

Mizoram Tourism Minister Holds Meeting With CYMA Leaders Amid Tourist Surge



Aizawl, April 11: Mizoram Tourism Minister Lalthinglova Hmar on Friday held a meeting with leaders of the Central Young Mizo Association (CYMA) to discuss strategies for managing the increasing number of tourists visiting the state. Media platform consultancy

During the meeting, Hmar described the rise in tourist arrivals as beneficial for Mizoram's economy and visibility but cautioned that unregulated tourism could affect local culture and traditions. He attributed the surge to improved connectivity, particularly the expansion of railway access

to Sairang since September last year. Officials noted that over 8 lakh tourists visited the state last year, with higher numbers expected in 2026. The minister stated that tourism has the potential to become a major industry in Mizoram if developed in a structured manner. He emphasized the need to balance hospitality with the preservation of local customs. The government has already initiated consultations with the Council of Churches in Mizoram (CCM) and the Presbyterian Church, and plans to engage with additional civil society organisations. CYMA President R. Lalthetha raised concerns regarding instances of tourist behaviour that may conflict with local norms. He proposed the introduction of clear guidelines outlining acceptable conduct for visitors, along with awareness campaigns targeting both tourists and residents.

Conrad bats for inclusive education to achieve near-universal literacy in Meghalaya

Shillong, April 11: Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma on Friday underscored the need for inclusive education to achieve near-universal literacy in the northeastern state. Addressing the "ULLAS Fest 2026" held at U Soso Tham Auditorium in Shillong, Sangma said "We are nearing the 100 per cent literacy rate, but we have to work together as a society to bring transformation in education, while empowering all sections," he said. The ULLAS (Understanding of Lifelong Learning for All in Society) scheme is a 2022-2027 central initiative promoting functional literacy and life-long learning for adults (aged 15+) who missed formal education. Stating that ULLAS



is a noble programme, the Chief Minister said that while many do not have the opportunity to become literate, this programme reaches to those who have a desire to read and write. He further said the state government

was very clear that its approach to education remains rooted in inclusiveness. State education minister Lahkmen Rymbui, in his speech informed that about two lakh people in Meghalaya are still illiterate. "Literacy

does not mean being a matriculate or graduate but to have the basic knowledge of reading, writing, numeracy and life skills and about 8 percent of our population still fall under the illiterate category," he said. He urged all stakeholders to work towards achieving the benchmark of 95 percent to be considered as a fully literate state. The ULLAS scheme focuses on volunteerism for teaching, offering training in literacy, critical life skills, and vocational skills through hybrid (online/offline) modes. The scheme covers five areas: Foundational Literacy and Numeracy, Critical Life Skills (digital/financial literacy), Basic Education, Vocational Skills and Continuing Education.

In Brief

Repoll ordered after disturbance at Sribhumi booth

Sribhumi: Repolling was held on April 11 at a polling station in Assam's Sribhumi district after reports of irregularities and disturbance during the earlier phase of voting. The fresh polling took place at Babyland English High School in the Karimganj North area, where the Election Commission stepped in to ensure a fair process. Voting began at 7 am amid strong security presence. Officials said additional forces were deployed at the booth to prevent any untoward incident and to maintain order throughout the day. The repoll was ordered after a tense situation was reported on April 9, when allegations of vote rigging and disruption surfaced from the same polling station.

Nagaland DCs' Conference begins in Kohima

Kohima: The Deputy Commissioners' Conference 2026 began on Friday at the Civil Secretariat Conference Hall in Kohima, bringing together district officials and senior government officers for discussions on governance, census work and development reforms in the state. The two-day conference is aimed at reviewing key administrative issues and improving coordination across departments at the district level. Addressing the inaugural session, Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio said the meeting comes at an important time when the role of Deputy Commissioners (DCs) is changing. He said while core duties such as maintaining law and order, revenue administration, elections and census operations remain essential, the responsibilities of DCs have increased over the years. He said DCs are now also responsible for implementing Centrally Sponsored Schemes, handling disaster management, addressing public grievances and ensuring coordination among different departments.

Man held within hours for Dao attack in Itanagar

Itanagar: In a swift action, police in Itanagar arrested a 42-year-old man within hours of a violent dao attack reported on Friday evening. The accused has been identified as Kholie Modi, a resident of Chimpu and originally from East Kameng district. According to officials, the case was registered at the Itanagar Police Station around 7:30 pm after a complaint was filed by Arun Degio. The complaint alleged that the victim was attacked with a sharp weapon in what police described as a serious and potentially life-threatening incident. The case has been registered under Section 103 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. Soon after the FIR was lodged, police teams began an immediate investigation. Officers conducted field enquiries, collected initial inputs, and verified leads from the spot.

Mizoram steps up tourist management as footfall rises

Aizawl: Mizoram Tourism Minister Lalthinglova Hmar held a meeting with leaders of the Central Young Mizo Association (CYMA) to discuss ways to manage the rising number of tourists in the state. The meeting focused on coordination between the government and community groups to ensure smooth tourist movement while protecting local culture and traditions. Chairing the discussion, Hmar said the increase in tourist arrivals is a positive sign for Mizoram's economy and growing visibility. However, he also cautioned that the growth must be handled carefully so that it does not affect the lifestyle and values of local communities.

Protest Meeting at Guwahati Press Club Against Recent Attacks On Press Freedom

Guwahati, Apr 11: Nitumoni Saikia, Editor-in-Chief of Pratidin Time, on Friday called upon young journalists to continue asking questions despite challenges, asserting that it is their fundamental right. He was addressing a protest gathering of the media fraternity at the Gauhati Press Club in the wake of recent attacks on media institutions, particularly Asomiya Pratidin. Saikia stressed the importance of standing with the people at all times. Criticising Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, he said that in his career he had seen five Chief Ministers but "never one who functions this way," alleging that journalists are being targeted. Calling for unity, he urged media house owners to take a strong

and responsible stand, warning that a section of the media has compromised its integrity by aligning with political interests. "I am not a neutral journalist. I always stand for the people. We will continue to question the government. When Congress was in power and I questioned it, I was called a BJP agent. Now when I question BJP, I am called a Congress agent," he said. Addressing concerns over his housing situation, Saikia clarified that he has been paying rent regularly for a government-allotted flat since 2012 and challenged authorities to prove otherwise. Veteran journalist Haider Hussain also called for unity within the media, urging journalists to collectively resist forces acting against public



interest and emphasising solidarity in the current climate. Senior journalist Afrida Husain shared experiences from her career, stating that she has never been afraid to ask questions as she is not a beneficiary of any government. Another senior journalist, Munin Bayan, expressed concern over what he described as continuous attacks on the media, saying journalists are increasingly "anxious and wor-

ried." He also criticised the reaction of the Chief Minister to tough questions, warning that treating accountability as confrontation threatens democracy. Noted journalist Pankaj Nath criticised the current political environment, alleging attempts to divide "Bor Asom" and weaken Assamese identity. He asserted that a united media cannot be silenced and condemned the reported eviction notice issued to Saikia as vindictive.

Repoll ordered after disturbance at Sribhumi booth, voting reheld under tight security

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ected by a commotion inside the booth, which raised serious concerns about whether voters were able to cast their votes freely. Following this, authorities reviewed the situation and decided that a repoll was necessary to protect the integrity of the election. Election officials said the decision was taken in line with standard procedure to ensure that the election remains free, fair and transparent. They also said that close monitoring is being carried out to avoid any repeat of earlier incidents. Voters turned up in steady numbers since morning and many said they felt more confident due to the visible security arrangements. Local residents welcomed the move to hold a repoll, saying it was important to give people a proper chance to vote without fear or disturbance.

Restoration Work in North Sikkim Reviewed by ADGBR (East)



Gangtok, Apr 11: In a strong demonstration of leadership and commitment, Additional Director General Border Roads (East), Shri Jitendra Prasad, VSM, visited the landslide-affected area at Taramchu in North Sikkim, one of the most challenging and fragile terrains in the region. Amidst difficult conditions where road connectivity serves as a critical lifeline, Shri Jitendra Prasad personally assessed the ground situation and interacted with Border Roads Organisation (BRO) personnel deployed at site. Standing shoulder to shoulder with the troops, he reviewed the ongoing restoration efforts and issued clear directions for expediting fresh works to ensure early reopening of the route. During the visit, the ADGBR (East) carried out a detailed inspection of the progress of works and emphasized the organisation's unwavering commitment towards restoring and strengthening connectivity in the region. He reiterated that in such remote and sensitive areas, roads are not merely infrastructure but are vital for survival, development and maintaining the crucial link between border communities and the rest of the nation. The visit served as a morale booster for the personnel on ground, reaffirming BRO's ethos of leading from the front and its steadfast dedication to nation-building in the most demanding environments.

Nagaland DCs' Conference begins in Kohima Focus on governance and development delivery

Kohima, Apr 11: The Deputy Commissioners' Conference 2026 began on Friday at the Civil Secretariat Conference Hall in Kohima, bringing together district officials and senior government officers for discussions on governance, census work and development reforms in the state. The two-day conference is aimed at reviewing key administrative issues and improving coordination across departments at the district level. Addressing the inaugural session, Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio said the meeting comes at an important time when the role of Deputy Commissioners (DCs) is changing. He said while core duties such as maintaining law and order, revenue administration, elections and census operations remain essential, the responsibilities of DCs have increased over the years. He said DCs are now also responsible

for implementing Centrally Sponsored Schemes, handling disaster management, addressing public grievances and ensuring coordination among different departments. According to him, the role has shifted from only regulatory work to a more development-focused and people-oriented approach. Rio said governance today is more focused on people, with greater use of technology and emphasis on results. He added that DCs are at the centre of delivering government services at the grassroots level and must ensure that welfare schemes reach the last mile. Highlighting government initiatives, the Chief Minister spoke about steps taken to improve transparency in recruitment, including the setting up of the Nagaland Staff Selection Board. He also mentioned the Chief

Minister's Micro Finance Initiative, which aims to support livelihoods and promote inclusive growth. On employment, Rio said the Nagaland Skill and Entrepreneurship Development Mission has been aligned with sectors such as construction, hospitality, transport and IT services. He noted that over 73,000 applicants have registered under the programme, with efforts being made to link training with job opportunities through job fairs. He also referred to the Nagaland Japan Connect 2026 initiative, under which more than 450 youth have registered for overseas employment opportunities. So far, 65 candidates have received recruitment intent in sectors like agriculture, manufacturing and shipping. Speaking on the health sector, the Chief Minister said 83 medical officers and

- The Deputy Commissioners' Conference 2026 started on Friday in Kohima, attended by district officials and senior government officers to discuss governance, census work, and development reforms.
- Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio emphasized the evolving role of Deputy Commissioners (DCs) beyond regulatory tasks to include implementing Centrally Sponsored Schemes, disaster management, and public grievances handling.

junior specialists appointed during the COVID-19 period are currently in service. However, he expressed concern over low participation in recruitment, noting that only a small number of registered doctors have applied for government posts.

Man held within hours for Dao attack in Itanagar, weapon and vehicle seized

Itanagar, Apr 11: In a swift action, police in Itanagar arrested a 42-year-old man within hours of a violent dao attack reported on Friday evening. The accused has been identified as Kholie Modi, a resident of Chimpu and originally from East Kameng district. According to officials, the case was registered at the Itanagar Police Station around 7:30 pm after a complaint was filed by Arun Degio. The complaint alleged that the victim was attacked

with a sharp weapon in what police described as a serious and potentially life-threatening incident. The case has been registered under Section 103 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. Soon after the FIR was lodged, police teams began an immediate investigation. Officers conducted field enquiries, collected initial inputs, and verified leads from the spot. Based on these efforts, the accused was identified within a short span of time. During the course of



the investigation, police also traced the vehicle allegedly used in the incident. The vehicle, a Renault Triber bearing registration number

AR-05-1952, helped investigators establish the sequence of events and track the movement of the accused. A crucial breakthrough in the case came from

video footage of the incident, which supported the complainant's statement and helped confirm the identity of the accused. Following this, police recovered the weapon used in the attack — a dao — and seized it as part of the investigation, following all required legal procedures. Acting on the evidence gathered, police apprehended Kholie Modi on the same day. Officials stated that all procedures related to arrest and investigation were

carried out as per law. Police described the case as an example of a prompt and focused response to a serious crime. They said the quick identification of the accused, recovery of the weapon, and securing of video evidence were key to solving the case within hours. Reaffirming their strict stand against violent crimes and use of weapons in public places, police said such acts will not be tolerated and strict action will be taken against offenders.

