irresponsible and condemnable." "The revered institution of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama must not be dragged into baseless narratives or malicious speculation like the so-called 'Epstein files.' Attempts to malign a sacred spiritual institution through misinformation are deeply irresponsible," Khandu said. The Chief Minister, a prominent voice for Himalayan Buddhist communities, reiterated that the Dalai Lama is wide-



ly regarded as an apostle of peace and harmony, and that periodic attacks on his reputation often stem from politically motivated efforts to undermine Tibetan spiritual author-

ity. Khandu's remarks came amid a surge of unverified claims circulating on social media and certain media platforms following the release of unclassified documents related to

Epstein. The OHHDL, in its statement, categorically dismissed the reports as false and misleading, urging the public to rely only on credible and verified sources.

PM Modi to Land on Assam Highway Airstrip as 16 IAF Aircraft, Including Rafale and Su-30MKI, Take Part in Mega Airshow

Guwahati, Feb 11:Prime Minister Narendra Modi will make a historic landing on a specially developed highway Emergency Landing Facility (ELF) in Assam’s Dibrugarh district on Saturday, an event that will be marked by a major Indian Air Force (IAF) airshow featuring some of the country’s most advanced military aircraft. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said the Prime Minister will first arrive at the Chabua Air Force Station from New Delhi on Saturday morning before boarding another aircraft to land directly on the Moran ELF.

Following his landing, the Prime Minister will witness a 30-minute aerial display involving 16 Indian Air Force aircraft. The airshow will feature advanced platforms such as Rafale fighter jets, Su-30MKI multirole fighters, MiG-29 aircraft, Tejas light combat aircraft, C-130J Super Hercules transport aircraft, Apache attack helicopters, and Chinook heavy-lift helicopters. Several aircraft are expected to demonstrate their capability

to operate from the highway airstrip through landings, take-offs, and low fly-pasts.

The programme comes after extensive trial operations conducted earlier this week. The IAF successfully carried out landing and take-off drills using a C-130J Super Hercules, followed by fighter jet operations that included the Su-30MKI and other aircraft, to assess the strip’s operational readiness.

The Emergency Landing Facility has been developed over a 4.2-kilometre stretch on National Highway-127 along the Demow–Moran route at Jatiyani. It is the first such facility in Northeast India and is considered strategically significant for enhancing India’s defence preparedness. In emergencies or strategic situations, the airstrip will be capable of supporting operations by advanced fighter and transport aircraft.

Preparations for the Prime Minister’s visit have been intensified, with the Dibrugarh district administration, the Indian Air Force, and construction



agencies working in coordination. Vehicular movement on the highway stretch has remained suspended since February 6 to facilitate trial runs and security arrangements, while IAF personnel continue to monitor the site.

Following the Moran programme, the Prime Minister will depart from the Advanced Landing Ground and arrive at Guwahati airport at around 12:30 pm. At 1 pm, he will inaugurate the Guwahati–North Guwahati connecting bridge over the Brahmaputra and inspect the structure. Chief Minister Sarma has described the bridge as not merely an infrastructure project but also an architectural achievement executed by local Public Works Department engineers.

Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma Distributes Appointment Letters To Over 1,800 Youth

Guwahati, Feb 11: Continuing the state’s aggressive push for employment, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday distributed appointment letters to over 1,800 candidates. The event, held in Guwahati, is part of the state government’s flagship initiative to provide transparent, merit-based recruitment for the youth of Assam. Strengthening Key Departments The distribution ceremony catered to a diverse group of recruits, focusing on both permanent administrative roles and mission-based contractual positions. The breakdown of the new appointments includes: 1,694 Candidates: Selected for various technical and administrative posts across the Public Works Department (PWD), Transport, and Water Resources departments.



185 Candidates: Appointed on a contractual basis under the Assam State Rural Livelihoods Mission (ASRLM) to bolster rural economic initiatives. A Milestone in Public Employment During his address, Chief Minister Sarma highlighted that with this latest batch, the total number of government job placements under his administration has reached a staggering 1,58,373.

He reiterated that the recruitment process has been designed to eliminate corruption and ensure that “merit remains the only criteria” for securing a

government position. This milestone reflects a sustained effort to revitalize the state’s workforce while providing socio-economic stability to thousands of families across Assam Future Outlook

The Chief Minister emphasized that these appointments are not just jobs but a responsibility to serve the public and contribute to the state’s developmental infrastructure. He encouraged the new recruits to work with dedication, particularly in the Water Resources and PWD sectors, which are vital for the state’s flood management and connectivity goals. The government remains committed to its promise of expanding the workforce, with several more recruitment cycles expected in the coming months to further bridge the employment gap.

CM Khemchand flags off media team to Vietnam

Imphal, Feb 11: Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh today flagged off a 30-member media delegation on an external media tour to Vietnam, sponsored by the Department of Information and Public Relations (DIPR), at Yumnam Leikai, Imphal West. The team comprises 25 members from the All Manipur Working Journalists’ Union (AMWJU) and 5 officials from DIPR.



Secretary (IPR) Hungyo Worshang, along with officials of the department, is also part of the delegation.

Interacting with the team prior to the flag-off, the Chief Minister conveyed his best wishes and encouraged them to make the most of the visit. He also bid them a safe and fruitful journey. Director (IPR) Ahanthem Subhash Singh, senior members of the Editors Guild Manipur (EGM), and members of AMWJU also attended the flag-off ceremony.

KCAM blames government for Ukhrul violence

Imphal, Feb 11: The Kuki Chief Association, Manipur (KCAM), expressed deep concern over the unfortunate Litan Sareikhong incident on February 7 and condemned, in the strongest terms, the acts of arson committed by villagers from both sides, i.e., the Sikkibung Tangkhuls and the Litan Sareikhong Kukis. The association squarely placed responsibility on the government for its failure to prevent the continuation of such barbaric acts, which continue unabated to this day. It is reported that the incident originated from a minor altercation involving a few intoxicated individuals from both villages, and the matter was suppose to be addressed peacefully and customarily through the established village authority of Litan Sareikhong, in consultation with the family of the injured person. However, in utter disregard of the reconciliation process, the violence has continued to escalate ceaselessly, said a press release of KCAM. Under no circumstances should this incident be allowed to spiral beyond its immediate context. The crisis must



be contained within the Litan area and treated strictly as a dispute between two villages. It should not be misconstrued or projected as a conflict between two communities, it said. The KCAM observed that the government’s insincerity in dealing with the already volatile situation in Litan Sareikhong, where a particular community has been given a free hand by State and Central Armed Forces to burn down houses. Furthermore, it is shameful that the State Fire Department acted in a biased manner, with the fire brigade taking a pro-

active role in dousing the houses of one community while turning a blind eye to those of the other, it said. The situation in the Litan area has now escalated into a humanitarian crisis. Populations on both sides have abandoned their homes for safer places and have been displaced, it said. KCAM appealed to the Government of India to act promptly before it is too late by rehabilitating the victims and initiating an immediate resettlement process for the displaced people, with trusted Central Security Forces deployed on the ground.

Sur Sangam Grand Finale celebrates musical excellence of tea garden students in Guwahati

Guwahati, Feb 11: The Grand Finale of Sur Sangam – Tea Garden Student Talent Hunt concluded on a high note in Guwahati, celebrating the musical talent, confidence and creativity of students from tea garden communities across Assam. The state-wide initiative is jointly implemented by The Hans Foundation in collaboration with the Department of Secondary Education, Government of Assam.

Held at the Sri Sri Damodardev International Auditorium, the Grand Finale witnessed vibrant performances by the Top 16 finalists, culminating in compelling live presentations that reflected months of structured training and rigorous evaluation across tea garden belts of Sonitpur, Tinsukia and Dibrugarh. The event was graced by Dr. Ranaj Pegu, Hon’ble Minister of Education, Government of Assam, as the Chief Guest, and renowned Indian playback singer and Padma Shri awardee Suresh Wadkar as the Guest of Honour, renowned singer Padma Wadkar, renowned film director Bharat Bala Ganapathy, along with senior officials from the Government of Assam and representatives of The Hans Foundation. Addressing the gathering, Dr. Ranaj Pegu said, “The Government of Assam is continuously working to ensure that students from underserved and marginalised communities receive the best possible opportunities to discover and develop their talents. Initiatives like Sur Sangam reflect our commitment to holistic education, where students are encouraged to grow not only academically but also creatively and culturally.” Padma Shri awardee Suresh Wadkar praised the initiative and the young performers, stating, “I was deeply moved by the sincerity, discipline and musical depth displayed by these young performers. Sur Sangam is a beautiful initiative that brings hidden talent into the spotlight. I am excited to welcome the winners to my academy in Mumbai and support them as they take the next steps in their musical journey.” Ahead of the Grand Finale, the judgement and evaluation process was conducted on February 9, where the Top 16 contestants were assessed by an eminent jury comprising Dikshu Sarma, Kallol Borthakur, Ruppankita Papari and Arupjiyoti Baruah. The jury evaluated participants on musicality, vocal technique, expression, originality and stage presence before announcing the final results. Gyno Munda of Sonajuli TE Model School, Sonitpur, was declared the Winner of Sur Sangam – Tea Garden Student Talent Hunt. Anmol Kumar of Chandmari TE Model School, Tinsukia, secured the position of First Runner-Up, while Gojendra Gowala of Deodham TE Model School, Tinsukia, was named Second Runner-Up.



Consolation Awards were presented to Anurag Sarma of Dikhari TE Model School, Dibrugarh; Rupali Nayak of Sepon TE Model School, Dibrugarh; and Punyadhar Tanti of Tara TE Model School, Tinsukia, in recognition of their commendable performances throughout the competition. Selected from among thousands of participants across tea garden areas, the awardees impressed the jury with their vocal ability, musical expression and confident stage presence. The top 6 winners of Sur Sangam – Tea Garden Student Talent Hunt will receive education scholarships up to the post-graduation level, along with advanced mentorship at Suresh Wadkar’s music academy in Mumbai, in addition to certificates and other recognitions.

Sur Sangam – Tea Garden Student Talent Hunt is part of The Hans Foundation’s Uttam Xikhya programme, implemented across Model Schools in tea garden areas to integrate structured music education into the school ecosystem. The initiative has seen enthusiastic participation from thousands of tea garden students and highlights the role of co-curricular activities in enhancing confidence, engagement and overall student development. Speaking on the vision behind the initiative, Shweta Rawat, Founder and Chairperson, The Hans Foundation, said, “At The Hans Foundation, we believe that true education empowers children to express themselves and dream beyond their circumstances. Sur Sangam is not just a talent hunt; it is a platform of dignity, confidence and opportunity for children from tea garden communities. Seeing these students perform on such a grand stage reinforces our belief that talent flourishes when access and mentorship come together.” Through Sur Sangam, the Government of Assam and The Hans Foundation continue to strengthen their shared commitment to inclusive, quality education, using music and the arts as powerful tools to nurture confidence, creativity and future opportunities for students across tea garden regions of the state.

Ukhrul incident misrepresented as communal clash: KSO

Imphal, Feb 11: The Kuki Students’ Organisation (KSO), Ukhrul district, has rejected claims of a communal clash in Litan village, clarifying that the incident stemmed from a minor scuffle between a few intoxicated individuals that was later misrepresented, aggravating tensions between communities. KSO Ukhrul vice president Mercy Khongsai said what began as a small altercation involving three or four drunk men was wrongly projected as a clash between two communities. “It is not a communal thing at all. However, some anti-social elements or people with such a mindset are trying to portray it as a communal issue,” she said, expressing concern over how the situation spiralled despite efforts to defuse it.

Efforts underway to identify culprits behind Ukhrul violence: Dy CM

Imphal, Feb 11: Deputy Chief Minister L. Dikho has assured that efforts are being made to identify those involved in the violence at Litan in Ukhrul district and that authorities are working with all concerned stakeholders to resolve the crisis. Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a programme, Dikho said coordination was ongoing among the chief minister, the government, security forces and civil society groups. “We are trying to meet everyone and make them understand. There are positive signs,” he said, adding that while an immediate resolution may not be possible, “hope-

fully things will improve soon.” The Naga People’s Front leader said the perpetrators had not yet been identified. He noted that initial confusion followed reports of firing and the burning of houses, but said the picture was now clearer. According to him, the government’s efforts were showing results, and the situation was “gradually cooling down”. “We hope everyone will cooperate,” the Deputy Chief Minister said. Notably, the State Government has extended the suspension of internet services in Lhungtin sub-division of Kangpokpi district and Phungyar sub-division of Kamjong district for five days with immediate effect.

CM Khemchand visits displaced persons in Jiribam

Imphal, Feb 11: Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh today visited internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Jiribam district, bordering southern Assam. He first visited the relief camp housing Meitei IDPs at Jiribam Higher Secondary School campus where he interacted with the inmates.



Yumnam Khemchand left for Jiribam from Kangla Helipad at 10 a.m. On his arrival at Bidyanagar Helipad, he was warmly received by the District Administration, led by Deputy Commissioner, Jiribam Krishna Kumar along with Superintendent of Police Prakhar Pandey, ADC, Jiribam Th. Manoranjan Singh and other officials from the District Administration, District Police and Central Security Forces. At Jiribam Higher Secondary School campus, the Chief Minister told the inmates that everyone should work towards removing the trust deficit. “Jiribam is the gateway to Manipur and has a potential to become a business hub.

Like Mumbai is India’s business capital, Jiribam can be Manipur’s Mumbai. For the business to flourish, peace has to come first,” he said. The Chief Minister then visited Kalinagar relief camp housing the Hmar tribal IDPs. The Hmar tribe belongs to the Kuki-Zo community. “Let us consider the last two years was a nightmare, let us forget it and have the courage to move forward towards peace and development,” he said. As the Hmar IDPs were all Christians, Shri Khemchand said that Christianity teaches forgiveness and fostering love for neighbours and even enemies. He then visited Jarolpokpi Hmar village, which had experienced vio-

lence during 2023. The Hmar villagers gave full support to his government and urged him to take care of the needs of the tribal village, particularly the school building. The Chief Minister then visited Mongbung Meitei village and interacted with the villagers. It may be added that during his interaction with inmates at the Jiribam Higher Secondary School campus, the Chief Minister presented a wheelchair to an elderly woman under Palliative Care Scheme. Meanwhile, speaking to reporters on the sideline of the visit, the Chief Minister stressed upon his commitment to a unified Manipur, free from caste and community lines.

Bridge Collapse at Anipur Market in Sribhumii Leaves Two Seriously Injured, a Safety Concerns



Sribhumii, Feb 11: Several vehicles were caught in the sudden collapse of a bridge at Anipur market under the Ramkrishnanagar constituency in Sribhumii district on Wednesday, leaving two

persons seriously injured and triggering panic in the area.