NE/EAST

Sepahijala SP injured as BJP and Tipra Motha supporters clash in Takarjala

Agartala, Apr 11: Simmering tension has gripped the Takarjala area in Tripura's Sepahijala district following a violent clash between supporters of the BJP and Tipra Motha on Friday. In this latest incident of pre-poll violence ahead of the ADC elections, Superintendent of Police Sepahijala Bijoy Debbarma was among several people injured as miscreants resorted to stone pelting and hurled projectiles using catapults at Garobazar in Takarjala. According to police sources, the confrontation turned violent during the day, prompting the deployment of addi-

tional security forces to bring the situation under control. Though active clashes were contained, tension continued to prevail in the area till late evening, with crowd mobilisation reported in various pockets until night. Authorities maintained that while no fresh violence had been reported, the possibility of escalation could not be ruled out. Sepahijala SP Bijoy Debbarma sustained injuries while attempting to manage the situation, as protesters allegedly hurled stones and other objects at security personnel. Reports indicated that he was struck by a projectile believed to

have been launched using a catapult. Police used mild force to disperse the crowd. Senior officials stated that the Additional Director General of Police rushed to the spot to supervise law and order measures. Despite heavy deployment, the situation remained sensitive due to continued mobilisation of people near the incident site. Sources also confirmed that one individual identified as Bijoy Debbarma, a supporter of Tipra Motha, suffered bullet injuries during the unrest. However, senior police officials clarified that security forces did not open fire during the incident. The

house of local BJP candidate for the ADC polls, Nirmal Debbarma, also came under attack. His office was vandalised, and till late night, his residence was besieged by Tipra Motha supporters. Meanwhile, allegations and counter-allegations emerged from both political camps. Leaders of the BJP claimed that the residence and office of candidate Nirmal Debbarma were targeted by miscreants. State BJP president Rajib Bhattacharjee alleged that attackers used catapults to damage the property shortly after a campaign rally had concluded.

Bihar man held offering foreign agency help to breach PM Modi's security

Patna, Apr 11: According to police, a man was detained in the Buxar region of Bihar for reportedly posting a message to the website of a foreign intelligence organization, suggesting he might jeopardize Prime Minister Narendra Modi's security in exchange for cash. On Thursday night, Simri resident Amal Kumar Tiwari, the accused, was captured. Mobile phones, a laptop, and other digital evidence were taken from his home. Police said that Tiwari had placed a message on the website of a US-based intelligence outfit, requesting cash in exchange for compromising the Prime Minister's security, according to a PTI report. On his phone, investigators discovered many VPNs and apps that were used to access the dark web. Additionally, phony identification documents that were purportedly being used for cybercrimes were found by police.

UP final voter list at 13.39 crore after revision, over 2 crore names deleted

Lucknow, Apr 11: The State Election Commission of Uttar Pradesh has published the final voter list following the completion of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise. It shows the number of voters in the state to be 13.39 crore. Sharing the draft of final voter list on Friday, Chief Electoral Officer Navdeep Rinwa said that it had 2.05 crore voters less than the number of voters that existed in the official records when the SIR began. There were 15.44 crore voters in the state records on October 27, 2025, when the first phase of the SIR exercise began, but it came down to 12.55 crore voters after the first phase of revision ended on January 6, 2026. As per the final roll released on Friday, the state now has 7,30,71,061 male (54.54%), 6,09,09,525 female (45.46%) and 4,206 transgender voters. The number of first-time voters in age group of 18-19 years stands at 17,63,360, while the gender ratio is 834:1,000. Rinwa said Prayagraj recorded the highest growth in voter numbers, with 3,29,421 new voters, followed by Lucknow (2,85,961), Bareilly (2,57,920), Ghaziabad (2,43,666), and Jaunpur (2,37,590). But at the level of as-

sembly segments, Sahibabad saw the highest increase with 82,898 new voters, followed by Jaunpur (56,118), Lucknow West (54,822), Loni (53,679), and Firozabad (47,757). Rinwa said that between January 6 and April 10, a total of 8,15,996 voters were deleted from the list, out of which, 3,50,026 names were deleted for not responding to notices sent to them by the Election Commission after the completion of the first phase.

The official added that notices were served on a total of 3.26 crore voters, from which 3.28 lakh names were deleted as they had shifted out, 79,076 names were deleted due to the entries appearing at multiple places, 55,865 were deleted due to death and 2,069 names removed because either the voters were underage or not Indian citizens.

According to Rinwa, Uttar Pradesh registered a net increase of 84,28,767 voters in the final draft list from the first list released on January 6. This rise includes 42,27,902 additional male, 42,00,778 female, 87 third-gender and 14,29,379 first-time voters. The final list shows the gender ratio has marginally improved, Rinwa said.

Search in AJP chief's house in case related to activities in 'party office'

Lucknow, Apr 11: A search operation was reportedly conducted in the residence of Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP) president and Assembly election candidate Lurinjyoti Gogoi on Friday in connection with an incident that had happened on polling day, a police officer said. He said the search was carried out as per legal provisions. Gogoi was the opposition alliance's candidate from Khowang constituency in Dibrugarh district, with polling held in a single phase across the state on Thursday. "With regard to the incident that had happened in Khowang yesterday, after following technical input, police team reached the particular location and followed legal search procedure," Dibrugarh Senior Superintendent of Police Gaurav



Abhijit Dilip told PTI. AJP leaders and members, present at the location, claimed that police "failed" to show any search warrant. Come and where was the warrant, the police team could not show anything," they said. Another police officer had said on Thursday that AJP had alleged that BJP was running an IT cell at a house in the area in Khowang constituency. "A group of AJP workers reached there along with police. After some time, AJP leaders Samudra Barua,

Swakhyar Borgohain and Chitrakamal Handique also went there. Following a heated exchange of words, the AJP workers and BJP activists got involved in a physical brawl, in which the three AJP leaders were injured," the officer had said. The SSP had said that the building "seems to be a party office and further investigation is underway to ascertain what exactly was going on there", with no arrests made on the polling day.

'New Congress' received strong support from people during Assam assembly polls: Gaurav Gogoi

Guwahati, Apr 11: Assam Congress president Gaurav Gogoi on Friday said the "new Congress" in the state received strong support from voters in Thursday's Assembly elections. Addressing a press conference, he said that although a few leaders had left the party, a new Congress was delivered to the people, and they responded positively by extending their support to it. The Congress lost several leaders to the ruling BJP over a period of time. Among them are Pradyut Bordoloi and Bhupen Kumar Borah, who joined the BJP in recent months. Both contested the polls on BJP tickets.

Gogoi underscored that the Congress had worked out an alliance strategy by excluding the minority-based All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) and aligning



with Assam Jatiya Parishad, Rajior Dal, CPI, CPI(ML), and All Party Hill Leaders Conference, which was appreciated by the people. He claimed that the Congress had observed a strong anti-incumbency wave during the election campaign

and that the government's failure was clearly reflected during the elections. "From the tea industry to local enterprises, this government has not been able to create or promote any indigenous or local industries. The Congress was able to take

this lack of industrialisation to the people," Gogoi said.

He alleged that Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had taken the AIUDF's support during Rajya Sabha elections in March and facilitated defections. He said the Congress maintained dignity and respectful relations even with opponents, but Sarma created a "toxic" environment through aggressive outbursts in recent days. "I think the Chief Minister totally panicked. He did not expect these reports to come and become so viral. In the last five-six days, he had been literally tearing his hair out. His desperation can be seen in his words, actions and on his face. But just by shouting, truth does not become a lie," Gogoi said referring to party leader Pawan Khara's recent claims targeting the Chief Minister's family.

Himanta, the chief minister of Assam, predicts that the in assembly elections About 90 seats will go to the NDA

Guwahati, Apr 11: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma is confident that the BJP-led NDA would win around 90 of the state's 126 Assembly seats. He attributed the high voter turnout (85.51 per cent) to the Assamese people's assertive attitude. "There was a high turnout at polling booths in Muslim as well as Hindu areas. A lot of encouragement was seen among Hindu and local people, which we normally see among people in minority areas. The Assamese largely voted this time," Sarma told media persons.

He observed that there had been a steady increase in the turnout of Assamese voters since 2016, and it peaked this election. He further said some MLAs and candidates had informed him that many polling booths in Assamese areas recorded 94 to 95 per cent voting. "My (Assamese-dominated) Jalukbari constituency always records 95 to 96 per cent voting. But this time, such a high turnout was seen in many constituencies. Our campaign in the last five years has been that Assamese people should be more assertive. They demonstrated that assertiveness this election," the Chief Minister said. He said the Assamese people had realised that if they did not take elections seriously, a day would come when they would lose their identity in Assam itself. Music icon Zubeen Garg had died while swimming in Singapore on September 19 last year. His mysterious and untimely death had triggered statewide protests,



with protestors, particularly youth, demanding justice for the larger-than-life music icon. "...I feel we will get around 90 seats. One must not be surprised if it touches 100," he said. The BJP leader predicted that the minority-based party All India United Democratic Front would get four to five seats, which would leave the Congress's tally in the range of 18-22 seats. He felt that the three Gogois - state Congress president Gaurav Gogoi, Rajior Dal chief Akhil Gogoi and Assam Jatiya Parishad president Lurinjyoti Gogoi - faced tough contests. Gaurav (Jorhat), Akhil (Sivasagar) and Lurinjyoti (Khowang) were pitted against BJP candidates. "The three will have ten-

sions till the last vote is counted. People did not like the three-Gogoi concept," Sarma claimed, adding, "They will win or lose by around 2,000 votes. We did not face any competition as such. Assam BJP president Dilip Saikia said the state's 72 lakh "youth" voters, aged less than 30 years, exercised their franchise with a lot of excitement. "A large number of women as well as senior citizens took part in the festival of democracy with an open mind. We feel that we will get a historic mandate," Saikia said. He acknowledged that September, October and November last year were a difficult phase for the BJP when it faced many challenges.

Kanhaiya Kumar's old remark trends again amid Assam poll surge

Guwahati, Apr 11: In a video circulating online from a campaign rally in Assam's Bongaigaon on April 5, Congress leader Kanhaiya Kumar is heard making remarks that have triggered a political controversy over the issue of infiltration. Addressing the rally ahead of polling in the state, Kumar reportedly said that the "biggest infiltrator" had come from Gujarat and called for the removal of Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma from the state's political landscape to safeguard Assam's interests. "All thieves have gathered together and joined the BJP. The head of these thieves is the father of Jay Shah. A journalist told me that infiltration is an issue, I said that the biggest infiltrator has come from Gujarat and he needs to be chased out of here along with Himanta Biswa Sarma," Kumar is heard saying in the video. Meanwhile, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma described the election as a "movement" aimed at protecting the state's culture, identity, and land. Speaking after polling concluded on April 9, he said voter turnout reflected a strong public mandate. "This is not ordinary. This is historic. Assam has risen above language and caste. Our people have voted with one clear resolve - to protect our land, our identity, and our culture from illegal infiltration and demographic aggression," Sarma said. According to the Election Commission of India, Assam recorded a voter turnout of 85.38 per cent, surpassing its previous high of 84.67 per cent recorded in 2016.

His remarks quickly drew political attention, coming amid an already heated exchange between the Congress and the BJP over issues of identity, infiltration, and governance in Assam and other states. BJP leaders, including Union Home Minister Amit Shah, have repeatedly raised concerns over infiltration in



Assam during their campaign speeches, asserting that the party would not allow the state to become, in their words, an "infiltrator-dominated region."

The controversy also comes against the backdrop of earlier remarks by Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge during a campaign event in Kerala's Idukki district. Kharge had drawn comparisons between populations in Kerala and Gujarat while criticising Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, sparking strong criticism from the BJP. Kharge later issued a clarification, saying his comments had been "deliberately misinterpreted" and expressed regret, while affirming respect for the people of Gujarat.