Officials said one of the injured was rushed to Sribhumii Civil Hospital, while the other was admitted to Chargola Model Primary Health Cen-

tre (MPHC) for treatment. Eyewitnesses reported that chaos broke out within moments of the collapse, leaving drivers and passengers stranded. Two heavy dumpers, two hatchback cars, a

motorcycle and an auto-truck were among the vehicles reportedly damaged in the incident. On receiving information, Circle Officer Souvik Dutta reached the spot along with police personnel and other administrative officials. Rescue operations were launched immediately, and traffic in the area was brought under regulation, according to reports. Eyewitness and advocate Mrityunjay Nath said the bridge had been in a precarious condition for a long time. He pointed out that the alternative bridge at Dullabhchara is currently closed, forcing hundreds of

vehicles to use the Anipur bridge ежедневно, increasing pressure on the structure. “The Anipur bridge was the main communication link for the market and nearby areas. Its collapse will severely disrupt connectivity for residents of the Ramkrishnanagar co-district,” Nath said. The incident has also raised serious questions about the quality of construction and departmental supervision. Some locals alleged that government funds had been spent on repairing the bridge only a few days ago, sparking concerns over possible negligence.

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The price of the US tariff cut is high

The Agreement on Reciprocal Trade, signed on February 9, goes far beyond standard tariff reductions. Instead, it creates a binding framework that integrates Bangladesh’s defence, energy, trade and digital infrastructure into the US sphere of influence. The agreement mandates that Bangladesh “shall endeavour to increase purchases of US military equipment” while simultaneously limiting procurement from “certain countries” -- a thinly veiled reference to Chinese suppliers. The US has also committed to working with Bangladesh to “streamline and enhance defence trade.”The signing of the agreement with Bangladesh is the first of its kind in South Asia and “marks a meaningful step forward in opening markets, addressing trade barriers, and creating new opportunities for American exporters,” United States Trade Representative Jamieson Greer said in a statement. The deal prohibits Bangladesh from purchasing nuclear reactors, fuel rods, or enriched uranium from any country that “jeopardises essential US interests.” The clause offers a narrow exception only for existing reactors where no alternative supplier exists, effectively vetoing future nuclear cooperation with Russia or China.Under Article 4.3 of the agreement, if Bangladesh enters into a free trade or preferential economic agreement with a “non-market country” (a US regulatory term used for China and Russia), the US can terminate the entire deal and reimpose punitive tariffs. According to another provision, if the US implements border measures or trade actions to protect its own national security, Bangladesh is treaty-bound to adopt “complementary restrictive measures” following consultations. This provision obliges Dhaka to automatically align with US sanctions and trade wars, removing its ability to remain neutral in great power conflicts.As part of the deal, the US has cut its reciprocal tariff on Bangladeshi exports to 19 percent from 20 percent. The US will grant duty-free or preferential access to approximately 2,500 Bangladeshi products, while Dhaka will open its market to around 4,400 American goods on similar terms. The list includes US chemicals, medical devices, machinery and motor vehicles and parts; information and communication technology (ICT) equipment; beef, poultry, and tree nuts and fruit.However, the deal enforces a kind of managed trade with specific targets. Bangladesh has committed to purchasing \$15 billion worth of US energy commodities, including liquefied natural gas (LNG), over 15 years.Additionally, Biman Bangladesh Airlines, the state carrier, will purchase 14 Boeing aircraft, steering the country’s aviation sector away from European competitor Airbus. In the agricultural sector, Dhaka will import at least \$3.5 billion worth of US farm products, including wheat and soya bean. Mustafizur Rahman, a distinguished fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), said the agreement imposes numerous compliance requirements that restrict Bangladesh’s policy flexibility.Constraints are acute in procurement, especially in the defence sector, as it limits the country’s choices about both suppliers and equipment, he said.“This is an imposed agreement done through the total weaponisation of trade,” said Mustafizur, adding that the US had attached conditions to the reduction of additional tariffs that were originally imposed unjustly.“Under the deal, Bangladesh must offer zero duty on a number of US items and slash duties on certain other goods over five and 10 years, beginning with a 50 percent cut from the date the agreement comes into force.This has “significant revenue implications,” he said. “We are just two days away from the national election. My point is, why do they have to rush to sign an agreement that the elected government will have to implement? I don’t understand the rationale,” Mustafizur said.“Couldn’t we request the US to wait for a couple of days so that a democratically elected government could review and finalise the deal?”In another significant move, Bangladesh will have to remove restrictions on the right to strike, increase fines for anti-union discrimination, and, within two years, bring its Export Processing Zones (EPZs) -- vital to its garment industry -- under the jurisdiction of the general labour law, ending their special regulatory status. Bangladesh is required to use “digital logistics platforms” for its ports, terminals, and shipping fleet that are not only cyber-secure but specifically built to block “other foreign governments” from accessing the data.It has to establish measures to restrict the unauthorised export, re-export, and in-country transfer of US-origin or US-controlled items subject to the Export Administration Regulations (EAR) unless they have explicit permission from the US Bureau of Industry and Security.Dhaka is also required to “screen and share” with Washington to help identify “transactions of concern,” effectively granting the US oversight of Bangladesh’s trade flows.“We have a lot of issues in the agreement to be worried about. Signing such a deal at the eleventh hour of this government is controversial. They could say, ‘let’s wait for the elected government,’” said Selim Raihan, executive director of the South Asian Network on Economic Modeling.He argued that the agreement is heavily skewed, imposing a far longer list of obligations on Bangladesh than on the US, which raises serious questions about whether the minimal tariff relief is truly worth the price.Selim questioned the broader impact of the deal, specifically citing the plan to purchase 14 Boeing jets. “What about the economic security of Bangladesh and its long-term implications?”“Our national debt has already increased significantly. If we now have to take on additional debt to purchase Boeing aircraft and cannot reap corresponding commercial benefits, that will put further pressure on us. These calculations need careful consideration.”He highlighted the agreement’s failure to safeguard the nation’s long-term economic security or preserve its policy independence.

So far, the election process has held. Can it survive the last test

Bangladesh’s long-awaited 13th parliamentary election is set to be held on Thursday. After the interim government took office in August 2024, it was unclear what an election leading to a real transfer of power would actually look like—whether it would happen at all, how credible it would be, and whether the process could hold together. Now, the atmosphere feels different. Not celebratory, not dramatic, but calmer, steadier, and more grounded than many expected. What this election has not yet told us is, obviously, who will win, even though we all might have our predictions. What it has shown quite clearly, though, is that the process itself has held so far. The mechanics have worked reasonably well. Nomination papers were duly filed, candidates were scrutinised, appeals were heard, and decisions—whether popular or not—were largely made within accepted legal frameworks. Election logistics also appear to be under control. Most importantly, the armed forces and security agencies have stood firmly behind the Election Commission to ensure that the vote goes ahead

without disruption on February 12. In a country where elections have often unravelled long before election day, this matters. The presence of foreign observers and a broadly positive diplomatic assessment helped reinforce confidence. After months of doubt and anxiety, the simple fact that Bangladesh is heading into a nationally competitive election at all is something worth acknowledging. Party campaigning, too, felt different this time. For once, party manifestos have actually been discussed. Not just announced, but read, compared, and criticised. The conversation has moved—however unevenly—towards inflation, jobs, governance, and institutional reform. There has been less reliance on symbolism and far less negative emotional mobilisation than in past elections. Voters seem more interested in what parties claim they plan to do than in what they represent historically. Negative campaigning hasn’t landed the way it once did. Attempts to brand rival parties and candidates with various labels do not appear to have shifted sentiment in any meaningful way.

Economic stress and everyday frustrations seem to have crowded out the appetite for character attacks. Fear, as a political tool, has been noticeably weaker. Overall, the contest feels less like a knockout fight and more like shadow-boxing. There’s plenty of positioning, tactical noise, and last-minute manoeuvring, of course, but very little sense of a single, defining national battle. Instead of a clean two-party clash, outcomes are likely to be decided seat-by-seat based on local candidates, ground organisation, and credibility within constituencies. Youth politics fits into this pattern as well. Young voters make up a very large share of the electorate, many of them voting for the first time. Internet personalities and online activists played a decisive role during the mass uprising that brought down the Hasina regime—mobilising young people, sustaining momentum, and keeping pressure alive. But that influence has not translated easily into electoral power. The same voices have struggled to shape a unifying election narrative or meaningfully direct voting be-

haviour. The lesson is a familiar one. Social media is powerful at disruption, but elections still reward structure, local networks, and trust built on the ground. Then there is the Awami League and the unspoken question of its supporters. Historically, the party commanded a large share of votes. Barred from participating and unable to articulate a coherent alternative strategy, the party has been totally absent in any form from the campaign. Sheikh Hasina’s calls to reject the election have circulated, but they have not visibly unified the rank and file. Instead of coordinated boycott or resistance, what we see is fragmentation. Some Awami League supporters appear inclined to sit this election out altogether. Others are quietly drifting towards alternative candidates at the local level. Many seem disengaged, uncertain, or simply waiting. Fear may explain part of this silence, but it does not explain all of it.Awami League’s core ideological anchors—liberation identity and secularism—no longer function in the way they once did. Either those ideas have been rejected, or they are simply

no longer decisive. This helps explain the broader realignment underway. Politics is becoming less about moral ownership of the past and more about competence, delivery, and future trajectory. Voters, especially younger ones, are increasingly post-ideological. They are sceptical of the past political framework; they appear more realistic, mostly concerned about their transactional future, and willing to switch loyalties or disengage altogether. These patterns show that meeting the country’s needs—a credible process, issue-based scrutiny, limited impact of old attack narratives, restrained influence of social media, and constituency-driven and, above all, development-focused outcomes—is more significant than which party actually wins the election.National identity does not change overnight. It evolves through repetition. Sustaining these electoral standards will eventually redefine Bangladesh’s political identity, proving that the people have learned to reclaim their power through the vote. And that, shall we hope, will be the most important and enduring change of all.

Enjoying mafia movies doesn’t make me a killer. So be wary of the state using rap music to prove murder

How often have you slumped into an armchair and surfed various streaming platforms in search of escape? Even if not looking for them, you’ll have been bombarded by a vast array of crime procedurals made in the UK, the US, various continental jurisdictions and further afield. They are set in gritty urban and idyllic rural landscapes; in country houses and even submarines. Whether featuring hardbitten veteran cops or gifted middle-class amateurs, what they all have in common is murder.Middle England is seemingly addicted to these TV dramas and the books that inspired so many of them. The creativity that produces them is big business. But what if those who write or even just enjoy this form of popular art found themselves prosecuted for real crime, with their work or taste used as evidence of criminality? If you find this possibility ridiculous, spare a thought for the increasing number of young black men and boys charged with “gang-related offences” on the basis of their participation in, or mere engagement with rap and drill music. It’s as though prosecutors were watching The Night Manager and trying to send Hugh Laurie to prison.It is more than three years since the Guardian published an excellent piece by Ciaran Thapar, a youth worker and writer, who shared his experience of refuting music evidence in a trial in which a group of young people faced charges of

conspiracy to possess a firearm. Now, some white middle-aged police officers routinely put themselves forward as expert witnesses as to the appropriate interpretation of this predominantly youth cultural phenomenon. Reliance on this evidence to prove motive, intention or criminal propensity is prejudiced and prejudicial. It risks grave miscarriages of justice, not least when accompanied by the dangerous doctrine of joint enterprise. The Crown Prosecution Service doesn’t keep records on the use of rap music as evidence, but a study by the University of Manchester identified 68 cases involving 252 defendants between 2020 and 2023. This is probably a significant underestimate given that first instance trials are not often reported in the media or on legal databases. Two-thirds of the defendants in the Manchester study were black, and 12% were mixed race; 82% were under 25 years old, with 15% aged 17 or younger. More than half the cases were joint-enterprise prosecutions. In the case of the “Manchester 10”, black teenagers were collectively sentenced in 2022 to 131 years in prison for conspiracy to murder and to cause grievous bodily harm. During the trial, a nine-second video clip of someone identified as one of the defendants, with drill music in the background, was used as evidence of his gang membership. In closing, the prosecution silk told the jury that some of

the defendants had become involved in gang culture “because they had an interest in drill with its themes of violence, drugs and criminality”. The appeal court found that a police officer had misidentified Ademola Adedeji as the person in the video. The young man in question was of good character and had no gang connections. The video had nothing to do with gangs and didn’t even include rapping. Adedeji’s conviction was quashed, but only after he had served three years in prison.Equality before the law is an age-old principle of justice. It requires that no one be above the law’s reach, nor below its protection. The shameful events currently rocking our politics only highlight the dangers of entitlement and hypocrisy, and the obvious destruction of trust in our vital institutions when there is “one law for some” and no fair hearing for others. That is why I have joined forces with my old friend Doreen Lawrence and the Art Not Evidence campaign to table an amendment to the victims and courts bill currently before parliament.It is a modest but vital reform that would create a presumption that creative expression on the part of a defendant should not be admissible unless four tests are met. First, the expression must have a literal rather than figurative or fictional meaning. Second, it must refer to the specific facts of the alleged offence. Third, it is relevant to an issue of fact in dispute, and,

last, that issue cannot be decided by other evidence. In applying these common-sense principles, courts would have to consider various factors, including the artistic conventions of the genre in question. Experts should be truly independent. Further, in the rare cases in which creative expression was admitted, the judge would give directions to the jury not to be influenced by stereotypes. Racial stereotypes are a real danger in this context. A lack of knowledge or understanding of rap lyrics and imagery will ignore the symbolism, storytelling and exaggeration that are key features of one of the UK’s most widely consumed cultural forms. The misuse of the music in prosecutions also risks suppressing the enjoyment and expression of the art form in underprivileged communities that find it both creative and cathartic. The deputy prime minister, who is now the justice secretary, was the author of the groundbreaking 2017 Lammy Report into the criminal justice system. Surely he will listen. Surely he must agree that just as the singing of rebel songs in north London pubs was never a reliable marker of terrorism, that the Police’s Every Breath You Take doesn’t prove Sting is a stalker, and that my love of Coppola movies doesn’t make me a mobster, for new generations in multiracial Britain, rap and drill is overwhelmingly art – and not reliable evidence.

Britain’s building standards are now so bad, even the super-rich are facing housing misery

Even multimillionaires can’t escape Britain’s cowboy builders, it seems. Last week, residents of One Hyde Park, the UK’s most expensive flats, won a £35m court case against the contractor that built their homes. The high court ordered the construction company Laing O’Rourke to fix defective pipework that was discovered to be causing problems in 2014, only three years after the luxury development was completed.At the other end of the economy, tens of thousands of families are facing damp and mould issues also caused by botched building works. A National Audit Office investigation revealed in October last year that a staggering 98% of external insulation fitted under the previous government’s home-improvement schemes was installed so ineptly that it will have to be repaired or replaced.Across the UK, an epidemic of similar stories reveals a brewing crisis in construction quality. New-build houses are regularly beset with shoddy workmanship. In Croydon, an almost brand-new 35-storey tower is already so riddled with mould and leaks that residents are being moved out for major repairs. Barratt Redrow, one of the UK’s largest property developers, recently uncovered £248m of defects

across their portfolio.At every tier of society, the UK seems hamstrung by abysmal construction standards, unable to build anything without catastrophic bodes and eye-watering remediation bills. How did building in Britain get so bad?“We are the dinosaurs of construction in Europe,” Barbara Jones, a veteran builder with 45 years of experience on construction sites, tells me. “I work with people from lots of different countries and they are laughing at us. They think we’re ridiculous, that we don’t value skill. A tradesperson is nothing here. Whereas in Germany, it’s a very respected job.” Jones says there seems to be a devaluing of practical skills in schools – a process kickstarted when Britain’s Skills Training Agency, which had for decades offered rigorous tuition across a variety of vocations, was sold off under the Thatcher government. Despite warnings that privatisation would be unsustainable and could lead to asset-stripping and lower-quality courses, the Conservatives flogged the organisation to a private company in 1990 that went bust only three years later. The fiasco precipitated a nationwide collapse of construction training, compounded by a lack of legal protection for specialist roles in the sector.In many

developed economies, skilled construction jobs are strictly regulated in the same way as they are for doctors and lawyers, so that only fully qualified professionals can take on these roles. In Germany, which is widely considered to enjoy a significantly higher standard of construction than the UK carpenters, roofers, architects, bricklayers and plumbers must all be properly trained and accredited before they can practise. In the UK, however, anyone – regardless of qualifications – can be a carpenter or perform the functions of an architect. The UK’s extensive building regulations don’t protect us from sloppy construction, either. Britain has thousands of rules governing the design of new architecture, covering everything from the width of doorways to the gradient of staircases. But in practice, local building control inspectors are not able to double-check the quality of every brick that’s laid. It was once standard practice for developers to employ an independent clerk of works, as is still common on the continent, who’d visit construction sites frequently to monitor the quality of workmanship. These days, the role has all but lapsed or is performed by the contractors themselves, in effect allowing them to mark their own homework.In the

past, architects were often charged with overseeing build quality on the buildings they designed. But in recent years, a new type of construction contract has given builders more power to make changes to the projects they are working on without external oversight. The “design and build” contract has become notorious among architects as a bodger’s charter, enabling unscrupulous builders to cut costs by, for example, swapping out high-quality materials for cheaper alternatives. Some have even argued that the design and build contract, under which architects are only involved as initial design consultants before builders take over responsibility for finishing a project, contributed to the Grenfell Tower fire tragedy.“There’s a culture of cost-cutting, whether for social housing or for high end,” explains architect Astrid Smitham, whose housing scheme in Barking, designed with Nicholas Lobo Brennan, won the UK’s most prestigious affordable housing prize in 2023. The pair have worked in Europe as well as in Britain, witnessing first-hand how much worse the culture of our construction sector has become as contracting firms cut corners to make more money and replace labourers’ day rates

with piecework. This system sees builders paid a small fixed amount for each task they complete rather than an hourly wage, incentivising working as quickly as possible and cutting corners. Inferior modern materials have also played a role in the decline of UK building quality. In the past, British architecture was predominantly made with flexible and breathable materials such as Victorian lime mortar, which was able to handle temperature fluctuations, moisture changes and ground movements. Today, construction is dominated by cheaper, more rigid materials such as cement, which is prone to crack over time.So, what needs to change? Most importantly, the political appetite to improve building standards.Britain’s construction quality crisis isn’t a mystery, but the logical outcome of political choices. It’s the result of deregulation, privatisation and allowing the primacy of cost-cutting profiteers to supplant quality control and craft. When you rob building of its dignity, you don’t get efficiency; you get mould, leaks and devastating repair bills at every rung of the social ladder. Until those choices are reversed, we’ll keep building problems faster than we can fix them.

Amazon Prime reports record delivery speeds and rising non-metro adoption in 2025

Aizawl: Amazon’s Prime membership ecosystem in India recorded strong operational and consumer growth in 2025, highlighted by its fastest-ever delivery performance, with over 55 crore products delivered the same or next day, a 40% year-on-year increase, according to the company. The market data also shows that Prime members saved more than twice the annual membership cost on average, while the top 10% of users saved over eight times the membership value through free delivery, deals, cashback, and rewards.Demand trends indicate expanding penetration beyond major cities, with more than 70% of new Prime signups coming from non-metro locations. Prime members shopped five times more frequently than non-Prime customers, while adoption of the ultra-fast Amazon Now service offering deliveries within minutes in select parts of Bengaluru, Delhi-NCR, and Mumbai led to tripled shopping frequency among users.To support long-term growth, Amazon India invested over ₹2,000 crore in 2025 to expand logistics infrastructure, enhance associate safety, and deploy new operational technologies. Prime continues to offer a bundled membership model combining shopping, entertainment, gaming, and reading benefits, with pricing tiers ranging from ₹399 to ₹1,499 annually, reinforcing its position in India’s fast-growing digital commerce subscription market.

Tata Steel, Maruti Suzuki, to Ambuja Cements

Mumbai: The GIFT Nifty indicates that the domestic indices will open on a higher note. Here are updates on all the stocks that made headlines ahead of the budget. You can check these stocks to stay informed about all key developments. Earlier on Monday, the NSE Nifty 50 closed the session 174 points or 0.68% higher at 25,867, while the BSE Sensex rose 485 points or 0.58% to close at 84,065. Stocks to watch, February 10, 2026NHPNHPC has floated a Rs 5,129 crore tender for major civil and hydro-mechanical works at its 1,856 megawatt Sawalkot hydroelectric project in Jammu and Kashmir, marking a key step in accelerating the construction of one of India’s largest under-development hydro assets. The company has invited online bids under domestic competitive bidding for the Lot-1 package of the project, which includes construction of diversion tunnels, coffer dams, access tunnels, dam works, associated roads and hydro-mechanical installations, according to the tender notice issued on February 5, 2026.BSE reported a consolidated net profit of Rs 603 crore for Q3FY26, up 166% compared with Rs 225 crore reported in Q3FY25. The Exchange clocked revenue from operations of Rs 1,244 crore, rising nearly 62% from Rs 768 crore reported in the corresponding quarter last year.BSE reported a consolidated net profit of Rs 603 crore for Q3FY26, up 166% compared with Rs 225 crore reported in Q3FY25. Maruti Suzuki IndiaMaruti Suzuki India (MSIL) said it dispatched over 585,000 cars through railways last year, which is 18% higher than the previous year. The company’s share in rail-based vehicle dispatches reached 26% in 2025, up from just 5.1% in 2016.

M&M Q3FY26 profit rises 32.62% on strong SUV, farm demand; records labour code impact

Mumbai: Mahindra & Mahindra (M&M) reported a 32.62% year-on-year (YoY) increase in its Q3FY26 standalone net profit at Rs 3,931.3 crore, from Rs 2,964.31 crore reported in Q3FY25.The automaker’s revenue from operations stood at Rs 38,516.81 crore, up 26.13% YoY from Rs 30,538.23 crore reported in Q3FY25.On a sequential basis, the company saw a decline in 13.03% in its net profit from Rs 4,520.52 crore reported in Q2FY26. Revenue also increased 15.25% quarter-on-quarter (QoQ) from Rs 33,421.6 crore reported in Q2FY26.Mahindra to invest Rs 15,000 crore in a new facility in NagpurThe company said growth was broad-based, with auto, farm and services businesses delivering solid operating performance during the quarter.New labour codes trigger Rs 293 crore exceptional loss-The company reported an exceptional item loss of Rs 292.94 crore during the quarter. “In accordance with the new Labour Codes, the Group has currently estimated the incremental impact on rtirial benefits to be Rs. 292.94 crores for the Group and Rs. 98.19 crores for the Company,” the company noted in its Q3 releaseWhile commenting on the Q3 Anish Shah, Group CEO & Managing Director, said, “Auto & Farm has maintained



its leadership position on the back of steady customer demand,strong product acceptance and unwavering focus on operational excellence. TechM continues to make meaningful progress. Mahindra Finance delivered another solid quarter with meaningful PAT growth while maintaining strong asset quality. We are especially pleased to see breakout performance from two of our growth gems,

Mahindra Logistics and Mahindra Lifespaces.”Rajesh Jejurikar, Executive Director and CEO (Auto and Farm Sector), said the company saw strong demand and positive response to new launches, including the XEV 9S and XUV 7XO. Key highlights from Q3FY26 On the consolidated basis M&M reported a 46.97% YoY increase in its net profit at

Rs 4,674.64 crore, from Rs 3,180.58 crore reported in Q3FY25. Consolidated revenue from operations stood at Rs 51,579.95 crore, up 24.39% YoY from Rs 41,464.98 crore reported in Q3FY25.Mahindra & Mahindra share priceThe share price of Mahindra & Mahindra gained nearly 1.28% in the intra-day trade on Wednesday. The stock has increased 17.23% in past six months.

Oil India Q3 profit falls 34% as crude prices soften; refinery arm posts strong rebound

Mumbai:State-owned upstream major Oil India Limited reported a sharp 34% year-on-year decline in standalone net profit to ₹808 crore for the December quarter, weighed down by a steep fall in crude oil realisations amid a softer global price environment. Alongside the earnings announcement, Oil India declared an interim dividend of ₹7 per fully paid equity share, providing a payout to shareholders despite the profit contraction at the standalone level.Crude price realisation — the key profitability driver for exploration and production companies — dropped around 15% on-year to \$62.84 per barrel during the quarter, reflecting the broader downturn in global oil markets. The weaker pricing translated into slower topline growth, with revenue from operations slipping 6.2% to ₹4,916.10 crore compared with the year-ago period. In contrast to the upstream slowdown, the company’s refining arm



Numaligarh Refinery Limited delivered a strong earnings rebound. The subsidiary

more than doubled its net profit to ₹867 crore in the December quarter from ₹385

crore a year earlier, buoyed by robust refining margins. Its gross refining margin stood at \$16.27 per barrel, benefiting from favourable product spreads.Oil India output slips from ageing fields Production also edged lower, highlighting the pressure on legacy assets. Oil India produced 1.659 million metric tonnes of oil equivalent (MMTOE) during the quarter from its mature and ageing fields, marginally below 1.697 MMTOE recorded in the same period last year. Oil India Limited reported a 34% year-on-year decline in standalone net profit to ₹808 crore for the December 2025 quarter (Q3 FY26), driven by a 15% drop in crude oil price realization to ₹(562.84) per barrel. Despite the drop in upstream earnings, the company’s refining arm saw a strong rebound due to improved margins. Key metrics show revenue decreased by 6% to ₹4,916 crore, with a declared dividend of ₹7 per share.

Why did India’s largest bank just reach a point of no return SBI’s Rs 22,176 cr profit

Mumbai: For years, State Bank of India’s big numbers felt like declarations, not chapters. Profits could excite in isolation, asset quality could become stable for a quarter or two, yet markets seldom regarded any result as evidence of sustainability. Each strong run was read as performance in the moment, not proof of a robust cycle.That pattern broke in the December 2025 quarter.In Q3 FY26, SBI had a net profit of ₹22,176 crore, up 13% YoY from ₹19,484 crore in the same quarter in FY2025, marking its highest quarterly profit ever. But the impact was not the headline number.It was the chronological sequence in which it came: sustained 15.44% YoY loan growth, deposit enlistment that helped to manage funding costs, and an asset-quality enhancement with few qualifiers and no dependency on one-off gains. The market noticed. Shares jumped 6–7% to a fresh high on results day, outperforming broader indices.For the first time in several banking cycles, SBI’s size appeared to be working with its fundamentals.What investors are now grappling with is not whether the bank can produce a big quarter; it clearly can, but whether this marks a testable shift in how SBI utilizes scale, and whether that change can continue beyond a single earnings season.Credit growth came first — and it held

This quarter was not superficial, and the loan book expansion, was the first sign of it. State Bank of India’s domestic advances expanded to ₹39.90 lakh crore, translating into 15.44% YoY growth, while international gross advances grew 13.41% YoY to ₹6,93,332 crore.At this scale, the numbers matter less as a percentage and more as intention. Large banks often slow down lending late in a cycle to safeguard



asset quality or protect margins. SBI did neither. It grew, and it grew firmly, even as credit metrics continued to expand. That performance marks a break from its earlier cycles.Historically, SBI’s credit growth managed to speed up before asset quality steadied, driving clean-ups later.In Q3 FY26, the order reversed. Growth followed repair. That is a subtle shift, but it is precisely the change investors wait

for before re-rating a bank of this size.Just as notably, this expansion was not protective. It was not propelled by refinancing, rollovers, or opportunistic short-term lending. It was a real incremental implementation, which is harder to support, and so more important as a signal. Breadth, not a single growth lever. The components of growth counted as much as its speed. Retail lending continued to grow steadily, but

the sharper push came from other industries and agriculture, where year-on-year growth stayed in the high-teens.Corporate lending also picked up, but without overwhelming the product mix. No single segment ruled the balance sheet.This shift matters because SBI’s past cycles often tilted too heavily on one engine at a time, large corporates in one phase, unsecured retail in another.

Aditya Birla Capital, L&T Finance

New Delhi: In its February 2026 rejig of the MSCI Global Standard Indexes, index aggregator MSCI on Wednesday made two changes to its India index. As part of the revision, Aditya Birla Capital Ltd and L&T Finance Ltd were added, while Indian Railway Catering & Tourism Corporation Ltd (IRCTC) was removed. The changes are effective from February 27.As per Nuvama Alternative & Quantitative Research Aditya Birla Capital may attract passive inflows of around \$257 million. L&T Finance, on the other hand, may see inflows of about \$238 million. Railway stock IRCTC may see outflows t the tune of \$142 million following its exclusion. In the MSCI India Domestic Small Cap Index, MSCI added seven stocks such as Canara HSBC Life, JSW Cement, Ashapura Minechem Ltd, Emcure Pharma, NSDL and Thyrocare Technologies. It removed 34 stocks including Just Dial, Rajesh Exports, Symphony, Zaggie Prepaid, Websol Energy, Kaveri Seed, Gokaldas Exports and Dilip Buildcon, among others. Others included KNR Constructions, HG Infra,

Electronics Mart India, Ashoka Buildcon, Juniper Hotels and Jai Balaji Industries Ltd. Abhilash Pagaria, Head - Nuvama Alternative & Quantitative at Nuvama said India’s weightage in the MSCI Standard Index will remain steady at 14.1 per cent, with the total number of represented companies increasing from 164 to 165.”There are also several changes in the Small Cap Index, which are highlighted in the subsequent slides. As the small-cap universe remained under pressure, the index will see over a dozen exclusions in India, with the stock count reducing from 508 to 480 post-rejig,” he said.Meanwhile, an increase in free float weightage would result in \$172 million inflows for AU Small Finance Bank, Nuvama said.Smallcap stocks such as Premier Energies, NSDL, Emcure Pharma and JSW Cement are seen attracting \$5-15 million inflows. L&T Finance, Gokaldas Exports, Sterlite Tech and KNR Constructions may see up to \$43 million outflows, as per estimates. Akzo Nobel India is seen attracting \$5 million inflows on high weightage.