Garro Hills groups demand exclusive tribal voter list for GHADC elections

Guwahati, Apr 11: Several organisations in Meghalaya's Garo Hills have called on the Garo Hills Autonomous District Council (GHADC) to revise its legal provisions and prepare a distinct voter list to ensure non-tribals are kept out of council elections. Representatives of these organisations met the Chief Executive Member (CEM) on Friday, conveyed their greetings on his recent appointment, and presented key concerns for immediate attention. The representation was jointly signed by groups such as the Association of Democratic Empowerment (ADE), A'chik Holistic Awakening Movement (AHAM), A'chik Youth Welfare Organisation (AYWO), Federation for A'chik Freedom (FAF), Federation of Khasi Jaintia and Garo People (FKJGP), and the Garo Students' Union (GSU).

At the centre of their demands is a change in the electoral system. The organisations maintained that the inclusion of non-tribals as voters or candidates in GHADC elections goes against the intent of the Sixth Schedule. They proposed that both voting rights and eligibility to contest should be limited strictly to Scheduled Tribe residents of



Meghalaya, adding that possession of ST certificates alone may not be enough to stop indirect representation. The memorandum also pointed to increasing friction between tribal and non-tribal communities, attributing it to unresolved concerns, including widespread encroachment on tribal land. Specific locations mentioned include Wadagokgre A'king in Phulbari and Boldamgre A'king in the Halidayganj/Singimari area. The organisations noted that existing laws, such as the Garo Hills District (Transfer of Land) Act, 1955 and the Meghalaya Transfer of Land (Regulation) Act, 1972, already restrict land ownership by non-tribals in Sixth

Schedule areas. However, they said poor enforcement and minimal penalties have allowed violations to continue, and called for tougher punishments, including fines amounting to several lakhs. Issues related to illegal mining, timber trafficking, and unauthorised settlements were also flagged. To address these concerns, the groups suggested better coordination among departments including Land & Revenue, Home, Forest, and the police. The groups called on the council to act decisively to secure the rights and identity of tribal communities, stressing that timely intervention is essential to maintain harmony and prevent further tensions in the region.

Gauhati Commerce College gets autonomous status, UGC grants five-year approval

Guwahati, Apr 11: University Grants Commission has granted autonomous status to Gauhati Commerce College for a period of five years, marking a significant step for higher education in Assam. The new status will be effective from the academic session 2026–27 and will continue till 2030–31. Officials said the decision reflects the college’s steady performance in academics and its efforts to maintain quality education over the years. With this recognition, the college will now have the freedom to design its own syllabus, introduce new courses, and conduct examinations independently. However, it will continue to remain

affiliated with its parent university. The autonomous status is expected to bring more flexibility in teaching and learning. College authorities will be able to update courses as per industry needs, which may help students gain better skills and improve job prospects.

Teachers will also have more scope to innovate in curriculum design and assessment methods. Education experts said such a move will help raise academic standards not only in the institution but also across the state. They believe it could encourage other colleges in Assam to work towards similar recognition and improve



overall quality in higher education. Gauhati Commerce College is known as one of the leading commerce institutions in the state. Over the years, it has produced many professionals

in business, finance, and administration. With the new status, the college is expected to strengthen its position further and offer more opportunities to students in the coming years.

Mizoram Governor leads joint celebration of four states’ foundation days in Aizawl

Aizawl, Apr 11: Mizoram Governor Vijay Kumar Singh led a combined celebration of the foundation days of Bihar, Rajasthan, Odisha and Himachal Pradesh at the Durbar Hall of Lok Bhavan in Aizawl. The programme was organised under the Centre’s Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat initiative. Addressing the gathering, the Governor said it was a matter of pride to celebrate the foundation days of four different states together. He highlighted that each state has its own identity, culture and strengths, and has made steady progress over the years. “Each state is unique and excels in its own way. They possess immense potential,” he said. He added that such programmes help people understand each other’s traditions

and bring citizens closer. Stressing on national unity, he said India’s diversity is its biggest strength and will play a key role in building a developed nation by 2047. The event was presided over by Pi Lalhruiatlungi, Additional Private Secretary to the Governor, who explained the aim of the programme. Video messages from the Governors of the four states were screened, along with short films showing their history and development. Representatives from the four states shared brief presentations. Among them were Dr Saurav Suman from Bihar and Dr Nidhi Yadav from Rajasthan, both Assistant Professors at NIT Mizoram, Prof Pravakar Rath from Odisha, Pro Vice Chancellor of Mizoram University, and Ms Sona-



li from Himachal Pradesh, a student of the College of Veterinary Sciences in Mizoram. Students from Mizoram Uni-

versity, NIT Mizoram and Government Mizoram Law College presented cultural dances and folk songs, adding

colour to the event. After the programme, the Governor interacted with participants and guests.

Manipur CM Visits Relief Camp

Imphal, Apr 11: Yumnam Khemchand, Chief Minister of Manipur, visited a relief camp in Imphal East district on April 11 and met the family of a seven-year-old internally displaced girl who was recently raped and murdered, an incident that has sparked widespread outrage across the state. During the visit, the Chief Minister interacted with the grieving family and other internally displaced persons (IDPs) staying at the camp. He expressed condolences and assured full support to ensure justice for the victim. The state government has also provided an ex gratia amount of ₹10 lakh to the bereaved family. In a Facebook post, he stated that the welfare of IDPs remains a top priority. After listening to their concerns, he directed officials to take immediate action to address their grievances, focusing on reducing hardships and ensuring timely rehabilitation and resettlement. “We remain committed to standing by every affected family and working tirelessly towards restoring dignity, stability, and hope in their lives,” he said. The minor girl, originally from Moreh, had gone missing on April 4 and was found dead the next day under the Singjamei Bridge. The incident has raised serious concerns about the safety of displaced communities living in relief camps.

Mizoram steps up tourist management as footfall rises, minister meets YMA leaders

Aizawl, Apr 11: Mizoram Tourism Minister Lalnghinglova Hmar held a meeting with leaders of the Central Young Mizo Association (CYMA) to discuss ways to manage the rising number of tourists in the state. The meeting focused on coordination between the government and community groups to ensure smooth tourist movement while protecting local culture and traditions. Chairing the discussion, Hmar said the increase in tourist arrivals is a positive sign for Mizoram’s economy and growing visibility.

However, he also cautioned that the growth must be handled carefully so that it does not affect the lifestyle and values of local communities. The minister pointed out that improved connectivity, especially the extension of railway services to Sairang last year, has played a key role in bringing more visitors to the state. According to official estimates, Mizoram has already recorded over 8 lakh tourist visits, and the number is expected to rise further in the coming months. Hmar said the government has started consultations with important religious and social organisations, including church bodies, to ensure that tourism development remains sensitive to lo-



cal sentiments.

He added that more stakeholders will be involved in the process in the coming days. CYMA president R Lalngbeta said that while tourists are welcome in Mizoram, there should be clear guidelines to avoid any behaviour that may hurt local sentiments. He suggested preparing a list of “dos and don’ts”

for visitors and increasing awareness among both tourists and residents. The meeting also discussed joint awareness campaigns, better sharing of tourist information, and training programmes for local tour guides. Officials spoke about the need to regulate homestays and ensure strict enforcement of Inner Line Permit (ILP) and Protected Area Permit (PAP) rules.

Nagaland Governor celebrates Rajasthan Foundation Day in Kohima



Kohima, Apr 11: Nagaland Governor Nand Kishore Yadav graced the Rajasthan State Foundation Day celebrations held at Lok Bhavan in Kohima. The event served as a vibrant bridge between the desert state of Rajasthan and the hilly terrains of Nagaland, highlighting the cultural threads that weave the Indian sub-continent together.

Honoring a Storied Legacy Addressing the gathering, the Governor extended his warmest greetings to the Rajasthani community. He spoke eloquently about Rajasthan’s historical legacy, characterized by tales of unmatched bravery, and its rich cultural heritage. From the architectural marvels of its forts to the timeless traditions of its folk music and art, the Governor noted that Rajasthan continues to be a cornerstone of India’s global identity. The Spirit of ‘Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat’

Central to his speech was the concept of Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat. Governor Yadav emphasized that while India is a land of vast geographical and linguistic differences, the underlying spirit of unity in diversity remains its greatest strength. He noted that celebrating a state’s foundation day far from its borders—such as Rajasthan Day in Nagaland—is a testament to this national integration. A Call to the Youth The Governor issued a heartfelt appeal to the younger generation, encouraging them to: Value Diversity: Deeply understand and respect the various cultural traditions that coexist within the country. Promote Harmony: Actively contribute toward national unity by fostering inter-state friendships and cultural exchanges. National Contribution: Use their energy to build a more harmonious and inclusive India.

Meghalaya CM allays concerns over proposed luxury resort in Umiam

Shillong, Apr 11: Amid uproar against the proposed luxury resort and spa project at Lumpondeng Island in Umiam Lake, Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma on Thursday sought to allay public concerns, stating clearly that no permanent construction would be allowed on the island.

Addressing mediapersons in Shillong, the Chief Minister said the agreement signed between the State government and the Tourism Department, explicitly specified that no permanent structures would be permitted on the site. Sangma further dismissed apprehensions that the island would be turned into a concrete setup. “Temporary arrangements such as shamanias, pandals and stalls will only be allowed for limited durations during events, after which they will be dismantled,” the Chief Minister said, adding that such short-term arrangements would not have any lasting impact on the island or its flora and fauna. “Some approvals mentioned in the project were in line with Forest Department provisions under specific conditions, but the government has ensured through the agreement that no permanent construction would take place,” he clarified.

Shyaro Hydel Project to boost local power supply in Tawang, says Chowna Mein

Tawang, Apr 11: Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein said that the Shyaro micro hydroelectric project in Tawang district will play an important role in improving local power supply and reducing dependence on electricity from outside the region. Mein, who also holds the Power and Hydropower portfolios, visited the project site located under Jang while returning from Tawang. The project has a capacity of 2×1.5 MW and is currently under trial run. Sharing details after the visit, the deputy chief minister said he inspected the project along with senior officials, including Chief Engineer Durick Kamduk and officers from the Power and Hydropower Department. “The project is currently under trial run and is expected to be ready for inauguration next month,” Mein said. He added that the project is a significant step towards strengthening local power generation in the

border district. According to him, once operational, it will help reduce dependency on external power sources and ensure a more stable electricity supply for nearby areas. Mein also highlighted the importance of such projects in remote and high-altitude regions. He said small and micro hydropower initiatives are useful in areas like Tawang, where regular power supply is often a challenge due to terrain and distance. “The project will not only support local energy needs but also improve the overall quality of life of people living in the region,” he said. Officials said the Shyaro project uses the natural flow of mountain streams to generate electricity. This makes it a clean and environment-friendly source of power. Once fully operational, it is expected to strengthen the local power network and reduce the need for power import from outside the district.

Task force reviews progress in CNG, PNG infrastructure expansion in Assam

Guwahati, Apr 11: In its first meeting, the State Level Task Force for PNG and CNG Expansion (ASLTF-PCE) reviewed progress in the rollout of clean energy infrastructure across Assam.

The meeting chaired by Chief Secretary Dr Ravi Kota, reviewed the progress of key projects, including the completion of the Barauni–Guwahati Pipeline (BGPL) and the significant advancement of the North East Gas Grid (NEGG), which is now over 85 per cent complete. The ongoing expansion of PNG connections was also assessed, with AGCL achieving near 100 per cent of its recent targets and further expansion planned across multiple districts.

Emphasis was laid on expediting PNG and CNG infrastructure to strengthen Assam’s transition towards a gas-based economy and



gradually phase out dependence on LPG and other conventional fuels. The need for effective inter-departmental coordination and timely implementation was reiterated.

Key challenges, including pending permissions, infrastructure dependencies, and operational bottlenecks, were discussed, and probable solutions were deliberated upon to ensure

smoother execution on the ground.

A detailed status update was presented during the meeting. It was informed that individuals enrolled in plumber courses at ITIs in Golaghat, Jorhat, and Majuli will undergo a seven-day training programme to support the ongoing expansion works, with additional ITIs to be engaged as required.

NPP seeks re-poll in Koridang seat, alleges suppressed voting in Alichen

Kohima, Apr 11: The National People’s Party (NPP) has demanded a re-poll in several polling stations under the Alichen cluster in Nagaland, alleging irregularities and unusually low voter turnout in the 28 Koridang Assembly Constituency. In a formal complaint submitted to the Election Commission of India, the party flagged what it described as an “abnormal” drop in voter participation in Alichen. According to data cited by the NPP, only 1,323 votes were cast out of 3,310 registered voters, leading to a turnout of about 39.9 per cent. The party pointed out that neighbouring polling areas recorded much higher turnout figures, ranging from over 70 per cent to as high as 99 per cent. It claimed that Alichen alone accounted for a large share of the uncast votes in the constituency, raising concerns over what it termed as “localised suppression” rather than a normal variation. The NPP further alleged that in some

polling stations, turnout dropped sharply to as low as 15 per cent and 23 per cent. It claimed that the presence of security personnel, particularly IRB forces, created fear among voters, which may have discouraged people from coming out to vote. The party also raised concerns over a disruption in the polling process. It alleged that voting was halted for nearly an hour due to actions by election officials, including strict identity verification checks carried out by observers and district authorities. According to the complaint, no steps were taken to compensate for the lost time, such as extending polling hours. The party said this affected rural voters, women, elderly citizens and daily wage earners the most. The NPP also expressed concern over the possible misuse of state machinery, stating that such developments could have influenced the outcome in what it described as a closely contested seat.

NDA will win around 100 seats in Assam: Himanta

Guwahati, Apr 11: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma today offered prayers at the Khatu Shyam temple in Rajasthan’s Sikar, and expressed confidence that the NDA would win around 100 seats in the state’s Assembly elections. Speaking to reporters, Sarma rejected the allegations levelled by Congress leader Pawan Khera as baseless, “false” and said the matter would be dealt with as per law. Congress leader Pawan Khera, on April 5, alleged that Sarma’s wife holds multiple passports and offshore properties. “I expect the BJP to perform even better than before in the state. I believe the BJP-led NDA will return with very good results, even better than earlier. Out of 126 seats, we may secure around 90 to 100 seats,” he told reporters. “This is a temple, and I do not wish to engage in politics here,” he said. However, Photoshop and AI were used to level false allegations. The law will take its own course, he added.

North East Chronicle

APRIL 12 2026 VOL 02 NO. 49



The Politics of Distraction

In an increasingly polarised political environment, public discourse is often dominated by issues that evoke strong emotions but offer little substance. Debates are framed around identity, religion, and symbolism, while critical issues like employment, education, and health-care receive limited attention. This shift is not accidental. It serves as a convenient tool to divert attention from governance challenges and policy shortcomings. By keeping the public engaged in divisive debates, accountability is diluted and real issues are sidelined. The role of media and political leadership becomes crucial in this context. While some platforms amplify distractions, others must strive to bring focus back to pressing concerns that directly impact citizens’ lives. A healthy democracy depends on informed and engaged citizens. It is essential to question narratives, demand accountability, and prioritise issues that shape the future. Without this shift, the politics of distraction will continue to overshadow the politics of development.

An environmental disaster in Moldova has Russia’s fingerprints all over it

In the second week of March, the nature vlogger Ilie Cojocari went out to film the arrival of spring on the Nistru (Dniester) river, 70 metres away from his home in Naslavcea, a village bordering Ukraine on the northernmost point of Moldova. But as he approached the river he could smell the stench of oil rising up from the water and see dark spots floating on its surface. Something was wrong.

Two days earlier, Russia had attacked Ukraine’s Novodnistrovsk hydropower complex 15 miles upriver. Cojocari had been kept awake all night by the sound of shelling. “No one slept in the [Moldovan] district of Ocnița that night,” he told me.

There was no official information from either the Ukrainian or Moldovan governments on the oil spill into the river when Cojocari went filming along its banks. But soon after posting his footage, he received calls from the Chișinău ministry of the environment asking him to confirm that the footage was real.

The next day, the ministry publicly announced that the water in Naslavcea was being tested and that officials had asked Ukraine about the origin of the spill. On 16 March, nine days after Russia attacked Ukraine’s hydropower complex, Moldova declared an environmental alert, the president Maia Sandu laid the blame squarely on Moscow.

A crisis centre was set up to monitor the spill and remove the pollutant. Oil traps and barrages made from textiles and absorbent materials were erected, and authorities provided people with alternative water supplies. But for many local residents, this felt like more than just a contaminated water issue.

Moldova has had war on its doorstep for four years. During this time, more than 2 million refugees have passed through a country of 3 million. Some 140,000 Ukrainians have settled within its borders. Russian drones have violated Moldova’s airspace and Vladimir Putin’s attacks on Ukrainian energy infrastructure have caused power outages. At its peak, inflation rose to 35% in 2022 and is currently around 5%. On 31 January, Moldova had to declare a state of energy emergency after Russia attacked the Isaccea–Vulcănești power line in Ukraine, reducing the capacity of the capital Chișinău, to produce electricity.

Rising from the Carpathian mountains near the Ukrainian-Polish border and flowing into the Black Sea, the Nistru provides 80% of Moldova’s drinking water.



The spillage of tonnes of petrol into this body of water is therefore a national crisis. Oil slicks have been detected all the way to Dubăsari, which more than 200 km from Naslavcea where Cojocari initially spotted pools of polluted water.

Fortunately Moldova’s European allies were able to step in and offer support. Moldova is a candidate country for EU membership and Brussels triggered an emergency aid facility. Romania and Poland sent help to prevent the petrol from streaming downwards towards Chișinău, which is home to a third of the population and almost entirely dependent on the Nistru for water. Other countries followed suit. Although catastrophe seems to have been halted for now, we are now acutely aware of just how vulnerable our water supply is to attacks from Russia and the chaos caused by its war on Ukraine. Yet an information war between Moldova’s pro-European and pro-Russian factions has given rise to conflicting interpretations.

In the aftermath of the Nistru disaster, Moldova’s minister of the environment, Gheorghe Hajder, released a number of on-the-ground videos in which he spoke directly to the public, Volodymyr Zelenskyy style. This heightened many people’s fears that the war was spilling over. The water shortage was just the latest, and most devastating, confirmation of it.

Bălți, the second largest city, with a population of about 120,000, was most affected by the leak. Army and police forces there were mobilised to help provide water tanks, which helped people like Irina, a 39-year-old mother of three, to deal with the shortage.

Irina told me that she queued at a nearby well with her husband twice a day: in the morning, before the children woke up, and in the evening, after work. This allowed the family to cook and wash, and drink water. “If I had 20 people before me, then 50 queued after me,”



she recalled. School lessons went online during the water crisis, which meant that Irina had to take days off work to stay at home with her children, aged seven and 13. But even at home it wasn’t easy to make sure that the children had access to clean water. In the shop where Irina works as a cashier, shelves that usually stock large bottles of water were emptied in hours.

When I contacted Larisa Novac, a member of the Moldovan parliament from the ruling pro-European Action and Solidarity party (PAS), she said: “This is an unprecedented situation. This is an attack on Moldova’s security”.

Vladimir Zgavordei, a mayor of three villages in the northern Florești district, which was also affected by the spill, told me that in areas without wells he had organised firefighter trucks to provide people with water tanks to water their farm animals.

But the entire food chain may be affected, ecologists have warned, along with fish, wild ducks, cormorants and swans. Thus far Moldovan authorities have not registered any impact on wildlife. This has not stopped speculation, however. After people posted pictures of dead birds on the river, the ministry said laboratory tests showed they were victims of avian flu or other natural causes. By 18 March the barrages erected along the river had stabilised the oil in the water at safe levels in the most affected districts. It was another 48 hours before authorities allowed people to use tap water from the Nistru. Even if the immediate crisis has eased, Moldova finds itself fighting on two fronts: to find alternative sources of water and to rid the river of pollutants, while struggling for the hearts and minds of those who refuse to believe that Russia was responsible for the leak. On 25 March, Hajder went to the Novodnistrovsk hydro plant to check on the situation. “No more oil stains have been noticed,” at the source,

Some days ago, while passing through Panthapath on my way to work, I saw many people, including day labourers and rickshaw pullers, gathered with sombre expressions: the roadside food stalls they depended on for affordable meals had been removed. This highlighted for me how urban street vendor removal disrupts essential economic and social lifelines and made me wonder whether city management can move beyond short-term clearances towards a more sustainable approach. Dhaka’s city administration has stepped up efforts to remove street vendors to improve traffic flow, urban aesthetics, and commuter safety. From a commuter’s perspective, this may feel like a necessary intervention as stalls often block sidewalks and streets, causing congestion and making movement difficult. However, informal markets are an integral part of the economic chain. Small producers handle production of goods, middlemen handle transport to the vendors, and vendors sell directly to low-income consumers. Removing stalls disrupts this chain, reduces income, and limits access to affordable food and essentials. Policies aimed at improving urban order can therefore unintentionally harm thousands of livelihoods and prove to be largely ineffective. We have seen it before: authorities clear



the streets of vendors, protests erupt and, within days, streets are reoccupied. Even after designated markets like Bangabazar and the Dhanmondi hawkers’ market were established, thousands of vendors have continued to operate across the streets of Dhaka and other urban areas. Removing such a significant number of vendors is a measure that carries substantial risks, including breaking existing supply chains, triggering protests, and possibly disrupting the livelihoods of some of the most vulnerable people in our society. In this case, what long-term, formalised solution can protect the interests of citizens, aid in traffic management, and simultaneously safeguard the

livelihoods of the street vendors while ensuring that low-income consumers are not overlooked?

One approach is to test solutions in a single zone before scaling up. Authorities could designate a street or cluster where vendors operate under regulated conditions, monitor the results, and refine policies based on lessons learned. Interim measures might include time-bound vending permissions or temporary zones, ensuring that income and access to food continue while longer-term plans are developed. Physical measures can also prevent unsafe or unplanned vending. Raising dividers along busy roads can discourage vendors from setting up in the middle of traffic lanes.

Footpaths—often used by informal shops—can be made unavailable with the installation of trees, benches, and waste bins, thus discouraging vendors from occupying these spaces. On the road, careful placement of bus bays, traffic signalling, and speed regulation can prevent vendors from setting up in unsafe places. These well-planned measures will not only keep streets safe for commuters but also prevent the recurring cycle of vendors setting up shop in dangerous or obstructive locations. A long-term strategy may begin with rehabilitating existing vendors, although this requires further resources and planning. The government could develop a database capturing vendors’ skills, experiences, and locations to guide pilot projects. Migrants from rural areas could be offered alternative employment, vocational training, loans, or support for freelancing or overseas opportunities. Dedicated vending zones could help generate government revenue, provide consumers with convenient access to goods, and sustain livelihoods. Allowing vendors to operate during off-peak hours—such as in the early morning for breakfast stalls—ensures commuters can move safely while consumers retain access to affordable food. With thoughtful urban planning, areas where informal markets can coexist with

city traffic can be identified, supported by infrastructure such as shelters, waste management, and pedestrian pathways. Formalisation is also essential as licensing of vendors provides legal recognition, access to training, and support for hygiene, business management, and microfinance. In return, the government could collect revenue systematically, improving city finances while supporting small-scale entrepreneurship.

Dhaka’s planners face a complex challenge: modernising infrastructure and managing traffic while keeping the informal economy alive. Current practices, which prioritise street clearance over inclusive planning, fail to serve commuters, residents, or vendors effectively. The solution must be holistic; balancing traffic management, pedestrian safety, urban aesthetics, and economic sustainability. Policymakers must seek solutions where all stakeholders see their interests reflected. The goal is not merely to remove vendors but to rethink urban management in a way that balances order and opportunity. When cities are planned to account for both mobility and economic activity, they give way to spaces where growth, social equity, and order can coexist. In a rapidly expanding metropolis like Dhaka, such an approach is essential.