India still doesn’t feel prosperous, according

Mumbai: Earning ₹22 lakh a year is often presented as a financial milestone in India. According to national income statistics, that figure places an individual in the country’s top 1% of earners — a label that signals elite status, success and comfort. But a growing body of commentary suggests that this headline number masks a deeper reality: in a country as vast and unequal as India, wealth is as much about where you earn and live as it is about how much you earn. Chartered Accountant Nitin Kaushik recently sparked a wide discussion on social media by calling the “Top 1%” tag a “statistical delusion”,

arguing that national averages ignore geography, cost of living and regional concentration of wealth. Problem with the national average On paper, ₹22 lakh per annum looks like a winning number. In practice, Kaushik notes, that income can feel “aggressively middle-class” in Tier-1 cities such as Mumbai or Bengaluru. After accounting for a 30% income tax bracket, high rents, expensive schooling, “The moment you step out of your door, your purchasing power is diluted,” Kaushik wrote, pointing to the dense concentration of wealth in states like Delhi, Goa and Sikkim.

Astronomers celebrate cancellation of \$10bn Chile project that threatened clearest skies in the world

London: The scientific community is celebrating the cancellation of a project which would have threatened the clearest skies in the world in Chile’s Atacama Desert.The proposed \$10bn, 3,000-hectare green hydrogen and ammonia production facility, known as INNA, included a port, transport links to the coast and three solar power plants, and had been under evaluation by Chile’s environmental regulator for almost a year.Astronomers had warned repeatedly that its proximity to some of the world’s most powerful telescopes would have irreparably damaged observation in the area, which is the best site in the world for ground-based astronomy.“This cancellation means that the INNA project will no longer have a negative impact on the Paranal Observatory,” said Itziar de Gregorio, the European Southern Observatory’s (ESO) representative in Chile, where it operates three telescope complexesPath of lunar eclipse at night

Chile’s perfect skies for stargazing under threat from giant chemical plant

Read more“However, what this megaproject has brought to the table is the urgent need for clear protection measures around the sites where professional astronomy is carried out in Chile.

This cancellation does not mean that the work to protect the skies is over.”Chile’s environmental evaluation service confirmed that, following meetings last week with AES Andes – the company which had proposed the facility – the project has now been formally withdrawn.Scientists had warned that the INNA facility would affect readings by raising light pollution, causing tiny vibrations in the earth which would affect instruments, aerialise dust which could settle on the mirrors of its precision telescopes, and increase atmospheric turbulence.They argued that there was no need to place the facility so close to the observatories given the potentially disastrous consequences for astronomy.Aes Andes, a subsidiary of US company AES Corporation which generates energy in Chile, Colombia and Argentina, with coal, gas, hydroelectric, wind and solar plants, declined to comment.However, in a press release it said: “After detailed analysis of its portfolio of projects, [AES Andes] has decided to cease the execution of the INNA project,” although it added that it was “absolutely compatible” with other activities in the area.An open letter published in December, led by 2020 Nobel prize winner Reinhard Genzel, had urged the Chilean government to kill the proposed project, as the facility would have been just 11.6km from Paranal, one of the world’s most important observatories.Its Very Large Telescope (VLT), built 2,600 metres above sea level, has taken the readings that have won three Nobel prizes. And on nearby



Cerro Armazones, the Extremely Large Telescope (ELT) – will be the largest and most powerful telescope ever built – is under construction. It will allow astronomers to scour distant galaxies, as well as Earth-like exoplanets in our own galaxy, that might support life.

Venezuela welcomes Trump-loving US TV channel in ‘marriage of convenience’

London: In the days after Nicolás Maduro was abducted by US special forces, hundreds of journalists from as far away as Japan flocked to Colombia’s border with Venezuela hoping to witness the fallout from one of the most dramatic moments in South America’s recent history. None were granted visas to enter. Those who tried to do so anyway were detained and thrown out.But last weekend a team of reporters was finally allowed to visit Caracas.Not the award-winning correspondents from outlets like CNN, Sky News and the BBC, who were among those left waiting at the border in January, but reporters from Newsmax, a conservative network owned by Donald Trump’s billionaire friend Chris Ruddy.

“We are here in the shadow of the great monument to Simón Bolívar, the great liberator ... of Latin America. And ... now we have a new great liberator, Donald Trump,” Ruddy told his channel’s correspondent as he stood in Caracas’s historic Plaza Bolívar celebrating the US president’s “almost miraculous” overthrowing of Maduro.“Just one military strike: boom! It was done,” the Mar-a-Lago-frequenting media mogul enthused, claiming Venezuelans all across the country were “really excited about what Trump is doing”.On Saturday, the anchor for the Florida-based broadcaster, Rob Schmitt, was even granted an “exclusive” audience with one of Venezuela’s most powerful men, the president of the national assembly, Jorge Rodríguez, who

is also the brother of the acting president, Delcy Rodríguez.“In the last 36 days, we have had a very good understanding and relationship working with the government of the United States,” Jorge Rodríguez said in what is thought to be the first such interview since Maduro’s capture.Rodríguez called for a “win-win relationship” and touted some of the world’s biggest reserves of oil, gold and natural gas. “As President

Donald Trump has mentioned recently, there’s a lot to be done,” he added, switching to English when asked how Venezuela’s people felt about the arrival of capitalist oil giants. “They are OK,” he said. Venezuela’s decision to open the doors to the conservative network, an upstart rival

to Fox News, highlighted the once-unthinkable alignment of interests between the remnants of Maduro’s supposedly “anti-imperialist” regime and their ideological opposites in the White House

For years those sides have been at loggerheads, as Trump worked to topple the socialist

ug” Maduro and Maduro berated Trump as an insane imperialist “gangster”.Now, for different reasons, Newsmax trip to Caracas. From the perspective of Delcy and Jorge Rodríguez, both close Maduro allies, the network’s visit was an opportunity to signal to Trump that they are reliable partners who should be allowed to remain in power without the need for a messy transition towards democracy.

Ireland’s basic income for the arts scheme becomes permanent



London: Ireland is creating a scheme that will give artists a weekly income in the hope of reducing their need for alternative work and boosting their creativity.The Basic Income for the Arts (BIA) initiative will provide €325 (£283) a week to 2,000 eligible artists based in the Republic of Ireland in three-year cycles.The culture minister, Patrick O’Donovan, said at the launch in Dublin on Tuesday that it was the first scheme of its kind in the world. “This is a gigantic step forward that other countries are not doing,” he said.The scheme was “a start” and hopefully would be expanded, O’Donovan said. “For the first time in the history of the state we now have, on a permanent basis, a basic income structure that will really revolutionise and, in many ways, set Ireland apart from other countries with regard to how we value culture and creativity.”

The permanent scheme follows a trial that ran from 2022 to 2025 to help artists during Covid pandemic shutdowns. New York and San Francisco had similar pilot schemes but Ireland is believed to be the first country to make one permanent.The pilot, for which 2,000 artists were randomly selected from 8,000 applicants, lowered the likelihood of artists experiencing enforced deprivation and reduced their levels of anxiety and reliance on supplementary income, a study found.The scheme recouped more than its net cost of €72m through increases in arts-related expenditure, productivity gains and reduced reliance on other welfare payments, according to a government-commissioned cost-benefit analysis.Peter Power, a member of the National Campaign for the Arts steering committee, said it was a real-world test of what happened when people were given stability instead of precarity. “Artists on the scheme spent more time creating and less time trapped in unrelated jobs just to survive, and many became better able to sustain themselves through their work alone,” he said.A more vibrant arts sector brought myriad benefits such as greater economic activity, improved mental wellbeing, critical thinking and innovation, Power added.Under eligibility rules, artists can receive support for three out of every six years. An artist selected for the 2026-29 cycle must skip the next cycle but can reapply for the following one.

Guidelines about the scheme, which has an initial budget of €18.27m (£16m), will be published in April. Applications for the cycle that begins in 2026 will open in May, with payments starting September and continuing until September 2029. Applicants are to be randomly selected. Jenny Dagg, a Maynooth University sociologist who studied the scheme, said it was a win for all but noted that eligible artists could not live solely on the weekly payments, which were considered supplementary income.Artists have welcomed the scheme but said they still faced a cost of living and housing crisis. Rents in Dublin have doubled since 2013, forcing many young people to continue living with their parents.

Father of pro-democracy activist Anna Kwok first to be convicted under Hong Kong national security law

London: A Hong Kong court has found the father of a wanted activist guilty of a national security violation, after he tried to end her insurance policy and withdraw the funds, drawing international criticism for the targeting of relatives of pro-democracy campaigners. Kwok Yin-sang, 68, is the first person to be charged under a homegrown national security law, also known as Article 23, for “attempting to deal with, directly or indirectly, any funds or other financial assets or economic resources” belonging to an absconder.His daughter, Anna Kwok, helps lead the Washington-based advocacy group Hong Kong Democracy Council, and is one of 34 overseas activists wanted by Hong Kong national security police. She is accused of colluding with foreign forces and police have offered a bounty of HK\$1m (\$127,400) for her arrest.Anna Kwok, a Washington based Hong Kong activist.Rights groups condemn arrest of Hong Kong activist Anna Kwok’s father and brotherRead more

Kwok Yin-sang was accused of trying to withdraw funds totalling HK\$88,609 (\$11,342) from an education savings insurance policy which he bought for her when she was almost two years old. He had pleaded not guilty and did not testify at the trial.The acting principal magistrate Cheng Lim-chi said since Anna Kwok is a fugitive, directly or indirectly handling her insurance policy is illegal.A sentence is yet to be pronounced.According to the prosecution, when Kwok was arrested, he said under police caution: “I know my daughter is wanted by the security bureau. I was the one paying for her insurance policy. Since she’s no longer in Hong Kong, I just cut it.”Kwok Yin-sang had initially been denied bail but he was later granted bail by the high court with conditions imposed including a travel ban and a ban on communication with his daughter.During the closing submission, defence lawyer Steven Kwan argued that section 89 and 90 of Article 23 should not apply in a case where a person was simply handling an insurance policy he had bought a long time ago for his children.“This ... is a form of prosecution based on family ties,” Kwan said.

Anna Kwok’s brother was also arrested for the same crime and is now on bail.China imposed a sweeping national security law in 2020 and the city’s legislature passed a second set of national security laws known as Article 23 in 2024, to plug what authorities called “loopholes” in the national security regime. The families of two Melbourne teenagers who died after drinking methanol-laced alcohol in Laos say they have been blindsided by news the workers responsible for serving the drinks received fines of just \$185.Bianca Jones and Holly Morton-Bowles, both 19, were killed by methanol poisoning along with four other tourists after a night out at the Nana backpackers hostel in Vang Vieng, a popular tourist destination in Laos, in November 2024.More than a year later, the girls’ fathers, Shaun Bowles and Mark Jones, said they were relying on a group chat with the families of the victims, started by parents of British lawyer Simone White, for updates provided by the UK government.That’s how they learned 10 people connected to the hostel faced court in January and were fined \$185 and given a suspended sentence for destroying evidence. “We were shocked by the absolute injustice for our girls and the others,” Jones told 9News.“We have had no correspondence with anyone from the Laos government. We had no idea the court case was going ahead.”While the men initially believed the court case was linked to the deaths of their daughters, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade confirmed the destruction-of-evidence charges only related to the death of the American tourist.“We’ve been in touch with the government yesterday and last night and what we’re ... asking them to do is to step up and represent our girls in the way that they deserve to be represented,” Bowles said.“Because we just we’re out of options. It’s pretty devastating.” The Laotian government previously vowed to “bring the perpetrators to justice in accordance with the law”.In question time, Mr Albanese acknowledged the recent



events had “added to the heartbreak” of the families.“We’ll continue to engage Laos authorities on these cases and we’ll do everything we can to support Holly and Bianca’s families at this distressing time,” he said.Victorian Premier Jacinta Allan, who has previously met the victims’ families, had outright contempt for the court outcome.“You can’t even really call it a punishment, can you? It’s just heartbreaking,” she told reporters.Foreign Affairs Minister Penny Wong said she made it clear to her Laos counterpart Australia expected “full accountability” and stressed charges should reflect the seriousness of the tragedy.The Laotian government previously vowed to “bring the perpetrators to justice in accordance with the law”.The department has apologised to the families for failing to keep it informed about the court outcome.“The department prides itself in its commitment to consular service and to ensuring that the interests of consular clients and their families are paramount,” it said.“On this occasion, we fell short of our aspiration.”Australia’s foreign affairs minister, Penny Wong, said she had made it clear to her Lao counterpart that Australia expects “full accountability” and stressed charges should reflect the seriousness of the traged

“We continue to press Lao authorities on the cases relating to Holly and Bianca’s deaths, and we will continue to support Holly and Bianca’s families at this distressing time,” she said.

Here’s How Tech Innovations Now Play A Large Role In Eye Care In India

Eye care in India has moved beyond just vision correction and basic surgeries. Recently, ophthalmology has become one of the key sectors to adopt MedTech innovations, primarily to meet the demands of early diagnosis, precision treatment, observation, and aftercare. As the number of lifestyle-related eye diseases increases, tech innovations are playing a larger role in the eye care delivery system in India. According to clinical data, over 11.9 million glaucoma patients are believed to live in India. Glaucoma is a gradually progressive disease that needs timely and regular care throughout life. As the number of diabetes patients increases, diabetic retinopathy cases follow the same upward trend, whereas cataract volume remains one of the highest in the world, with almost ten million cataract operations done annually. These facts call for systems with capabilities of early diagnosis, accurate treatment, and long-term patient management. Dr Kasu Prasad Reddy, Founder & Co-Chairman, Maxivision Super Speciality Eye Hospitals, says, “Many serious eye conditions progress without early warning signs. Technology gives us objective information even when patients feel their vision is normal, which helps us intervene at the right stage and focus on protecting vision rather than responding after damage has occurred.”

Diagnostics as the foundation layer of Modern Eye Care

The rapid adoption of MedTech in ophthalmology is a result of how deeply diagnostics are now integrated into



everyday clinical workflows. Advanced imaging platforms such as optical coherence tomography (OCT), wide-field retinal scanners, corneal topographers, and non-contact tonometers are no longer optional add-ons; they are the most important pillar behind the decision-making process in modern eye clinics. These technologies help in objective documentation, longitudinal tracking, and precision planning, allowing clinicians to monitor disease progression, evaluate treatment response, and plan interventions with better accuracy. This shift has transformed eye care from an observation-based approach into one that is data-led, measurable, and highly protocol-driven.

Beyond Detection: How AI Is Reshaping Eye Care Delivery and Scale

Although artificial intelligence is known for its role in screening and early detection, it also enhances efficiency in ophthalmology, consistency, and access to care. AI-powered systems are increasingly used to triage patients, prioritise high-risk cases, stan-

dardise image interpretation, and reduce inter-observer variability. In markets like India, where patient load is high and specialist availability is uneven, AI becomes a critical enabler of scale, helping eye care networks deliver timely, high-quality care across geographies.

Surgical technology improving precision and recovery

Surgical care is one of the areas that has seen rapid development in technology. Presently, phacoemulsification systems, premium intraocular lenses, and advanced real-time imaging are the cornerstones of a successful modern cataract surgery. With the help of cutting-edge technologies, a surgeon can be more accurate than ever, thus improving a patient’s outcome and time to recovery. This combination of scale and technology has helped strengthen patient confidence in surgical eye care.