Congratulations to the Artemis II crew – but the case for sending astronauts into space is rapidly shrinking

The 2020s has seen a revival of the “Apollo spirit”. The US and China are seemingly in a race to send humans to the moon by the end of the decade – and thereafter, perhaps, even to Mars. Nasa astronauts have just returned from a 10-day journey looping around the moon. Although they arrived back safely, Nasa accepts that the lack of data makes it impossible to quantify the risks involved – this represents only the second launch for the Artemis system and the first to carry astronauts.

To date, estimated expenditures on the Artemis programme are close to \$100bn (£75bn). The “one big beautiful bill” that the US Congress passed in July 2025 allocates \$9.9bn for the Artemis IV and V missions. Still greater expenditures are envisioned for a well-developed lunar base.

The benefits of going to the moon are clear. Detailed exploration will give us important clues about the formation of the solar system, and by implication about the history of exoplanets orbiting other stars throughout the cosmos. In addition, the moon offers a stable observing platform for all types of telescopes, including giant arrays of radio antennas. These can profit from their location on the lunar far side, which is shielded from the light and other radiation that our terrestrial civilisation constantly radiates into space.

But are “on-site” humans needed for any of this? Today, astronauts could still prove useful, despite the difficulties of keeping them alive and productive. But a decade from now, the advantage could swing towards robots: able to work around the clock, comparatively inexpensive, and not requiring replacement for many years or even decades.

Robots on Mars such as Curiosity and Perseverance (and their Chinese counterparts) have performed almost flawlessly for many years, requiring nothing but sunshine for their operations. These marvellous machines steadily improve their capabilities, while humans, who demand oxygen, food and shelter, do not. What cost, including possible tragedy, should be imposed for the greater inspiration that astronauts offer? And, we may reasonably ask, how much inspiration would astronauts on the moon now provide given that humans achieved the basic goal more than half a century ago?



As ever, space exploration has a political dimension, as well as a scientific one, with sending astronauts an eye-catching achievement. The Chinese government’s plans show a determination to increase China’s prestige and influence through space exploration. The Chinese have excelled in lunar research. After two robots orbited the moon, three more made soft landings there. Each of those deployed a robotic explorer, and in 2024 the third of these brought the first soil samples from the lunar far side back to Earth. The next Chinese lunar mission, scheduled for launch this August, will examine the south pole region with an orbiter, a lander and a “mini-hopper” probe. In 2028, the Chinese government plans to send equipment to investigate construction of a lunar base, including an enclosed ecosystem to rest on the moon’s surface. And there is every expectation that the Chinese will aim to match the US by sending humans.

But the most relevant difference between the Apollo era and the mid-2020s is the amazing improvement in our ability to create, launch and guide robotic explorers. Furthermore, improvements in sensors and in artificial intelligence (AI) will enable the robots themselves to identify particularly interesting sites from which to gather samples for return to Earth. Within 10 or 20 years, robotic exploration of the lunar surface could be almost autonomous, with little advantage to be gained by a human presence. Similarly, engineering projects might no longer require human intervention, but could instead be done by robotic fabricators. The same is true for the mining of rare minerals. The practical case for human spaceflight gets ever weaker with each advance in robots and miniaturisation.

Humans have, of course,

been crucial in assembling or repairing spacecraft orbiting the Earth. For example, after the Hubble space telescope (HST) was launched in 1990, its mirror turned out to be poorly aligned. But astronauts undertook a “rescue” mission in the shuttle to make adjustments – and later made further visits to upgrade the instruments. This has always been adduced as evidence of the key role of humans in space. But Riccardo Giacconi, who led the project to launch the first X-ray telescopes into space and was later in charge of the Hubble telescope, once told me that if the human element had been removed, several copies of the HST could have been built and launched with the money saved. In December 2021, the vastly more elaborate James Webb space telescope (JWST) was launched. The stakes were high because there would have been no prospect of a repair mission. The HST had been launched into a low (and accessible) orbit: in contrast, the JWST’s orbit, several times farther away than the moon, is far beyond the routine reach of astronauts. The JWST is a sterling example of the complex missions that can be undertaken without space crews.

Indeed, as robotics and miniaturisation improve, the practical and scientific case for any human spaceflight weakens. Its prime motive now is simply as an adventure – an ultra-expensive sport that should be left to billionaires and private sponsorship. We may envy the crew of Artemis who, while orbiting the moon, experienced the awe of the pioneer Apollo 8 astronaut Bill Anders in his iconic image Earthrise, depicting the Earthly home that we must cherish. But we do not need to send astronauts to the moon, or beyond, to bring the benefits of space exploration to humanity.

‘War-resistant’ equities, these shares, spearheaded the rally in spite of the US-Iran conflict

New Delhi: Defence and upstream oil companies were expected to be the biggest beneficiaries of the West Asia crisis. Instead, renewable energy, electric vehicle and metals stocks emerged as “war-proof” plays during the US-Iran war, leading gainers across broader indices.Even as the US-Iran situation moved into a two-week ceasefire phase, the market remained uneasy about whether a prolonged peace deal would be reached. Amid the uncertainty, solar panel maker Premier Energies soared 30.45 per cent since February 27, while larger peer Waaree Energies advanced 19 per cent during the same period. Acme Solar Holdings Ltd also gained 15 per cent over this period. These stocks were among top 10

BSE500 gainers during the US and Israel joint strikes on Iran from February 28 to April 7. Brokerages largely expect solar module manufacturers such as Waaree Energies and Premier Energies to report a solid set of March quarter results. EV two-wheeler maker Ola Electric Mobility Ltd surged 44 per cent to Rs 36.34 on Thursday from Rs 25.22 on February 27. However, most of this rally was recent, following the announcement of Bhavish Aggarwal-led company’s in-house developed Lithium Iron Phosphate (LFP) cell, which is currently awaiting regulatory approvals.Adani Power Ltd advanced 22.76 per cent during the period to Rs 172 level. JM Financial has Adani Power as its top power sector pick. Zyds

Wellness Ltd climbed 27 per cent since February 27. Defence stocks such as Zen Technologies, Mazagon Dock, Data Patterns (India) Ltd, Bharat Dynamics Ltd and Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd did gain but 3-12 per cent. Bharat Electronics Ltd fell 1.2 per cent. Lloyds Metals & Energy Ltd advanced 21 per cent. The company has acquired a 49 per cent stake in Virtus Lloyds Minerals Holding (VLMH) for \$ 30 million. VLMH holds 100 per cent of CHEMAF, which owns 50+ copper and cobalt mining permits in the DRC.

Reliance Industries, which owns world’s largest and most complex single-site refinery, fell 4.65 per cent to Rs 1,329.40. ONGC was up 3 per cent during the period mentioned

Nine Jefferies “buy” recommendations with a potential upside of up to 25% to 42%

New Delhi: Jefferies, in its recent report, has turned bullish on India’s non-lending financial and life insurance plays, naming stocks such as Max Financial Services, SBI Life Insurance Company, HDFC Asset Management Company, among its top picks, with “Buy” ratings and sees upside potential ranging from 25% to 42% in select stocks.

The brokerage says the sector is entering a phase where market volatility, shifting insurance demand, and rising financialisation of household savings are driving differentiated growth across insurers, asset managers, and capital market-linked firms. Despite near-term pressures on premiums and assets under management, Jefferies expects companies with strong distribution, improving margins, and exposure to retail participation trends to emerge as key beneficiaries over the medium term.

Jefferies on HDFC Asset Management Company: ‘Buy’

Jefferies has rated it ‘Buy’ with a target price for the stock is Rs 2,960 which indicates a 26% upside potential for shareholders. Jefferies forecasts a 20% growth in assets under management led by healthy net flows of 12% to 14% and market gains of 7% to 8%. With a stable core cost to income ratio, the earnings per share are expected to grow at a compound annual rate of 14%. The brokerage believes that large asset management companies will continue to command healthy valuations due to the structural opportunity provided by the low penetration of equity investments in India. Their key equity funds have recently performed in the top quartile of the industry and the sustenance of this performance is a positive trigger. Sharp movements in the broader equity markets would be a primary driver of both revenue and overall profitability for the firm. “Given the structural opportunity from equity under-penetration in India, we believe that large AMCs will continue to demand healthy valuations,” says Jefferies.Jefferies on ICICI Lombard General Insurance: ‘Buy’

The brokerage firm rates it ‘Buy’ with a price target of Rs 2,185 which suggests an upside of 26%. ICICI Lombard is a leading private general insurer that



BSE, Groww, and SBI Life are Jefferies’ recommendations in a volatile market

New Delhi: The sharp swings in the market are boosting trading activity in some pockets but it is also creating pressure in others like asset management and insurance. The international brokerage house, Jefferies, in its latest report, has shared its outlook on the select stocks, highlighting where it sees opportunities and where caution may still be needed. The brokerage house Jefferies is focussing on companies that either gain from higher market activity or have relatively stable earnings models. Wealth and financial services player 360 One has been given ‘Buy’ rating with a target price of Rs 1,190, implying a 16% upside, while Groww is seen reaching Rs 210, suggesting an 8% upside.BSE also features in the ‘Buy’ list with a target of Rs 3,330, indicating a 9% upside.

However, CDSL has been assigned a ‘Hold’ rating target price of Rs 1,310. In the asset management space, CAMS carries a ‘Buy’ rating with a target of Rs 820.In the insurance and financial space, Go Digit has a ‘Buy’ rating with a target price of Rs 385, while HDFC AMC has a ‘Buy’ rating with a target price of Rs 2,960. ICICI Prudential AMC has a ‘Buy’ rating with a target price of Rs 3,600, but this implies a 5% downside. At the same time, not every segment benefits. The report cautions that “lower IPOs/retail trades impact CDSL,” pointing to a slowdown in new listings and investor participation as a potential drag. In its report, the broker-



age house also noted that Registrar and Transfer Agents (RTAs) are likely to see Average Assets Under Management (AAUM) growth of 18-20% year-on-year. However, it expects KFIN Technologies to face higher yield compression compared to CAMS, mainly due to the rising share of exchange-traded funds (ETFs) at its key AMC partner, Nippon Life India Asset Management. Jefferies on Insurance and asset managers: Growth vs pressure

In the insurance sector space, the Jefferies report noted, “March 2026 results should see: Life insurance Annualised Premium Equivalent growth slow, with LIC’s margin expanding.”However, the general insurance segment appears

relatively stronger. “GIs & SAHIs to see better growth. Star to see loss ratio improve,” the report said. Loss ratio refers to the proportion of claims paid out compared to premiums earned, and an improvement here indicates better profitability.“We expect Star Health’s Q4FY26 IFRS loss ratio to improve by 120bps y-y due to price hikes, mix shift and new products,” Jefferies noted in its report.For asset management companies, the concern lies in market-linked income. “AMCs’ Q4FY26 PAT growth will be adversely impacted by lower other income,” Jefferies noted.ICICI Prudential Life Insurance has a ‘Buy’ rating with a target price of Rs 655, while Max Financial Services

also carries a ‘Buy’ rating with a target of Rs 2,125. One of the biggest factors highlighted in the Jefferies report is the impact of market volatility.According to Jefferies, “BSE & Groww gain from volatility,” as higher trading volumes typically lead to stronger transaction-based revenues.Nippon Life India Asset Management (NAM) has been assigned a ‘Buy’ rating with a target price of Rs 1,040.

Niva Bupa, however, has been given a ‘Hold’ rating with a target price of Rs 78.Nuvama Wealth Management has a ‘Buy’ rating with a target price of Rs 1,600, while PB Fintech has a ‘Buy’ rating with a target of Rs 1,800

HDFC Life has a ‘Buy’ rating with a target price of Rs 725, while ICICI Lombard has a ‘Buy’ rating with a target of Rs 2,185.The brokerage house noted, “Within our coverage, we prefer Groww (volatility play and TAM expansion), Star Health (defensive and loss ratio turnaround), SBI Life (lower regulatory risks and distribution moats), Nuvama (wealth management ramping up and attractive valuations) and ICICI AMC (lower SMID exposure and alternate opportunity).” In simple terms, Jefferies is favouring platforms like Groww and exchanges, while also backing insurers and wealth managers. As per the Jefferies report, several stocks in the capital markets ecosystem have been assigned a “Buy” rating, indicating expected upside from current levels.

Rs 2,000 crore invisible rail 2 small cap stocks securing

New Delhi: India is steadily moving towards a paperless economy. More processes are now being handled online. This trend is visible in trade, compliance and public services. What once looked like a policy goal is now becoming part of daily operations.Still, a paperless system needs more than digital documents. It needs identity verification. It needs e-signatures. It needs authentication. It also needs secure workflows. Without these layers, digital records cannot fully replace paper. That is where the investment case gets interesting. This is not just a general digitisation story. It is about the businesses that help users verify, sign and process documents online. As more institutions move these tasks online, the trust layer becomes more important.That is why we have focused on eMudhra and Protean eGov Technologies. Both these companies have a combined order book of Rs 2,000 cr. eMudhra is a direct play on digital trust. Protean has a wider presence in digital identity and authentication, and related public digital infrastructure, even though



it missed the PAN 2.0 short-list. LTIMindtree won the PAN 2.0 project, but its exposure to this theme sits within a much broader IT services business. That makes eMudhra and Protean more focused fits for an article on the trust and identity layer behind India’s paperless economy. eMudhra is a licensed certifying authority involved in issuing digital signature certificates in India under its eMudhra brand. The company is licensed by the Controller of Certifying Authorities (CCA), Min-

istry of Information Technology, and operates under the guidelines set by the Information Technology Act. Mudhra reported a strong December quarter.

Growth was led by product revenues and better traction in overseas markets. Total income for Q3 FY26 rose 35.6% year-on-year (YoY) to Rs 191.1 crore. Net profit increased 29.5% to Rs 29 crore. Earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation (EBITDA) rose 38.2% to Rs 44.1 crore. EBITDA margin stood at 23.1%.

Hormuz’s opening and ceasefire provide short-term respite

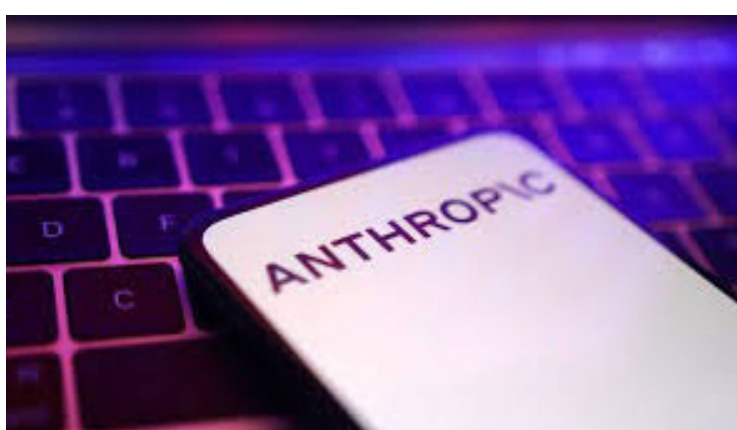


New Delhi: The 15-day ceasefire for the West Asia war offers a temporary window for ships stranded due to the closure of the Gulf of Hormuz to exit the region. This may help exporters cut their losses and allow fresh cargo bookings for trade to normalise, but only longer-term peace will salvage the situation, according to exporters and experts.More than 800 ships are waiting to cross the Hormuz Strait, 16 of which are Indian. “It will take 1.5 to 2 months for the entire backlog to clear and for normal cargo movement to resume,” said Padmanabhan Babu, CEO and Founder of Lexship. Lexship provides crossborder logistics services.”Just a day before the war began on March 1, around 140 ships crossed the strait which by the end of the month had reduced to 5 a day. On the first day of the ceasefire there were no large-scale crossings as attacks still continue in the region. “We are trying our level best to bring our ships as early as possible, as well as sending vessels again to bring the cargo from there,” said Mukesh Mangal, Additional Secretary in the Department of Ports, Shipping and Waterways. Apart from Hormuz there have been disrup-

tions in the Red Sea routes which has strained India’s exports to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region, totaling \$58.87 billion in 2024-25. Apart from Hormuz there have been disruptions in the Red Sea routes which has strained India’s exports to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region, totaling \$58.87 billion in 2024-25. For Europe and the US—India’s biggest market—ships are avoiding Dubai’s transshipment ports and taking a longer route through the Cape of Good Hope. This has led to rates of 20 feet equivalent container to US going up to \$ 4,500-5000 from \$ 2000-3500 pre conflict, Basu saidTo deal with the high freight, insurance and other logistics costs to West Asia the government announced the Resilience and Logistics Intervention for Export Facilitation (RELIEF) scheme, which will also reimburse up to 50% of charges paid by small and medium exporters. The exporters want relaxation of conditions in the scheme because the support is paid after shipment payments are received. “The support should be given earlier as payments for exports can take months,” Chadha said.

Is Anthropic’s “Mythos” AI model concerning for Indian IT stocks Motilal Oswal explains

New Delhi: The information technology (IT) sector stocks are under pressure in today’s session , even as the earnings season gains momentum. The Nifty IT index slipped 1% in early trade. This is after Anthropic released the preview of the new model, Mythos. This is seen as stronger than earlier models like Claude Opus on coding and security benchmarks.Interestingly, this comes at a time when Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), India’s largest IT services company, is set to announce its Q4 results later today. TCS is the only tech stock in green today.IT sector stock performance at this houln early trading, Infosys, LTI MindTree and Coforge declined about 2% each. Oracle Financial Services Software (OFSS), Tech Mahindra, and HCL Tech also edged lower by 1% each. The new AI model is being rolled out under a controlled programme called Project Glasswing.As per the Motilal Oswal report, “Project Glasswing is a controlled deployment of Anthropic’s most advanced cybersecurity-focused model. Access is restricted to a small set of large enterprises and infrastructure players.”This limited rollout suggests that while the technology is powerful, it is still in a testing phase. However, its capabilities are already drawing attention,



especially in areas like vulnerability detection and system security Motilal Oswal, elaborating on the impact of the new release on Indian IT services, said that “We believe this does not immediately disrupt the entire security services stack, but it does signal gradual effort compression in parts of testing and vulnerability assessment work, which is a key area to monitor for IT services.”

The report further noted, “In simple terms, if AI can be used to write better code, it can also be used to find vulnerabilities or automate attacks. Glasswing is built to stay ahead of that risk.”Persistent Systems, Wipro, and Mphasis is also trading down marginally lower.In a recent report, brokerage firm Motilal Oswal shared its latest outlook on IT sector stocks,

highlighting key trends shaping the space. Motilal Oswal in its report pointed out that the key factors weighing on IT stocks is the rapid advancement in artificial intelligence (AI) capabilities. The report highlighted a new model launched by Anthropic, a global AI research company, which is showing significant improvements in both coding and cybersecurity tasks.“Mythos is positioned as extremely good at identifying and fixing cybersecurity vulnerabilities, outperforming human experts and existing tools,” the brokerage house report added. According to the brokerage report, “Manual-heavy security services: Traditional vulnerability assessment relies on engineers + tools. Mythos could reduce effort

in testing and audit layers.”Motilal Oswal added that Mythos is positioned as “extremely good at identifying and fixing cybersecurity vulnerabilities, outperforming human experts and existing tools.” In some cases, it has identified bugs that remained undetected for decades despite multiple testing cycles. “In some ways, it is superior to most human cybersecurity engineers,” they added.“Large enterprises, on the other hand, operate in brownfield setups with legacy systems built over 20-30 years. Deploying AI here requires integration, data cleanup and governance alignment, which takes time,” added motilal Oswal report. Motilal Oswal outlined the impact on IT services and pointed out that “Mythos builds on big gains in capabilities on Opus, which, released in Feb’26, sent most tech/SaaS stocks tumbling down. While this release may not have the same impact on stocks, it further expands the list of things AI can do better than humans – coding, ERP, and now cybersecurity.”According to the domestic brokerage house, “It (Mythos) is extremely large-scale (reported to be in the highest compute class) and trained specifically for deep code understanding, vulnerability detection and exploit simulation.”

Oil tanker crew who have been stranded in the Gulf for six weeks are experiencing a “mental breakdown”

Iran: “You can try to lessen the effect this situation has on your mental health, but it’s getting harder.” One of the 20,000 mariners imprisoned by Iran’s chokehold on the Strait of Hormuz is at their breaking point after being stuck in the Gulf for six weeks. However, the oil tanker worker, who originally talked to the Guardian a month ago, claimed that any hope they could soon be free to depart had since faded, if it ever felt true at all, given the precarious Middle East peace. “We are anchored close to numerous ships that are fully laden. The crew member, one of hundreds anchored off the coast of the United Arab Emirates with a clear view of the laden Kuwaiti oil tanker that was set on fire by an Iranian missile less than two weeks ago, stated, “No one has moved an inch.”The distinctive plumes of intercepted missiles slashed the sky above their ships just hours after the ceasefire was reached. Even if the ceasefire permitted them to cross the strait, many sailors feel unwilling and unable to do so after a month and a half of drone attacks and rumors of underwater mines. The seafarer stated, “I gave my notice exactly one month ago.” “I’ve told the master that I refuse to sail over the strait. It all comes down to safety. The majority of the crew on the same tanker share this sentiment, they continued, stating that roughly 90% of them wish to exercise their right to refuse to sail. Colleagues are often checking on a crew member who has experienced a “mental breakdown.”“I have no doubt that the stress of this scenario is causing this specific problem, this

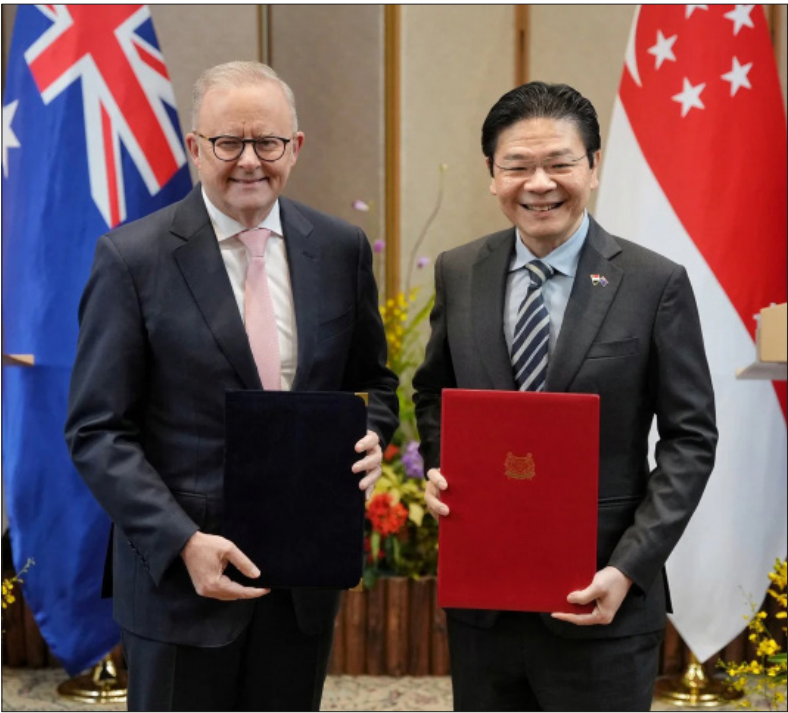


mental collapse, on tankers all around us. The seafarer stated, “Seafarer support [phone] lines are trying to help, but we have all known from the beginning that it would not be enough.” The International Transport Workers’ Federation (ITF), a trade union, has received over 1,000 requests from seafarers on 300 different vessels since the dispute began. Twenty percent came from people who wanted to return home. Pay and availability to necessities like food, water, and fuel were further issues. The seafarer made his first helpline call following the recent attack on Kuwait’s Al-Salmi oil tanker, which was only a few miles distant. “I wasn’t sure if I could manage how I was feeling, and I felt a little overwhelmed. For me, it’s crucial that no one witness my tears. Simply expressing all the emotions to a complete stranger was helpful. However, according to David Appleton, a senior leader at Nautilus, which advocates for ship employees, there is a limit to what guidance and assurance from a distance can accomplish. “Everyone tries their hardest to help, but

what you really want to do is get people out of the situation,” he stated. Appleton continued, “In addition to the psychological toll that the threat of violence takes on people—the fact that you’re sitting there almost like a sitting duck—there is also the uncertainty and not knowing how long it’s going to go on.” The eroding mental health of those on board stranded tankers has reignited calls for shipowners to replace their crews with mariners willing to offer relief. Under maritime regulations shipping companies cannot force seafarers to work in hazardous zones, but there will still be those desperate enough to take up the work. “Most of our potential relievers are Ukrainian seafarers; the ones who are away from their homes, spending money in foreign European countries because they can’t go back home,” the seafarer said. Shipping companies are required to offer double pay to crew working in hazardous areas. They are expected to find those interested in promotion and give them a higher rank to sign on. They will also be looking for those who have

been ashore the longest and need the work. The seafarer said: “The only difference between them and us is choice. At least they will be making a choice to come here, regardless of why they choose to do so.” They hope that within the coming weeks their tanker will be taken to anchorage to allow new crew to take the places of those unwilling or unable to carry on. “The captain had an informal conversation with our crew manager, who was trying to get the crew to stay aboard until we reach the discharge port but he immediately shut that down,” they said. “I’m in no mental condition to perform any intense task after all of this. It is the hardest situation that I have ever been in,” the worker said. There is no guarantee they will ever return to the sea. “I have worked on tankers all my life. To go, means letting go of all I’ve accomplished. But to stay in this work, means there is a chance that I’ll have to return here eventually. I will only be able to make that decision after a few months of being off this tanker. At home,” they said.