Digital tools enabling long-term care

Chronic eye disorders, such as glaucoma, need continuous monitoring and personalised

treatment. Electronic health records, storing images in the cloud, and well-organised follow-up mechanisms are gradually assisting in meeting this requirement. Patients themselves are able to understand their personalised line of treatment and also their current condition through the imaging and medical reports, and at the same time, doctors can tailor more individualised treatment plans accurately by comparing the data over time. Tele-ophthalmology and digital consultations are also becoming more common for follow-ups, especially for stable patients, reducing the burden of frequent hospital visits without compromising care quality.

Technology expanding access beyond metros

Significantly, the adoption of MedTech in ophthalmology is not just limited to big metropolitan hospitals anymore. Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities are currently enjoying access to cutting, edge diagnostic and surgical devices. Such growth indicates that technology not only helps in standardising care procedures but also in making specialist-level services more accessible to the patients.

Why eye care leads the MedTech curve

Eye care stands out because outcomes are measurable and meaningful to patients. Close to perfect vision, speedy recovery, and disease stabilisation are some of the concrete benefits patients experience, thus their faith in technology-enabled care is reinforced. At the same time, MedTech gives clinicians pinpoint accuracy and certainty in their decisions.

Why Diet And Lifestyle Matter More Than We Think For Long-Term Health

In modern healthcare conversations, genetics and medical interventions often dominate discussions around long-term health. Yet, mounting evidence suggests that everyday habits play a far greater role in shaping health outcomes over time. According to the Economic Survey 2025–26, nearly 24% of Indian women and 23% of Indian men are overweight or obese, highlighting obesity as a growing public health challenge driven by unhealthy diets, sedentary lifestyles, and increasing consumption of ultra-processed foods. “Long-term health outcomes are shaped less by occasional treatments and far more Nutracy Lifestyle. “Diet and lifestyle remain among the most underestimated, yet most powerful, determinants of both longevity and quality of life.” The survey also underscores how lifestyle-related factors influence biological processes that contribute to chronic disease and the ongoing mental health crisis in India, reinforcing the urgent need to shift focus from reactive care to prevention.

The Science Linking Lifestyle to Long-Term Health

Lifestyle-related conditions, commonly referred to as non-communicable diseases (NCDs), are now the leading cause of mortality worldwide. Cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, obesity, and certain cancers are far more strongly linked to modifiable lifestyle behaviours than to genetic destiny. “Research consistently shows that a significant proportion of chronic diseases can be delayed or even prevented through sustained improvements in diet, physical activity, and daily routines,” says Dr Patil. Lifestyle choices directly affect foundational biological systems, including metabolism, immune function, inflammation, and cellular repair mechanisms. Poor dietary habits and physical inactivity increase chronic low-grade inflammation, insulin resistance, and oxidative stress. In contrast, healthier habits help maintain metabolic efficiency and physiological balance, reducing long-term disease risk.

Diet as the Foundation of Preventive Health

A balanced, nutrient-dense diet is central to long-term health, energy levels, and disease prevention. Consuming a variety of whole foods supports metabolic health and lowers the risk of chronic conditions. “Regular intake of refined carbohydrates, added sugars, and high-sodium processed foods disrupts metabolic balance, leading to weight gain, cholesterol abnormalities, and unstable blood sugar levels,” notes Dr. Patil. Modern nutrition science increasingly focuses on dietary patterns rather than isolated nutrients, recognising that sustained health benefits come from consistent food choices over time not short-term dietary trends or restrictive regimens. This philosophy underpins disease-specific nutrition planning widely recommended by experienced nutritionists, dietitians, and PCOS specialists.

Lifestyle Habits Beyond Food

While nutrition is foundational, long-term health depends on a broader lifestyle framework especially for individuals seeking structured, weight-focused care. Research shows that multiple healthy habits work synergistically, amplifying their overall impact.

Physical Activity: Regular movement supports cardiovascular health, improves insulin sensitivity, and helps maintain healthy body composition. Even moderate, consistent activity significantly reduces the risk of chronic disease. “Movement doesn’t need to be intense to be effective, it needs to be regular,” says Dr. Patil.

Sleep Patterns: Adequate sleep is essential for hormonal regulation, immune resilience, and metabolic balance. Chronic sleep deprivation increases the risk of obesity, type 2 diabetes, and heart disease. “Sleep is often neglected, yet it’s one of the most powerful metabolic regulators,” she adds.

Tobacco and Alcohol Use: Smoking remains one of the strongest preventable risk factors for cardiovascular disease and cancer, while excessive alcohol intake increases the risk of liver disease, hypertension, and metabolic

dysfunction.

Stress Management: Persistent psychological stress disrupts inflammatory pathways and metabolic stability, gradually increasing disease susceptibility. “Chronic stress quietly erodes health, it doesn’t announce itself, but its effects accumulate,” explains Dr. Patil. Together, these behaviours form lifestyle profiles that strongly predict long-term health outcomes.

Practical Strategies for Sustainable Health

Sustainable health improvements are built through realistic, evidence-based actions not extreme measures.

Prioritise Diet Quality: Focus on whole foods, increase fibre intake, and reduce reliance on ultra-processed foods through gradual, manageable changes.

Integrate Physical Activity: Incorporate walking, structured exercise, and daily movement into routine life for lasting benefits.

Protect Sleep: Maintain consistent sleep schedules and prioritise quality rest to support hormonal and metabolic health.

Avoid Harmful Substances: Eliminate tobacco use and limit or avoid alcohol consumption.

Focus on Consistency: “Health is not built through short-term interventions, it’s built through habits sustained over time,” emphasises Dr. Patil.

Rethinking Long-Term Health

Health is shaped by the accumulation of daily choices made over years, not by isolated actions. A substantial body of scientific evidence supports the understanding that food choices and lifestyle behaviours are central to long-term wellbeing. “Recognising nutrition and lifestyle as integral to medical care allows us to shift from reactive treatment to proactive prevention,” says Dr. Patil. As chronic diseases continue to rise globally, acknowledging and acting upon the role of diet and lifestyle is no longer optional. Sustainable health is built quietly, through informed decisions repeated day after day, long before illness ever appears.

Celebrity crib sheet: Sydney Sweeney is everywhere – here are nine things you need to know about her

Spare a thought for Sydney Sweeney! Yes, she is young, beautiful, rich and talented, but she has also been getting it from all sides this week. Her passion project has bombed at the box office; she is still paying for a jeans advertisement she did four months ago, and being called on to address charges of having joked about eugenics; and fellow members of the Hollywood elite are breaking ranks to express their disdain (in one case, with a vomiting emoji). And, as she found out this week, she can’t even enjoy a kiss with her controversial new boyfriend without being snapped by the callous paparazzi! Here’s what you need to know when Sweeney’s name next crops up – which, if current trends continue, will be soon.

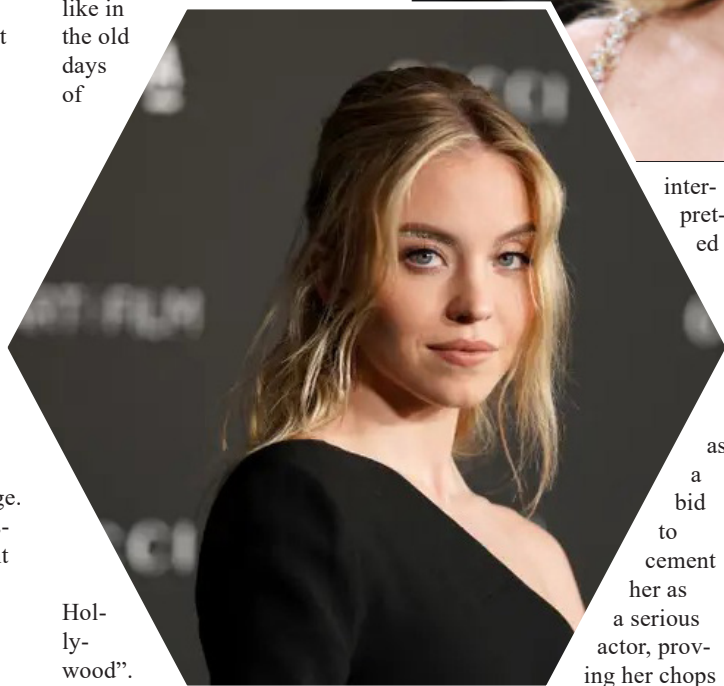
1. She’s dating Taylor Swift’s arch-nemesis

Since September, Sweeney has been romantically linked with Scooter Braun, the music mogul best known for allegedly holding Taylor Swift’s song catalogue hostage. The pairing has generated discussion online for its apparent randomness and 16-year age gap, but they haven’t shied away from attention, either, being photographed together on several long and outdoors-y dates. The happy couple were recently papped sharing an intimate yet also highly visible moment, kissing on a rock in Central Park – suggesting they are at least not averse to publicity. Sweeney may be comfortable writing herself off the guest list for Swift’s wedding, but her affiliation with Swift’s arch-villain hasn’t helped with her increasingly embattled public image.

2. Bezos wants her for Bond

Braun is not the only pop-culture “bad guy” Sweeney is cosy with. The couple report-

edly connected at Jeff Bezos’s Venice wedding to Lauren Sánchez in June. Sweeney’s attendance at the lavish event initially raised eyebrows, given her lack of public connection to the Amazon founder, but was later explained as a money move, with Sweeney attached to a forthcoming blockbuster from Amazon MGM Studios. A source told Page Six that Sweeney “is not friends with either” Bezos or Sánchez, but “came to pay respects to the ‘boss’, just like in the old days of



Hollywood”.

Sweeney is also reported to be launching a lingerie line, backed by the private equity firm Coatue – where Scooter Braun’s friend Ben Schwerin, formerly of Snapchat, is a general partner – and \$1bn in investment from Bezos and his bride. Bezos is now allegedly pushing for Sweeney to be made the next Bond girl.

3. She’s been dealt a KO blow at the box office

Sweeney’s starring role in Christy, David Michôd’s biopic about the trailblazing boxer Christy Martin, has been widely



transformed and gruelling training regimen. The film has received mixed reviews and, last week, bombed at the US box office, opening to just \$1.3m. Sweeney, who made her name as an actor on the HBO teen drama Euphoria, has taken the blow in her stride, declaring on Instagram that she remained proud of the picture. “Why? Because we don’t always just make art for numbers, we make it for impact. And Christy has been the most impactful project of my life.”

4. She ‘did a jean ad’

Sweeney’s art, however, is increasingly at risk of being overshadowed by her controversies. In July, an ad for the denim company American Eagle, showing Sweeney decked out in denim with the tagline “Sydney Sweeney has great jeans” sparked instant controversy, seen by some as catering to the “male gaze” and subtly promoting whiteness. Since then, when asked about the ad on red carpets, Sweeney has barely been able to conceal her exasperation. Last week, she finally addressed the controversy – sort of. “I did a jean ad,” she, witheringly, told GQ. “I mean, the reaction definitely was a surprise, but I love jeans. All I wear are jeans. I’m literally in jeans and a T-shirt every day of my life.” Offered the chance to respond to criticism that “white people shouldn’t joke about genetic superiority”, Sweeney demurred: “I think that when I have an issue that I want to speak about, people will hear.” Her flippant, eye-rolling – not to mention, much belated – response to the controversy hasn’t won her fans.

5. She’s been adopted by the right

Of course, it’s not just about the “jean ad”. In August, Sweeney was shown to have registered as a Republican voter, not long after recent family photos were published showing guests wearing Maga-style caps. Sweeney also registered in tax-friendly Florida, shortly after purchasing a \$13.5m mansion. At the time, she dismissed the reporting of the images as “an absurd political statement” and asked the public to “stop making assumptions”. She has not commented on her politics, but the publicly accessible documents have for many been proof enough. Regardless of Sweeney’s relationship to the Republican party, they have been eager to align with her. Texas senator Ted Cruz declared criticism of the jean ad evidence that “the crazy left has come out against beautiful women”. And President Trump was also quick to lend his endorsement (“the ‘HOTTEST’ ad out there ... Go get ‘em, Sydney!’”).

6. She’s not the most popular woman in Hollywood

This week, White Lotus star Aimee Lou Wood, musician SZA and actor Christina Ricci

reportedly liked an Instagram video criticising Sweeney’s dismissive response to the American Eagle saga. (Wood also posted a vomiting emoji elsewhere.) Orange Is the New Black actor Ruby Rose (who lost out on the Christy role) also laid into Sweeney on Instagram Threads, writing: “You’re a cretin and you ruined the film. Period. Christy deserved better.” Rose’s objection was to an apparent Republican playing a gay woman: “None of ‘the people’ want to see someone who hates them, parading around pretending to be us.”

7. She’s also regular fodder for the discourse machine

Between her sex-symbol status and her place in the culture wars, Sweeney is a recurring trending topic on X, variously lusted over and reviled. Last December, candid photos of the actor sparked what X generously described as “debates over beauty standards” that waged for several days. (Think Andrew Tate acolytes calling Sweeney “mid” and a “catfish”.) This week, a screenshot of her implacable response to the GQ interviewer has been taken up by right-wingers as a meme-ish expression of ideological superiority.

The unseemly discourse is not just limited to online. After Sweeney played a Hooters waitress on SNL last year, the Spectator declared: “Yay! Boobs are back!” While, last month, conservative commentator Megyn Kelly railed against Sweeney’s sheer red-carpet gown: “I object.” In 2021, Sweeney tearfully addressed social-media trolling; more recently she has tried to rise above it, laughing off photographers’ demands to “show us those boobs” at the 2022 Met Gala. “It’s this weird relationship that people have with me that I have no control or say over,” she told Variety

last year.

8. She’s not above selling out ...

Sweeney has established herself as a businesswoman, producing many of her recent films. She’s not been shy about chasing brand deals, promoting flip phones, face creams, ice-cream and “super soft slippers”. “If I just acted, I wouldn’t be able to afford my life in LA ... They don’t pay actors like they used to,” Sweeney explained in 2022. Earlier this year, Sweeney partnered with a “men’s personal company” to produce a limited edition soap, marketed as containing a “touch” of her own bath water. “Why? Because y’all wouldn’t stop asking,” said the company, Dr Squatch, giving the soap’s scent as “morning wood”.

9. ... but now she could do with a win

Sweeney has re-cast box-office misfires as stepping stones to success. As her co-stars strained to apologise for their part in 2024’s disastrous Madame Web, Sweeney explained it as one of her “strategic business decisions”, enabling her “to build a relationship with Sony” that later led to Anyone But You. The charming 2023 romcom was a surprise hit, buoyed up by Sweeney’s on-screen chemistry (and rumoured romance) with her co-star Glen Powell. That same year, Sweeney delivered a powerful performance in Reality, playing an NSA whistleblower word-for-word from the interrogation transcript. But this year all four of Sweeney’s tentpole projects – Ron Howard’s historical thriller Eden, the cowboy crime-drama Americana, the straight-to-streaming Echo Valley, and now Oscar bait Christy – have fallen flat at the box office. Sweeney’s still standing, but if she is to get off the ropes, she’ll need a win soon.