According to Singapore’s PM, cutting petroleum to Australia “won’t happen”



Australia: Singapore’s prime minister assured Anthony Albanese that fuel will continue to flow despite the global crisis, and Australia’s biggest supplier of gasoline has promised not to stop supplies. In the midst of the “acute energy crisis” brought on by the Middle East conflict, Albanese’s whistle-stop visit with his Singaporean colleague, Lawrence Wong, resulted in a fresh agreement that the two nations would continue to provide each other fuel and liquefied natural gas. Additionally, a legally binding addendum on vital supplies like energy will be added to Australia and Singapore’s free trade agreement. The government claimed that the visit would assist ensure fuel supplies, even though there were no immediate announcements of additional petroleum supplies coming to Australia as a result of the travel to Singapore—a point that the Coalition opposition swiftly exploited. “We have no intention of limiting exports. When asked if Australia would receive priority treatment if Singapore had to reduce production, Wong replied, “We didn’t have to do so even in the darkest days of Covid, and we won’t do so

during this energy crisis.” “Plausible. It won’t take place. Singapore is Australia’s largest trade partner in southeast Asia, and considered one of Canberra’s closest strategic and economic partners. Australia is Singapore’s second biggest supplier of LNG, while Singapore is Australia’s largest supplier of petrol. Singapore makes up more than a quarter of Australia’s total refined fuel imports, including 55% of our petrol, 22% of jet fuel and 15% of diesel worth more than \$10bn. Australia supplies 32% of Singapore’s LNG, worth about \$5bn. Albanese’s short trip to Singapore, with only one full day on the ground, was not anticipated to immediately lock in any new fuel supplies. But amid global supply shocks from the Middle East war, and ongoing interruptions to shipping through the strait of Hormuz – further complicated by Israel’s ongoing bombing campaign in Lebanon – there is concern that major exporters of fuel may see their supplies interrupted. Albanese and his government have mounted a major diplomatic offensive to ensure Australian fuel imports keep arriving, including using our own exports of gas and coal

as leverage. “These are difficult times, not just for Australia and Singapore, but for countries everywhere,” Wong said. “That is why in times like these, we must work closely, move faster, and stand together. Not just to manage the risk, but to protect the well-being of our people.” The joint statement agreed by Albanese and Wong said Australia and Singapore would “make maximum efforts to meet each other’s energy security needs” in refined fuels and LNG. “We reaffirmed our commitment to support the flow of essential goods including petroleum oils, such as diesel, and LNG and agreed to intensify cooperation to facilitate the timely movement of goods and essential supplies through enhanced coordination, efficient border and port processes, transparency, and early consultation,” the statement read. “We agreed on the need to co-ordinate our response to this global crisis so that both our economies are stronger and more resilient into the future.” “We recognised the importance of the role of our countries in each other’s energy security – Singapore is one of Australia’s top suppliers of refined petroleum products, and Australia is one of Singapore’s top suppliers of liquefied natural gas.” While Albanese did not secure any additional fuel supplies during the visit, both sides said the agreement would lock in future ongoing supplies. “This is not just about managing today’s crisis. It’s about building trusted supply lines for a more uncertain future,” Wong said. Albanese spoke favourably of giving Singapore more access to additional Australian LNG. Wong said a new Singaporean government body, which centralises imports of gas, would “look to Australia to assess more gas on a commercial basis, and hopefully more long term gas as well.” However Albanese appeared to downplay the prospects of his government instituting a new tax on gas exports, as has been championed by progressive campaigners, members of his own Labor backbench, and even the Coalition’s shadow minister Andrew Hastie.

115 mph winds from Cyclone Maila batter the Solomon Islands

Asia : Over the next few days, Severe Tropical Cyclone Maila, which is presently in the Solomon Sea, is predicted to keep heading southwest. Maila was the strongest cyclone ever recorded this far north in the Solomon Sea, with peak sustained winds of 115 mph (185 kph) and gusts of up to 160 mph on Thursday, according to the Australian Bureau of Meteorology. Widespread damage has been wrought by the storm throughout the Solomon Islands, especially in the Western, Choiseul, and Isabel provinces, where residences, clinics, and schools have sustained damage. After around 120 people were displaced and over 73,000 people were impacted altogether, the government is giving humanitarian aid top priority. Maila is forecast to move south of Papua New Guinea over the weekend, bringing heavy rain and strong winds to south-eastern areas before moving into the Coral Sea. From Sunday, the storm is likely to continue south-westwards towards the far north Queensland coast early next week.

In the meantime, much of Vietnam is experiencing a protracted period of intense heat, with core sections experiencing temperatures above 40C



(104F). Tay Hieu and Con Cuong in the province of Nghe An recorded highs of 41.9C and 41.3C, respectively, between Monday and Wednesday. It is predicted that the heat will continue, with temperatures in Nghe An and Hue topping close to 40C and generally above 35C.

While low humidity is making fires more likely, rising electrical consumption might put pressure on power supply. Since Wednesday, strong winds and torrential rain have lashed

southern South Korea, particularly its southern islands, including Jeju, Gwangju and Yeosu. Winds of 65mph were recorded on Udo, part of Jeju province. Ferries have been suspended and about 250 flights have been cancelled.

The Korea Meteorological Administration has warned that rainfall rates of 20-30mm an hour are possible, raising the likelihood that Jeju could break its April daily rainfall record of 101.6mm, set in 1998.

Starmer said he is “fed up” with how Trump and Putin are affecting energy prices in the UK



Europe: Keir Starmer has stated that he is “fed up” with the impact that Donald Trump’s Middle East policies are having on the British populace, seemingly equating the US president with Vladimir Putin. “I’m fed up with the fact that families across the country see their bills go up and down on energy, businesses’ bills go up and down on energy because of the actions of Putin or Trump across the world,” the prime minister stated in an interview with Robert Peston of ITV on Thursday. In addition to appearing to denounce Benjamin Netanyahu for Israel’s ongoing attacks on Lebanon, despite Iran’s demand that Lebanon be included in the ceasefire that was reached on April 7, Starmer, who has been harshly criticized and occasionally ridiculed by Trump for not committing British forces to the war on Iran. “That should stop—that’s my strong opinion—so the question isn’t a technical one of whether or not it’s a breach of the agreement,” Starmer stated. Following the Middle East ceasefire, Starmer and Trump discussed the need for a “practical

plan” to allow shipping through the Strait of Hormuz on Thursday. A Downing Street spokesperson said: “The prime minister spoke to President Trump from Qatar this evening. The prime minister set out his discussions with Gulf leaders and military planners in the region on the need to restore freedom of navigation in the strait of Hormuz, as well as the UK’s efforts to convene partners to agree a viable plan. “They agreed that now there is a ceasefire in place and agreement to open the strait, we are at the next stage of finding a resolution. The leaders discussed the need for a practical plan to get shipping moving again as quickly as possible.” Starmer also said on ITV that although Britain did not have “access to all the details of the ceasefire”, he disagreed with the attacks on Lebanon: “Let me be really clear about it: they’re wrong.” Writing in the Guardian on Thursday, Starmer said he wanted Britain to be “a country where people are not at the mercy of events abroad”. He added that while the responses of previous governments to world events were to simply “manage the crisis, find a sticking plaster and then desperately try to reassert the status quo”, he promised his government would do better. “This time, it will be different. The war in Iran must now become a line in the sand, because how we emerge from this crisis will define all of us for a generation.” The prime minister’s relationship with Britain’s allies has been noticeably strained since the US and Israel’s war with Iran began in late February. Starmer and other European leaders have been repeatedly chastised and belittled by Trump and other prominent members of his administration. These have included Trump sharing a video from the sketch show SNL UK in which Starmer is portrayed as being scared of the US president and trying to avoid his call, and stating that he is “no Winston Churchill”. Others on the receiving end of Trump’s ire include the French president, Emmanuel Macron. Trump claimed Macron’s “wife treats him extremely badly” and even suggested that she hits him, claiming that Macron was “still recovering from the right to the jaw” when he spoke to him earlier in the month. The Spanish prime minister, Pedro Sánchez, who has been outspoken in his disapproval of the wars in Iran and Gaza, has been one of Trump’s most vocal detractors. In response, the president has threatened to cut off all trade and suggested that if the US wanted to use Spain’s bases in the region, they would take them by force, stating: “If we want, we can just fly in and use it. Nobody is going to tell us not to use it.”

Gulf states reconsider security in view of the US-Israeli conflict with Iran

Iran: As they deal with an emboldened Tehran and repair their damaged economy following the US and Israel’s assault on Iran, Gulf countries will look to expand their security alliances. The Iranian regime and its remaining missile arsenal will continue to pose a threat to the Gulf. Iran targeted American bases on their territory in retaliation for a coordinated attack by the United States and Israel. However, the nations claim that they cannot allow Iran to maintain control over the Hormuz Strait, which serves as a conduit for the majority of their trade. Iran asserted that it would maintain the control it gained over the canal throughout the conflict, enabling Tehran to control the Gulf at any time, when it agreed to a truce this week. The United States and Iran are scheduled to begin negotiations in Islamabad as early as Friday, and one of the primary issues to be discussed is the future of the strait. Over the course of the five weeks of the fight, Gulf countries celebrated their ability to protect themselves by mostly intercepting Iran’s missile and drone onslaught. However, a conservative group led by Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates is taking a tougher stance on future relations with Iran, while other countries are looking for peace through reestablished ties with

Tehran, according to experts. Hours after a ceasefire was announced, Iran retaliated, according to Iranian state media on Wednesday, claiming that the UAE was likely responsible for an attack on its oil installations on Lavan Island. It would be the only known aggressive move in the conflict by a Gulf country. The United Arab Emirates has remained silent. Saudi Arabia and Iran on Thursday held their first official contact since the conflict began, in a call between the two foreign ministers that “discussed ways to reduce tensions to restore security and stability in the region”. Bader Mousa Al-Saif, a professor at Kuwait University, said the Gulf should reconsider its security, forming partnerships with countries such as Turkey and other middle powers, as opposed to relying solely on the US. He said that the region must get away from the danger of conflict repeatedly erupting now, so that economic foundations can be reset. “It behoves all the countries in the region to rethink the model,” said Al-Saif.

“The question is how to insulate the region as a whole from going into a forever war.” The likes of Turkey and Pakistan, which have large and capable militaries, look set to play a bigger role in the Gulf. There were moves in this direction even

before the war. In recent months, Saudi Arabia forged a defence pact with Pakistan and the UAE announced a defence partnership with India. During this conflict, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar hurriedly signed defence agreements with Ukraine, to tackle the threat from Iranian drones. There have been calls for a “Muslim Nato”, but that idea is considered highly unlikely. A new alignment emerged in March of Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Egypt and Pakistan, “Step”. However the rivalries between those countries, and the lack of clarity on whether they are protecting against Iran or Israel complicates the relationship. Turkey and Pakistan border Iran and do not want to see confrontation with Tehran. The UK, which helped defend Gulf skies during the war, could also be involved. Arriving in Jeddah on Wednesday, Keir Starmer discussed with the Saudi crown prince “how the UK and Saudi Arabia could further deepen their defence industrial cooperation to boost capability and mutual security”. Abdulkhaleq Abdulla, a political science professor in the UAE, said that he expected security ties with the US to deepen and others to join the UAE in having relations with Israel – a partnership that includes military and intelligence ties.