Sanjay Dutt and Maanayata Celebrate Their Eighteenth Wedding Anniversary

Mumbai: Today, February 11, marks the 18th wedding anniversary of Bollywood star Sanjay Dutt and his wife, Maanayata Dutt. To commemorate the important day, the couple shared sweet photos of themselves together on social media. In addition to calling his lady-love a “rock” who has supported him “thick and thin” in his anniversary post, Maanayata also released a reel that chronicled their journey together.Sanjay Dutt celebrated the milestone by posting sentimental photos of himself and Maanayata Dutt on Instagram.

He wrote his wife a heartfelt note to lock the treasured moments. “Happy anniversary, mama. You have always been a source of strength and have supported me like a rock through thick and thin. You have helped me get back up when I have fallen.” The celebri-



ty went on to say, “You have given me the most amazing kids, and we stand together as a team through life no matter what. Thank you for being there for me and taking care of me.

I hope we have many more wonderful times together. I love you,

mother Jai Bhole Nath.”Sanjay’s industry friends quickly took notice of his romantic anniversary post. “Happypppyy Anniversary to you and Mana, here’s to many more years of unconditional love and friendship,” wrote Shilpa Shetty in response. While Zareen Khan

tweeted a red heart, an evil eye, and a sparkling emoji in the comments area, Dia Mirza and Sophie Choudry also used red heart emojis. Maanayata also celebrated the special day with another heartfelt post on Instagram. She shared a montage of throwback moments from all these years. Alongside this, she wrote, “18 years!!!! Recapping the Countless moments, endless love, and a journey I wouldn’t trade for anything ever!! From then to now, it’s just...and...still you, happy anniversary, my bestest half, love you always & forever!!” One of her favorite memories, according to Maanayata, is of “the two of us on the scooter in Budapest and also with Iqra Dutt on Karwachauth.”In 2008, Sanjay Dutt married Maanayata Dutt. In October 2010, Shaaran and Iqra, twins, were born to the couple.

R Madhavan was unable to attend the reunion of Rang De Basanti



Mumbai: Where had Maddy gone? During Rang De Basanti’s special screening on February 6th to commemorate its 20th anniversary, that was the question that was trending on social media. As director Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra brought the group back together, including Aamir Khan, Soha Ali Khan, Siddharth, Sharman Joshi, and Kunal Kapoor, fans immediately realized that one of their favorite faces was absent.Soon after the film’s release, actor R Madhavan, who portrayed the Air Force pilot, clarified that his absence was due to professional obligations. He reveals, “I was unable to travel back in time because I was at a shoot overseas

when the incident occurred. I truly missed it, and I wish I could have joined everyone in celebrating this timeless movie. According to the 55-year-old, the reunion was first scheduled for January but had to be rescheduled after a plane disaster in Baramati, Maharashtra, on January 28 that killed everyone on board, including Ajit Pawar, the deputy chief minister at the time. Naturally, we didn’t want to celebrate at that moment. “It was an extremely sad and heartbreaking incident,” he recalls. The film crew, meanwhile, showed up with sweatshirts with the title of the movie and posed outside the theater before the showing began.

Having seen “bits and pieces” of Dhurandhar 2, Rupali Ganguly

Mumbai: When actress Rupali Ganguly talks about her brother, choreographer Vijay Ganguly, whose work in Dhurandhar has garnered attention, she is unable to contain her emotions. Rupali, who describes herself as a very proud sister, stated that she values Vijay’s compliments even more than she does her own accomplishments.During a conversation, Rupali disclosed that she has already seen snippets of Dhurandhar’s impending sequel. “I went to the theater twice to see Dhurandhar. What a movie. In addition to seeing tidbits of the second half yesterday, I am eagerly awaiting its release. While we were on a video conference, Vijay was editing something.”Look at this shot, look at this shot,” he said. I urged him to rewind and show it to me once more because I thought it was such a great photo. “Every frame is incredible,” she continued.”Despite being the children of filmmaker Anil Ganguly, we never got anything on a platter,” Rupali said, reflecting on their upbringing and the hardships the siblings ex-



perienced. Papa went completely insane. She emphasized that Vijay’s discipline started early and stated, “I have seen Vijay struggle for the bare minimum, and he is a good person.” “People are unaware that he has been an editor since he was eleven years old. He is an excellent editor, which is why he delivers everything. In addition, Rupali half-jokingly gave herself credit for Vijay’s foray into dancing. “Whether you like it or not, Vijay and I used to dance for everyone when they came home. He used to be a perfect replica of Michael Jackson. After that, I joined Shiamak, and I forced Vijay to do the same. Then he flew away,” she remembered.Even though

both siblings are employed in the entertainment sector, they seldom ever talk about work-related matters. Rupali recalled first learning about Dhurandhar in passing and then seeing a rough cut of the song Shararat. Rupali was sure of the sequence’s significance, although Vijay had been critical of himself for it. “He insisted that this song would have been a hit if I had shot it properly. “Are you mad?” I asked. This will be a super duper hit song,” she said. Dhurandhar is more than just a box office hit for Rupali. Frame by frame, it serves as a reminder of tenacity, family, and the subdued pride that comes with witnessing a brother’s journey.

Kapil Sharma talks candidly about his battle with depression at age 36



Mumbai: The path of comedian and actor Kapil Sharma has not been easy. The comedian has experienced a number of phases that could have terminated his career, from early triumph to personal loss and public defeats, but he has always managed to emerge again. As he reflected on his past, Kapil revealed how each phase was essential in forming the person he is now. Speaking on his life’s highs and lows in an interview, Kapil stated, “Every phase had its own charm.” It was different in childhood. That stage was different when my father was present. Life took a radical turn after his death in 2004. I then went back on track after having another chance on TV. I fell

deeply into depression at the age of 36. People began to say, “He’s done.” After that, I married. The show then returned. I then completed almost 300 episodes once more.”The past never changes,” he added, adding that he missed his father every day. Those who have left won’t return. I sobbed when I received a check for ₹10 lakh after winning the trophy in The Great Indian Laughter Challenge Season 3. if my dad were still with us now. I recall standing silently outside my house at nine o’clock at night when my performance began. Every home in the community had a television on, and I could hear people laughing. I imagined how delighted Papa would be if he were still with us. Though I

mourn dad every day, some days are more difficult than others. With the intention of becoming a singer, Kapil relocated from Amritsar to Mumbai. But he became well-known in 2007 after winning the third season of The Great Indian Laughter Challenge, a comic reality television program. After winning Comedy Circus, he started Comedy Nights with Kapil on Colors TV in 2013 under the K9 Productions banner. He then became one of the most well-known and prosperous comedians in India. As the male lead in the romantic comedy Kis Kisko Pyaar Karoon, which was directed by Abbas-Mustan and starred Elli AvrRam, Manjari Phadnis, Simran Kaur Mundi, and Sai Lokur, Kapil made his Bollywood debut in 2015. The movie became a financial success. Later on, he starred in a number of movies, including Crew, Zwigato, and Firangi. His most recent appearance was in the film Kis Kisko Pyaar Karoon 2.At the moment, Kapil is occupied with The Great Indian Kapil Show on Netflix. Navjot Singh Sidhu, Archana Puran Singh, Kiku Sharda, Sunil Grover, and Krushna Abhishek are also featured in the show. It has already been extended for a fifth season after completing four so far.

Karan Johar wins temporary court relief in his lawsuit against YouTuber CarryMinati for defamation

Mumbai: A Mumbai court has intervened in the escalating online dispute between well-known YouTuber Ajey Nagar, also known as CarryMinati, and filmmaker Karan Johar. In a recent development, the court granted an ad-interim ex parte order in Johar’s favour in a defamation suit that names Nagar and several other parties.Johar claimed that offensive material and defamatory statements about him were spread via YouTube videos that were extensively shared on social media. This led to the ruling. Ajey Nagar (CarryMinati), Deepak Char, Akshay Gajra, One Hand Clap Media Pvt Ltd, Poptech Growth Private Limited, and Meta Platforms, Inc. are named as defendants in the lawsuit, which was brought by Karan Johar via Apoorva Mehta.Johar’s legal team claims that the content in question damaged the filmmaker’s reputation by using language that was “vulgar

and abusive.” Despite the removal of some films, the petitioners contended that their reach had already expanded greatly. Unknown people allegedly continued to circulate the same content by resharing clips from the videos as reels and short videos. Johar’s legal team, DSK Legal, asked the court to step in right now and stop such content from being shared further.Speaking on behalf of Ajey Nagar, his representatives said that the YouTuber had already removed the videos and any associated content that might be construed as defamatory. Additionally, they contended that the Mumbai court might not be able to hear the case.

Additionally, according to his legal team, Nagar requested seven days to confirm the information in the legal notification and provide a suitable response. They contended that he was not given enough opportunity to explain his perspective because the law-

Vinod Khanna survived a lung cancer diagnosis prior to bladder cancer

Mumbai: Kavita Khanna, Vinod Khanna’s wife, has discussed the late actor’s protracted and challenging health struggle. Khanna passed away a few years ago from bladder cancer, but her family had not yet made public the fact that she had suffered from another severe illness much earlier.Khanna was initially diagnosed with lung cancer in 2001 during a routine check-up after doctors discovered patches in his lungs, according to a video that Kavita shared on her YouTube channel.He smoked between 40 and 80 cigarettes a day, according to Kavita, and experts at the time suggested that he could need to have a portion of his lung removed. “Vinod was diagnosed with lung cancer in 2001,” she stated. During his yearly physical, they discovered spots in his lungs. His daily cigarette consumption ranged from 40 to 80. When we visited Mumbai’s top MRI specialists, they all concluded that it was lung cancer.According to Kavita, while determining their next course of action, the couple sought multiple medical opinions and also sought spiritual guidance. She said that although specialists overseas initially found the recovery hard to accept, subsequent follow-up scans revealed no indication of lung cancer. “We went to Germany later,” she stated. Vinod experienced excruciating discomfort in the vicinity of his shoulder one evening. For two days, he was just lying in agony. After visiting to check on him, Gurudev recommended that we have an X-ray taken. The fact that there was



no malignancy was more significant than the absence of a broken rib. Amazing! They saw all the reports when we returned via London, and they were unable to believe that there had been a full recovery. They simply believed that stories were confused in India. Lung cancer did not return. Khanna was given a bladder cancer diagnosis almost ten years later, and he fought the illness until his passing.”The prognosis was that if he did everything that allopathy had to offer, there was a 25% chance he’d be alive after two years.” Kavita recalled at the time. ‘I’ve had a full life,’ Vinod stated over the phone to Gurudev. And I’m prepared to leave if the time has come. However, I do not wish to subject my body to agony. Gurudev therefore invited him to perform the panchkarma at the ashram. Two years after his first diagnosis, the cancer had disappeared. It was gone when we performed the scans in America. “He was still in very good health when it started declining,” she continued, adding that he had subsequently been urged to quit drinking. Bladder cancer ultimately claimed his life.”In 2017, Vinod Khanna passed away.

Eknath Shinde defends Salman Khan’s visit to the RSS function

New Delhi: Following Bollywood actor Salman Khan’s attendance at the ‘100 Years of Sangh Journey: New Horizons’ event in Mumbai, which sparked both admiration and criticism on social media, a new controversy broke out. Eknath Shinde, the deputy chief minister of Maharashtra, came up to defend the actor as online discussions grew more heated, portraying the matter as one of citizenship rather than politics. Salman’s attendance at the RSS-sponsored event, where film industry heavyweights Vicky Kaushal and Ranbir Kapoor shared the stage with RSS president Mohan Bhagwat, soon became a topic of conversation. Supporters dismissed the controversy as needless, while critics questioned the actor’s participation’s optics. Shinde dismissed the criticism, highlighting Salman’s Indian citizenship above any political analysis

of his looks. “Is this a query about Salman Khan attending or not attending the RSS event? Salman Khan is a citizen of India. Shinde emphasized that public personalities shouldn’t be confined to political storylines for attending cultural events, saying, “He has Lord Ganesha at his home, and his family does too. As the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh reflected on its century-long journey and future orientation, the event itself marked a significant milestone. Mohan Bhagwat used Khan as an example in his speech to emphasize the impact Bollywood celebrities have on young Indians. College kids imitate the style of Salman Khan. They respond they don’t know—Salman is doing it—when asked why. Bhagwat said, “The context of good values in society should become a fashion,” implying that superstars might use their fame to promote socially

conscious messages. The film industry was heavily represented at the two-day event. Filmmakers Mohit Suri, Subhash Ghai, Nitesh Tiwari, Mahaveer Jain, Om Raut, Vikram Malhotra, and lyricist Prasoon Joshi joined Salman Khan and Ranbir Kapoor on the first day, while actors Akshay Kumar and Vicky Kaushal, as well as filmmaker Karan Johar and actor Ananya Panday, were present on the second. Vineet Kumar Singh, Jackie Shroff, Rupali Ganguly, Raveena Tandon, and Shilpa Shetty were among the other well-known attendees. Filmmakers Aanand L Rai, Amar Kaushik, Amit Sharma, Ramesh Taurani, Anand Pandit, Madhur Bhandarkar, Mahesh Manjrekar, and Nitesh Tiwari were also. The celebrities are seated among the crowd during the sessions in a number of photos that are doing the rounds on social media.

Kalpana Iyer, the Ramba Ho girl, on Kudrat co-star Vinod Khanna



Mumbai: Kalpana Iyer, the original Ramba Ho girl, made the decision to go back in time and remember her experience collaborating with the late, great actor Vinod Khanna on the drama Kudrat in 1981.She described Vinod Khanna as a beautiful person who was always courteous to everyone around him in an exclusive interview with IANS.”How do you remember Vinod Khanna?” was the question posed to Kalpana. “An absolute gem,” she snapped back. The Hum Saath-Saath Hain actress continued by describing him as a “Wonderful human being, classic, and elegant.”Vinod Khanna had one of the most graceful walks in the business, Kalpana added. “You had to see because of the way he walked in when he entered a room,” she said. I know because I have seen him up close, as I have always stated. “He always had a kind

grin, was courteous, and was gentle. I’ve never witnessed him get offended or furious with anyone. In addition to Kudrat, I had known him personally for a very long period. He was quite respectful everytime I saw him, even if we didn’t meet every day. Vinod Sahab was one of those individuals with a remarkable set of values. He will always be a very, very sweet, fantastic, and enduring memory for me,” Kalpana continued. She went on to say that she is pleased that Akshaye Khanna, the actor father of Vinod Khanna, has inherited his father’s smile.Speaking about Kudrat, it was directed by Chetan Anand and starred Rajesh Khanna, Hema Malini, Raj Kumar, and Priya Rajvansh, among others, in important parts.R. D. Burman wrote the music for the movie, which was distributed by Mehboob Studios and R. K. Studios.



Bengal-Noida Police Fight Over Arrest Associated With Mahua Moitra’s False Chat Case



New Delhi, Feb 11: Police in West Bengal and Noida have released wildly divergent accounts of an attempted arrest related to the purported dissemination of falsified private conversations involving Mahua Moitra, a member of the Trinamool Congress. According to West Bengal Police, the culprit escaped because Noida Police blocked their attempt to apprehend him in Noida. Noida Police, however, have refuted these claims and asserted that the correct process was followed. A police squad from Krishnanagar, West Bengal, arrived in Noida on Monday morning to carry out an arrest order issued by a local court in the Nadia district, according to a top Noida Police source. The Bengal police team stated that after apprehending and holding the accused, a sizable group of Noida Police, consisting of ten to fifteen officers, showed up and prevented them from making the arrest. The four-person team was reportedly forcibly transported to a nearby police station and detained there for almost an hour and a half,

according to Bengal Police. The accused allegedly fled the scene during this time and is currently at large. The case concerns a private conversation that went viral on social media a few days ago and purportedly involved TMC MP Mahua Moitra and political strategist Prashant Kishor. Later, Mahua Moitra submitted a formal complaint at a Nadia district police station, claiming that forged and misleading information was being disseminated under her name. An FIR was filed and an inquiry was started in response to the complaint. Surajit Dasgupta uploaded the purported communication on his X handle, police discovered during the investigation. According to police sources, he seemed to be associated with a saffron organization based on his social media presence. Later, a forensic analysis by the Forensic Science Laboratory verified that the conversation was fake. The accused was given a notice following the forensic report, requesting that they come in front of the investigating officer on Monday. A Nadia local court

issued an arrest order against him after he did not show there. The Bengal Police team arrived at the accused’s Noida home on Monday morning and took him into custody, Krishnanagar SP IPS K Amarnath said. He claimed that Noida Police showed up and escorted the Bengal Police officers to the nearby police station while the arrest document was being drafted, leaving the accused unprotected at home. An altercation broke out between the two police teams after West Bengal Police said they were not provided with a suitable justification for this move. Senior police from both states stepped in and helped free the Bengal Police squad. But the accused had already made their getaway by the time they got back. The claims of obstruction have been denied by Noida Police. The SHO of Phase-2 Police Station told that the West Bengal Police squad showed up without warning. According to the SHO, Noida Police asked for more time to adhere to protocol and get a raiding unit ready. Noida Police claim that, in accordance with protocol, apartment security was notified before to the operation. The suspect was not present at the location when the combined raid was carried out. The SHO stated that the West Bengal Police team had the full backing of the community and denied any lack of cooperation. He further mentioned that the raiding team included the Chowki In-charge and the Station House Officer.

Pakistani star issued a serious warning to India



New Delhi, Feb 10: Sahibzada Farhan, the opener for Pakistan, stated on Tuesday that they will go into their highly anticipated match against India with an optimistic and aggressive attitude. Late Monday night, Pakistan canceled its boycott of the India match. On February 15, the two clubs will play a highly anticipated match in Colombo. “We’ll enter the game with the same attitude that we had in the Asia Cup and other games against India. During the post-match presentation, Farhan stated, “We’ll try to remain positive and play attacking cricket.” Farhan’s scorching 73, which served as the cornerstone of Pakistan’s 32-run victory over the USA, earned him player of the match. The ball was hitting my bat in the nets with great ease yesterday, the way we trained. Yesterday, I informed Hanif Malik, our hitting coach, that I was feeling optimistic about today’s game. I felt secure. I even declared that I would end the game in a manner that would win me player-of-the-match. To earn at least two or three player-of-the-match honors in this World Cup is a personal goal I’ve set for myself,” he continued. Salman Agha, the captain of Pakistan, stated that his team is as at ease setting an above-average total as they are pursuing. We are comfortable chasing, but we try to bat first and put up above par, then try to defend. Salman stated, “We have a flexible order, with the first three players ready to go and finishers going early. If we lose wickets, we have batters who can take the game further.” Pakistan’s batting performance against the USA was much more confident after they barely defeated the Netherlands in their opening match. “Clinical performance; we batted really well in the middle and got off to a good start with the bat. We have a top-notch offensive when it comes to bowling, and we know we could defend that after reaching 190. Agha acknowledged that there was still opportunity for development, nevertheless. There’s always space for development; we want to be more clinical and bowl better in the powerplay. These are the areas we wish to enhance. Monak Patel, the dejected captain of the United States, lamented letting runs go in the middle overs. Even though we bowled well in the powerplay, we gave up a lot of runs in the middle overs. “The pace bowlers bowled well, and they came back at the end,” he remarked. Patel stated that his team will try to finish well after losing both of their games thus far, severely hurting their chances of making it to the Super Eights. We came here with confidence and have been playing fantastic cricket, but even little mistakes can cost you. Our goal is to end this World Cup with two victories.

The Reason Behind Vande Mataram’s Selection as the National Song

New Delhi, Feb 11: On Wednesday, the Union Home Ministry ordered that Vande Mataram be sung at all government functions and in schools prior to the playing of the national anthem, Jana Gana Mana. We’ll now play all six stanzas of the song, including the four that were cut out in 1937. As the national song is performed, attendees are required to stand in attention, according to the Ministry. The order also covers civilian award shows like the Padma awards and other occasions the president attends, where the song would be played upon arrival and departure. Additionally, the song will be played in movie theaters and other public areas, albeit standing is not required in these settings. Vande Mataram, which was composed by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee in the 1870s, became the national anthem of India in 1950. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee composed the patriotic anthem Vande Mataram, which translates to “I bow to thee, Motherland,” in the 1870s. His book Anandamath, also known as “The Abbey of Bliss,” included it for the first time in 1882. The novel discusses ascetic rebels who revere the homeland as a goddess and takes place during the Sanyasi Rebellion against



the East India Company in the late 18th century. Rebels can be heard reciting the song as a patriotic hymn in the story. Nobel laureate Rabindranath

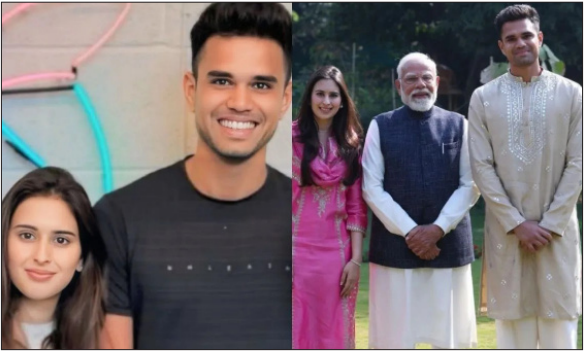
MP Raghav Chadha says the center should legalize virtual digital assets



New Delhi, Feb 11: On Tuesday, AAP MP Raghav Chadha urged the government to enact regulations to safeguard virtual digital assets, which include cryptocurrencies, stablecoins, and tokenized assets. He claimed that while India taxes these assets as legal, it regulates them as unlawful. Legalize digital assets that are virtual in India. Don’t take them out to sea. During the Rajya Sabha’s discussion of the Union Budget, Raghav Chadha stated, “Strengthen the Anti-Money Laundering Law and ring fence this ecosystem.” The AAP MP claimed that although India taxes cryptocurrencies at a rate of 30% capital gains tax plus 1% TDS, it does not provide investor protection, legal recognition, or a specific AML (anti-money laundering) framework. Section 194S of the Income-tax Act of 1961 was added by the Finance Act of 2022, requiring a 1% Tax Deducted at Source (TDS) on the transfer of virtual digital assets. Parliament was notified on Tuesday that taxes totaling up to Rs 705 crore were paid for revenue from Virtual Digital Assets (VDA) transactions in FY’23 and FY’24. Since virtual digital assets have not been granted asset class status, there is no specific licensing legislation, no explicit law protecting investors or consumers, no AML legislation (i.e., anti-money laundering guidelines or directives) for this asset class, and, of course, no clear legal classification. 4.8 lakh crore worth of trading in these virtual digital assets has therefore shifted offshore,” he stated. According to the MP, 73% of India’s cryptocurrency trading volume in the fiscal year 2025 has shifted to offshore exchanges as a result of these digital assets being traded in other nations like Dubai, Singapore, and Malaysia. Additionally, 180 virtual digital asset businesses have relocated to Singapore and Dubai, among other places. Therefore, 12 crore Indians are investing overseas in order to invest in stable currencies, virtual digital assets, cryptocurrency, and RWAs (Real World Assets). We must bring compliance onshore, enforce strict regulations, and apply it in India. As a result, if this occurs, the government would receive that amount of tax and 15 to 20 thousand crore rupees will be placed in the treasury,” he contended. “We should govern innovation rather than be afraid of it. “Regulation is protection, not prohibition,” he stated.

PM Modi is personally invited by Sachin to the Arjun-Saaniya wedding

New Delhi: In order to personally invite Prime Minister Narendra Modi to his son Arjun Tendulkar’s impending nuptials with Saaniya Chandok, batting icon Sachin Tendulkar met Modi at his home. According to reports, the couple, who became engaged last year, intends to get married next month. During the visit, Arjun, Saaniya, and Tendulkar’s close relatives were with him. In addition to showcasing the close relationship between the Prime Minister and the cricket legend, the encounter was a key turning point for the Tendulkar family as they get ready for a big and happy future. After meeting with Prime Minister Modi, Tendulkar sent an emotional statement in which he personally invited his son Arjun and Saaniya to their wedding and thanked the Prime Minister for his blessings and kind words for the young couple. “We were honoured to invite Hon’ble Prime Minister Shri @narendramodiji to Arjun and Saaniya’s wedding. Thank you, Modi ji, for your blessings and thoughtful advice for the young couple,” Tendulkar wrote on X. The legendary batsman also invited Home Minister Amit Shah and other political figures to Arjun’s wedding. As an all-rounder and left-arm fast bowler for Goa in domestic cricket, Arjun, 25, has gradually made a name for himself. He has amassed 685 runs and taken 52 wickets at an average of just over 38 in 24 first-class outings, including a historic century on debut against Rajasthan in the Ranji Trophy in 2022. The milestone was especially meaningful because it echoed his father Sachin Tendulkar’s hundred on his 1988 Ranji debut for Mumbai. Arjun has played in 24 List A cricket matches, taking 26 wickets and contributing valuable runs in the lower order. His ability to contribute in the shorter format is demonstrated by his T20 record, which consists of 35 wickets from 29 appearances. He has made five appearances for the Mumbai Indians in two seasons, but his opportunities in the IPL have been restricted thus far. He was later re-signed at the mega auction for INR 30 lakh, despite having been released prior to the 2025 campaign. He has started a new chapter in his career by joining the Lucknow Super Giants for the forthcoming season.



Abhishek Sharma was hospitalized and is unlikely to play against Namibia in the T20 World Cup



New Delhi: According to Dainik Jagran, ace batsman Abhishek Sharma of the Indian cricket team was admitted to the hospital with a stomach ailment and might not play against Namibia in the T20 World Cup. According to the source, he was already feeling ill prior to the last game against the USA, and his condition deteriorated after the game. This was stated ahead of Thursday’s group stage match against Namibia. According to reports, Abhishek had a high fever and was given infusions to relieve it right after. The team practice at the Arun Jaitley Stadium in New Delhi was skipped by the left-handed opener. “Abhi (Abhishek) still has some stomach problems. Assistant coach Ryan ten Doeschate told reporters on Tuesday, “We’re hoping he’ll be ready for the game

in two days.” Abhishek did not take the field when India bowled during the match against the USA after being removed for a golden duck. For the duration of the innings, Sanju Samson fielded in his place. After his team won, the young player did not even show up for the handshakes after the game. “Abhishek’s stomach infection has led to his admission to a private hospital in Delhi. To determine the issue, some tests are being conducted. Whether he will be released today is still uncertain. However, the match against Namibia currently appears questionable, according to a BCCI source. Ahead of their second group-stage match against Namibia on February 12, Ryan ten Doeschate stated that Washington Sundar had joined the Indian squad. During a pre-match press

conference in Delhi on Tuesday, Doeschate gave the media updates on important players, such as the fitness of Jasprit Bumrah. “Sundar joined the team yesterday, and he will train with the squad today,” explained Doeschate. “After a 10-day break, Bumrah has been bowling and he’s feeling much better,” he continued. He will bowl again today and is progressing nicely. Regarding India’s recent victory against the United States, Doeschate commended Suryakumar Yadav’s game-winning effort. “Fortunately, our skipper performed well. Because he has been indifferent for the past year, he is surrounded by excellent people. The way he played and saved the team last week demonstrated his leadership and consistency,” the assistant coach for India observed.

became a protest phrase during the early 1900s, particularly during the Bengal partition in 1905. It was sung at congressional sessions, marches, and political gatherings. In some situations, public singing was prohibited by British authorities. Using the Bengali alphabet, the material was written in Sanskritized Bengali. Early in the 20th century, Aurobindo Ghose (Sri Aurobindo) created an early English version. It was also translated and performed by Rabindranath Tagore. The later stanzas, which make reference to Hindu goddess images, particularly Durga, were criticized by certain Muslim authorities. They contended that these allusions were counter to monotheistic convictions. Only the first two stanzas were approved for official use by the Indian National Congress in 1937 because they were thought to be devoid of overt religious allusions.

The Indian Constituent Assembly designated Vande Mataram as the country’s national anthem on January 24, 1950. This took place two days prior to the January 26, 1950, enactment of the Indian Constitution. During debates on selecting a national anthem, Jana Gana Mana by Rabindranath Tagore was preferred because it was considered more inclusive and free from theological imagery. The song Vande Mataram was recognized as the national anthem.

The Constituent Assembly of India formally approved Jana Gana Mana as the country’s anthem on January 24, 1950. A presidential statement during the Assembly’s deliberations was used to make the adoption. Rabindranath Tagore wrote Jana Gana Mana in 1911. On December 27, 1911, during the Indian National Congress session in Calcutta, the song was performed for the first time. The hymn, which was first written in a very Sanskritized form of Bengali, was later accepted as India’s national anthem in 1950. It was believed that Jana Gana Mana was appropriate for official use and inclusive. Jana Gana Mana was regarded as spiritually neutral and does not portray the country as a deity, in contrast to Vande Mataram, whose final stanzas incorporate Hindu religious imagery that caused some groups to complain prior to Independence. Additionally, standardizing for formal events was simpler. The authorized version is roughly 52 seconds long.

Changthang Shans and Purig Warriors punch tickets, advance confidently into thrilling semifinals stage



Leh: Purig Warriors and Changthang Shans on Tuesday confirmed their semi-final berths on Day thirteen of the Ice Hockey League Season 3 at Nawang Dorjay Stobdan (NDS) Stadium, according to a release. The day also featured clean-sheet wins for Kangs Sing and Purig Warriors, a last-minute win for Kharu Falcons, and a victory for Changthang Shans in their final league-stage game. Kharu Falcons opened the day with a 6-5 win over Zanskar Chadar Tamers, with Jigmat Choster driving the result with a

five-goal haul. Padma Tundup put the Tamers ahead with a late first-period tap-in, and Rinchen Wangyal doubled the lead in the second with another tap-in. The Falcons stayed in touch through Choster's slapshot to get on the board. The game opened up in the third. Rigzin Punchok levelled in the first minute, before Choster's second put Kharu in front. Tsewang Chosfail responded to draw the Tamers level again, setting up a frantic finish. Choster kept Kharu pressing, and back-to-back tap-ins from Choster and Nawang Dorjey

pulled the game level in the closing minutes. With the contest headed for a tie, Choster struck his fifth in the last minute to break the deadlock and seal the win. Kangs Sing recorded a 6-0 clean-sheet win over United Nubra, striking early and keeping control throughout. Gonbo Tashi opened the scoring inside the first minute with a tap-in, before Stanzin Phuntsog and Gurmet Namgail added further tap-ins to extend the lead. Mushtaque Ahmad Giri made it four with a late second-period finish. Kangs kept the tempo in the third as Stanzin Samstan converted a tap-in, and Gurmet Namgail completed the scoring with his second, this time with a wrist flick, to seal the result. Purig Warriors secured a 2-0 win over Sham Wolves in the next game, with the deadlock finally broken in the second period. After sustained pressure at both ends, Anwar Hussain opened the scoring with a tap-in midway through the second. Sham Wolves pressed for an equaliser, but Villayat Ali doubled the lead later in the third with a wrist flick, sealing the result. The win confirmed Purig Warriors' place in the semi-finals, alongside Kangs Sing and Humas Warriors. Changthang Shans secured their semi-final place with an 8-2 win over Maryul Spawo.

Punjab FC announces strong squad ahead of highly anticipated and competitive upcoming ISL season

Chandigarh: Punjab FC announced their 27-member squad for the upcoming Indian Super League (ISL) season, their third season in India's top-flight league, according to a release. The Shers will start their ISL campaign against Jamshedpur FC on 21st February in Jamshedpur and will play their first home game on 9th March at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in New Delhi against NorthEast United FC. Blending a strong domestic core with carefully selected reinforcements, the Shers head into their third ISL campaign with a squad built to compete while staying true to their commitment to player development.

Blending a strong domestic core with carefully selected reinforcements, the Shers head into their third ISL campaign with a squad built to compete while staying true to their commitment to player development. Head Coach, Panagiotis Dilmperis, in his second season



with the club has picked a squad, which has balance of youth and experience. He has maintained the core from the last ISL season and the team which played in the Durand Cup and AIFF Super Cup. Dani Ramirez, Samir Zeljkovic, Nsungusi Jnr Efiiong, Bede Amarachi Osuji, Pablo Renan Dos Santos are the foreign signings of the squad.

The squad also comprises of seven players from the academy, highlighting the importance of the youth

structure within the club. Muhammad Suhail F, Pramveer Singh, Manglenthang Kipgen, Vishal Yadav and Singamayum Shami who have already made their senior team debuts will be joined by Ayush Deshwal and Thougamba Singh Usham this season. The Head Coach will be supported by Assistant Coach Konstantinos Katsaras and Indian Assistant Coach Sanjarlal Chakraborty along with Papaioannou Ioannis as the Strength and Condi-

tioning Coach and Vinay Singh as the Goalkeeping Coach. The goalkeeping department sees the arrival of Arshdeep Singh, whose presence adds assurance and leadership at the back. He is joined by Muheet Shabir and Ayush Deshwal, giving Punjab FC a well-rounded unit equipped to handle the demands of a long and competitive season. Defensively, the Shers boast a robust and versatile lineup. Bijoy Varghese, Muhammed Uvais, Pramveer Singh, Nongmaikapam Suresh Meitei and Khaiminthang Lungdim bring physicality and composure, while Pablo Renan Dos Santos adds experience to the backline. Young defenders such as Likmabam Rakesh Meitei, Leon Augustine, and Thougamba Singh Usham further strengthen the defensive structure. In midfield, Punjab FC possess a dynamic blend of creativity, control, and energy. Dani Ramirez is and creating scor 2025-26.

Tottenham sack coach Thomas Frank, team struggles five points above relegation zone

Champions League success, domestic despair

London: Thomas Frank was fired by Tottenham on Wednesday after only eight months in charge and with his team just five points above the relegation zone in the Premier League. Despite leading Spurs to the round of 16 in the Champions League, Frank has overseen a desperate domestic campaign. A 2-1 loss to Newcastle on Tuesday means Spurs are still to win in the league in 2026. The Club has taken the decision to make a change in the Men's Head Coach position and Thomas Frank will leave today," Tottenham said in a statement. "Thomas was appointed in June 2025, and we have been determined to give him the time and support needed to build for the future together.

However, results and performances have led the Board to conclude that a change at this point in the season is necessary."



Frank's exit means Spurs are on the lookout for a sixth head coach in less than seven years since Mauricio Pochettino departed in 2019. The Dane was appointed at the end of last season when Ange Postecoglou was fired despite leading Tottenham to its first trophy in 17 years by winning the Europa League and securing Champions League qualification. Frank had built up an impressive reputation for his work during a nine-year spell at Brentford when he established the modest London club into a Premier League

Force. But he was unable to repeat that success at Tottenham, where he won just seven of 26 games in the league. Spurs' last league win was December 28 and defeat at home to Newcastle extended a ruinous run to one win in 11 in England's top flight. Spurs dropped to 16th in the standings on Tuesday, just five points ahead of West Ham in the relegation zone.

Goals from Bryan Mbeumo and Bruno Fernandes ended an eight-game winless run against Spurs for the Red Devils, who cemented their position in the Premier

League's top four. United close to within two points of third-placed Aston Villa and open up a five-point cushion over Liverpool in sixth. A place in the top five is likely to secure a place in next season's Champions League due to the strong performance of English sides in European competition. Spurs' hopes of qualifying for the Champions League through their league position have long since disappeared as another damaging defeat for Thomas Frank leaves Tottenham in 14th. But there could be lasting consequences for Romero after his ill-discipline cost his side just days after a social media outburst aimed at the club's hierarchy.

Frank said the Argentine international had been "dealt with internally" after he described Tottenham's threadbare squad as "disgraceful" following the closure of the transfer window.

Sanju Samson's quiet fight stood out strongly in India's boisterous practice nets held at Delhi



New Delhi: Captain Suryakumar Yadav's warning was sharp and immediate. Anyone standing along the boundary ropes was ordered to face the pitch, not the stands. India's first training session at the Arun Jaitley Stadium ahead of the Namibia clash was under way, and the ball was being struck with enough venom to make back-turning a safety hazard. Fielding coach T Dilip set the tone, timing his fungo hits perfectly as India began their drills under the floodlights. The mood in the camp was characteristically buoyant. Having survived a scare against the USA in their Opeener, the squad Seemed intent on keeping things light. "Shot yaar, Dilip sir!" Hardik Pandya bellowed, his laughter echoing across the turf as he plucked high catches out of the night sky. Yet, amidst the high-fives

and the banter, a distinct contrast was brewing. While the group pivoted on collective joy, Sanju Samson seemed to be operating in a different time zone — one of intense, almost solitary focus. It wasn't just Dilip who was timing the ball well. As the fielding drills wound down, the top four padded up. Ishan Kishan. Sanju Samson. Tilak Varma. Suryakumar Yadav. Abhishek Sharma was a notable absentee. The India opener missed Tuesday's training session as he continued to recover from a stomach-related illness he picked up during the opening game against the USA on Saturday in Mumbai. Sources told India Today that Abhishek was hospitalised on Monday in the capital city. On Tuesday, Samson was battling alongside the man who replaced him in the XI — and the man he could yet partner

on Thursday — Ishan Kishan. The contrast, though, was audible. The sound of Kishan's bat reverberated through the empty Kotla stands; he was middling everything, Pepperidge-cracking balls into the mid-wicket and long-on tiers. Samson, conversely, looked like a man searching for a rhythm that refused to be found. Against the pace of Arshdeep Singh and Hardik Pandya, Samson was hesitant, lacking the characteristic flow that usually defines his game. In the floodlit practice nets at the Arun Jaitley Stadium, the Indian team prepared for their upcoming T20 World Cup fixture against Namibia with characteristic energy and laughter. Yet amid the booming strokes and cheerful banter, one figure stood apart — Sanju Samson, locked in a quiet, solitary battle to find rhythm and form. While the rest of the squad embraced a buoyant, big-hitting session, Samson's approach was markedly different. He batted for extended periods, working meticulously against spin and pace, searching for timing and confidence. His intensity contrasted sharply with the relaxed mood of teammates like Hardik Pandya who encouragement.

Haaland seals City's dramatic Anfield win

Liverpool: Erling Haaland kept Manchester City's Premier League title hopes alive with a dramatic late penalty at Liverpool. The Norwegian struck in second-half stoppage time in an explosive game at Anfield on Sunday to seal a 2-1 win and cut the gap on first-place Arsenal back to six points. City's title prospects looked in dire shape when Dominik Szoboszlai crashed a stunning long-range free kick in off the post in the 74th minute. And even when Bernardo Silva equalized 10 minutes later, second-place City was still looking at ending the match eight points adrift. But Haaland sent the away fans wild by firing into the bottom corner from the spot in the 93rd after Liverpool goalkeeper Alisson brought down Matheus Nunes in the box. And send off Szoboszlai for a foul on Haaland before the ball crossed the line. Even after Haaland's goal. Rashford's form has improved throughout the season and he came close to scoring in first-half injury time when his curling free kick produced a brilliant save from Leo Roman. wide from almost on the goal line.

T20 World Cup thriller: South Africa triumph over Afghanistan following two dramatic Super Overs

Ahmedabad: South Africa defeated Afghanistan in the second Super Over thriller during match 13 of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 held at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad on Wednesday. After the match tied with the score of 187 runs from both sides, Azmatullah Omarzai and Rahmatullah Gurbaz came to bat for Afghanistan as they managed to extract 17 runs in the first Super Over against the bowling of Lungi Ngidi. Fazalhaq Farooqi came to bowl for Afghanistan while defending 17 runs in the Super Over. He bowled well and got the wicket of Dewald Brevis, but Tristan Stubbs hit two boundaries, including a six on the last delivery, to force another Super Over.

Stubbs and Miller batted for South Africa again, and Afghanistan gave the ball to Omarzai. Stubbs welcomed him with a six. Miller hit a couple more sixes to end the over with 23 runs. Mohammad Nabi came to bat with Omarzai while chasing a challenging target of 24 runs. South Africa introduced spin in the Super Over and gave the ball to Keshav Maharaj. He started with a dot ball, then got the wicket of Nabi. Rahmanullah Gurbaz came to bat after that and hit back to back three sixes. With one more six needed on the final delivery, Gurbaz holed out at the point as Afghanistan lost the well-fought match. Earlier, Afghanistan chose to bowl after winning the toss, inviting the Proteas to bat first. The South African batters weren't able to



accelerate for the first three overs. Fazalhaq Farooqi drew first blood, dismissing South Africa captain Aiden Markram off a slower ball that he mistimed to mid-off. Regardless of the early setback, Ryan Rickelton and Quinton de Kock picked up the pace, ending the powerplay at 43 for 1. The left-handed batters continued with the same temperament, taking South Africa to a total of 98/1 after ten overs. De Kock scored 59 runs in 41 balls, becoming South Africa's highest run

scorer in T20 World Cups. He now has 737 runs compared to de Villiers' 717 runs, overtaking him during the innings. Ryan Rickelton was even more destructive, scoring 61 in just 28 balls, with the help of five fours and four sixes. Afghanistan captain Rashid Khan stalled the South African progress as he sent back both De Kock and Rickelton in the space of three balls. Tristan Stubbs failed to score big and could only make one run before Azmatullah Omarzai dismissed him. Dewald Brevis (23 off 19 balls) and David Miller (20 not out off 15 balls) helped the Proteas maintain momentum, as Marco Jansen's 16 off seven balls took South Africa to 187/6 in 20 overs. Azmatullah Omarzai took three wickets, as Rashid Khan grabbed a brace. Fazalhaq Farooqi also picked up a wicket. Coming to Afghanistan's innings, openers Rahmanullah Gurbaz and Ibrahim Zadran started with a bang, bringing up the team's fifty in just four overs without the loss of any wickets.

Blasters call off Kozhikode move, ISL home ties will continue to stay firmly rooted in Kochi city

Kochi remains Kerala football's central hub

Kochi: After weeks of speculation, and anxiety, Kerala Blasters FC have finally settled the big question — there will be no move to Kozhikode this season. Kochi will remain their Indian Super League (ISL) home. The club confirmed on Monday evening that it has signed a fresh agreement with the Greater Cochin Development Authority (GCDA), ensuring that the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in Kaloor will continue to host its home matches. For football fans across the state, it comes as a collective sigh of relief — Kochi's central location makes travel easier and preserves the city's long-standing identity as the nerve centre of Kerala football.

The decision follows a brief but intense standoff that had threatened to shift home matches to the EMS Corporation Stadium in Kozhikode. Ahead of the delayed and tightly packed 2025–26 ISL season, the Blasters had explored the move, citing unfinished renovation at the Kaloor stadium and steep rental costs — reportedly to be as high as Rs 10 lakh per match.



With the season set to kick off this weekend, a fresh round of communication between the club and the GCDA reopened the door to Kochi.

The GCDA has informed that the remaining renovation work in the stadium, including fixing of the removed Flood lights, will be completed by February 20, ahead of the first home match. Talks were re-initiated with the authority as there were delays in communication from the side of the Kerala Football Association which maintains the Kozhikode stadium and with the league just around the corner," a Kerala Blasters spokesperson said. The GCDA-owned Nehru Stadium — with its massive, arching stands — has been the Blasters' fortress since

The club's inception in 2013. Last September, both sides had mutually terminated their earlier contract as the ISL calendar drifted and the stadium entered a renovation phase linked to the now-shelved "Messi project" of the government. The Blasters had previously been paying around Rs 8.45 lakh per match as rent, which was set to increase this season. Sources now indicate That the new agreement significantly reduces the rental burden to under Rs 2 lakh per match, a crucial factor in the club's decision to stay.

The 35,000-capacity venue, which underwent renovation worth around Rs 70 crore, had been closed since September, 2025, and was handed over to private agency, Reporter Broadcasting Corporation,

and the event managers, Sports Kerala Foundation. The venue was returned to the GCDA in late December, albeit with some work pending. Despite PSG's attacking flair, Marseille coach Roberto De Zerbi's choices will be scrutinized following a truly dismal performance from his side lacking composure and fight. Marseille was eliminated from the Champions League following a 3-0 defeat against Club Brugge less than two weeks ago. Once again, I say sorry to the fans," De Zerbi said. "I'm not in the players' heads. I thought we had prepared well for this game but clearly not. We need to understand why we played this way in Bruges and here." Top scorer Mason Greenwood, fellow forward Amine Gouiri and new signing Ethan Nwaneri were anonymous in attack, with veteran Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang on the bench. De Zerbi dropped goalkeeper Geronimo Rulli after a couple of poor performances and replaced him with Jeffrey de Lange, who was out of sorts, albeit not helped by his defense Midfielder Vitinha Leonardo Balerdi.