Why is gaming becoming so expensive? The answer is found in AI

When the PlayStation 5 launched almost five and a half years ago, it was listed at £449 in the UK. If you were to buy one at the recommended retail price today, it would be £569.99, or £789.99 for the updated Pro model. Sony has just raised the price of its console by another £90, the latest in a series of hikes. This is unprecedented: consoles have always decreased in price over time (until they become retro collectibles – the other day, I saw someone asking £200 for a SNES on Vinted). So, what’s going on?

Unfortunately, this is another case of artificial intelligence ruining things for everyone. AI data centres need lots and lots and lots of computing power to be able to present you with lies whenever you Google anything, and this has pushed up demand and pricing for RAM and storage. This isn’t the only reason prices are rising – the wars in Ukraine and Iran have caused global economic disruption, and rampant inflation has eaten into many companies’ bottom line. But AI is the cause that’s easiest to get angry about, because it doesn’t need to be this way.

As my former Kotaku colleague Chris Person memorably puts it (via Aftermath): “I’m tired of these useless jackasses making the computer expensive.” PC gamers have been hit hardest of all by recent tech industry insanity, as Nvidia suddenly became the most valuable company in the world off the back of AI invest-

ment (and, previously, crypto miners). In October, its market cap hit £5tn(!), while its top-range graphics cards now cost more than £1,000. Shareholders might be celebrating, but customers, who want to buy components for their computers in order to play video games, are getting shafted.

As Sony’s price rises prove, you don’t have to be a PC gamer to be affected. Valve has run out of Steam Decks and is struggling to make more. There’s widespread speculation that its nifty little Steam Machine may not even launch, because the very idea of making an affordable home gaming computer is now laughable. Nintendo is making fewer Switch 2 consoles, and has just raised the price of physical games by \$10 in the US.

It’s not entirely fair to rag on Sony – this price rise is pretty much in line with general inflation in the past six years. But there has been an almost 30% rise in the cost of living in just over half a decade – and the AI bubble is helping fuel it. No single person or company can control global macropolitics, but it is undeniably true that a small number of extremely wealthy people are making a fortune by forcing technology that we don’t want into everything, while that which we do want is getting prohibitively expensive as a result. We are paying more for a PlayStation so that idiots can use ChatGPT to mislead people on dating apps.

These people do not love the computer, Person notes. “I



grew up making computers,” he writes in his piece for Aftermath. “I enjoy jailbreaking closed hardware that would otherwise become e-waste, like robot vacuums and Amazon devices, and giving them a second life as something ethical ... the rabid adherents of AI do not love computers; maybe they never did. They love money and having a mistake-prone LLM do their work for them.”

This isn’t about Sony’s greed. It’s an indication of the rot at

the heart of big tech – a closed economic system predicated on making things worse for most of us, so that a very few people can make a lot of money.

What to play

A palate cleanser for you after my rant: Hozy is a soothing game about cleaning up, renovating and decorating a series of rooms. Think Unpacking, but with much prettier lighting effects and a better furniture catalogue. You begin each scenario by sweeping up trash

and pulling up floorboards, and end by turning on the radio that you have placed on a cute table in a freshly painted nook. Do not expect the narrative punch of Unpacking – despite titbits of story context, it’s not clear why everyone in this town has let their house get into such a state – but if you enjoy arranging things, you’ll get a kick out of this. Right after I finished it, I downloaded Furnish Master, because Steam has a sale on boring games about playing

with houses. I’m all about it.

What to read “As a parent, like myself, I wondered where you stand on Roblox. Do you think it offers something positive for young gamers? A never-ending world of possibility and freedom? A good place to hang out online with friends? I feel an inherent negativity towards it, [largely] from People Make Games’s coverage of the exploitative environment for creators. Beyond this, I worry about who can talk to whom on-

line, as well as a general view that the ‘experiences’ of Roblox are akin to virtual junk food. Am I being too narrow-minded, though?” I recently wrote a column about whether online video games should be included in child social media bans, and Roblox comes up a lot in that conversation. (Roblox, for those blessed enough to be unfamiliar with it, is the most popular gaming platform in the world among children, and it offers players the tools to create and share whatever gaming experiences they want.) It keeps making headlines because of the reams of inappropriate, gross and even dangerous content that kids can access with minimal effort, and because of significant safety concerns. (Roblox has recently beefed up its child safety features in response.)

Millions of young people do have a lot of fun with Roblox, and some even get started with game development tools through this game. Clearly it does offer something positive. That said: I truly dislike Roblox, and I don’t let my kids play it. Not just because it’s impossible to ensure safe and appropriate content for kids on a platform where millions of people can make whatever they want, and not just because of safety concerns about talking to online strangers. I also think it’s bad. It looks bad, it’s infuriating to play, it uses exploitative engagement tricks. My feeling is that there are hundreds of actually good games that kids can play instead.

How games capture the awe and terror of cosmic isolation

Last week’s launch of the Artemis II space mission was a stunning spectacle, the 17-storey-high rockets erupting into cacophonous life before wrenching the craft through the Earth’s atmosphere. But the images that have come since hold just as much impact: the tiny Orion craft and its four-person crew drifting silently through space, further and further from home.

In his autobiography, the Apollo astronaut Michael Collins described this feeling perfectly. Left in the command module as Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin touched down on the lunar surface, he wrote: “I am alone now, truly alone, and absolutely isolated from any known life. I am it. If a count were taken, the score would be three billion plus two over on the other side of the moon, and one plus God knows what on this side.”

Although most science-fiction video games are set in distant galaxies or far-off futures where space travel has become routine, a few have attempted to explore this sense of solitude and vulnerability. As a Nasa-obsessed child in the 1980s, I loved the classic space trading game Elite, which rendered an entire lonely universe in monochrome vector visuals. I would play for hours, navigating between silent space stations in a small, single-seater craft, watching the stars pass by through the windows, planets rotating in the darkness far away.

More recently, the original version of space adventure No Man’s Sky, released in 2016, let you explore weird planets all alone – though these desolate places could be deadly, with acid for air or no resources for fuel, so every trip had around it the ominous shadow of death. The game was later patched to be more forgiving, but that sense of deadly peril made those quiet moments of arrival all the more enticing and emotional. Similarly, the surreal, minimalist planetary exploration game Exo One has you piloting a tiny alien craft over weird psychedelic landscapes, surfing thermal updrafts and swooping down impossible mountainsides. When I asked on BlueSky for people’s memories of space games that evoked this sense of beauty, loneliness and mortal danger, game developer Henry Driver wrote of Exo One: “I included it in the programme for a games festival I ran last year, and it captivated audiences like nothing else.” Many other familiar titles came up on that thread. The wonderful puzzle adventure Outer Wilds thrusts players into a time loop in a doomed planetary system, living out the same lonely 22 minutes over and over, while searching for a means of escape. Its worlds are cru-

el but beautiful, and all the while the clock ticks down to an apocalyptic supernova. Observation and Tacoma set you down in crippled space stations where you must piece together the events that led to disaster. Other games writers and designers, meanwhile, recalled feelings of solitude, awe and fear in titles such as Alien: Isolation, Freelancer, Homeworld and Out There. All of these capture the minimalist elements of space travel – often just isolated noises and details. Games industry adviser Tracey McGarrigan wrote of the Atari 2600 game Solaris: “The sounds of your ship’s engines ... the scrolling fuchsia corridors ...”

We’ll never fully understand what the crew of the Orion felt in those 40 minutes when they disappeared behind the moon, out of contact with mission control and utterly alone apart from each other. But games have, throughout their history, sought at least to simulate the feeling – to give us a taste of facing the black abyss, protected only by a thin layer of metal and a few tanks of oxygen. There is something in us that needs to know what it is like to loiter at the very edge of existence. That may be through extreme sports, or theme park thrill rides ... or through the generated galaxies of thoughtful



space games, the ones that concentrate not on generational starships or laser wars, but on small crews in tiny pods, the weight of the universe stacked against them in the dark.

What to play If you’re a veteran of the classic turn-based strategy sim XCOM, then saddle up: you’re needed back on the extraterrestrial battlefields. Xenonauts 2 is the sequel to Goldhawk Interactive’s well-received tribute to the XCOM series, once again putting you in charge of Earth’s defences as humanity squares up against alien invaders. You manage secret bases, develop technologies and then direct your troops to face alien monsters. The graphics are incredibly neat and evocative, and the complex layers of strategy and action make for a ruthlessly immersive challenge. I may be caught up in this desperate cause for many weeks.

What to read

Indie horror games based on the creepypasta phenomenon of the Backrooms have been in vogue for a couple of years via titles such as Exit 8 and The Complex: Found Footage. This recent MIT feature uses these

games to analyse the concept of institutional gothic – a sort of modern take on Victorian horror set in office blocks and shopping malls. Fascinating stuff.

Despite a tsunami of poor reviews, the Super Mario Galaxy movie made \$372.5m in its opening weekend. How did an animated sequel with a Metacritic score of 36 perform so well? “Family movie-going is leading the industry now,” box-office watcher David A Gross told Variety.

As an apologetic Sega fan, I was interested to read that the creator of Alone in the Dark is crowdfunding a new Mega Drive game. Frédéric Raynal developed the brick-breaking game PopCorn in 1988, and his re-booted version will come with a dedicated controller. The Kickstarter for the game is halfway to its target. This week’s question comes from Carl via email:

“Having just read and enjoyed Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, I wondered if there are any direct novelisations of video games – and if so, which should I read?”

Yes, there have been lots of video

game novelisations over the years – indeed, a lot of 1980s games such as Elite and Lords of Midnight were packaged with novellas that set the scene in an era before cinematic cutscenes. However, like film tie-ins they’re rather hit and miss. My favourite is very difficult to get hold of now: Ico: Castle in the Mist is based on the beautiful PlayStation game, written by Japanese author Miyuki Miyabe and translated into English in 2011. Otherwise, the Halo novels, especially Halo: The Fall of Reach by Eric Nylund, provide pretty good sci-fi fare, while SD Perry’s Resident Evil novels expand on the first games in the series, as well as exploring new stories (but are now considered non-canon, if that matters). If you enjoyed the classic dystopian adventure Bioshock, then John Shirley’s prequel novel Bioshock: Rapture is an intriguing read. Finally, lots of people enjoyed the Metal Gear Solid novels written by Raymond Benson, who also penned a series of James Bond stories. By the way, I would absolutely love to write a Last of Us novel if anyone at Naughty Dog is reading?

Mamitha Baiju, who plays Jana Nayagan, is upset that the Vijay movie is being distributed illegally



Mumbai: The industry was rocked when Vijay’s last movie as an actor, Jana Nayagan, was pirated online before it opened in theaters. In response, the producers acknowledged that they have filed a lawsuit against the offending parties and cautioned viewers not to download or distribute the movie via unapproved channels. The movie’s star, Mamitha Baiju, has responded to the leak by advising viewers to hold off until the theatrical premiere. (See also: Pooja Hegde claims the team is “disheartened” by the Jana Nayagan leak: “Don’t we deserve to celebrate Vijay sir’s last film?”) “Dear audience, a film comes to life through the hardwork, passion,

and commitment of so many people who give their best every single day,” Mamitha stated on her Instagram Stories. The fact that it is being distributed illegally is really disheartening. Certain moments are meant to be shared on a large screen, exactly as they were designed to be. “Let’s wait and enjoy it in the proper way when it officially releases,” she continued. Don’t encourage piracy, please. It’s the only way we can protect movies and all those who support them. Earlier, Pooja Hegde condemned the leak of the film. She wrote, “To see it being leaked and shared illegally is tough—not because of numbers, but because it takes away the respect that

every artist and technician on the film deserves. Plus, don’t we all deserve to gather together to celebrate and watch Vijay sir’s last film, one last time, on the big screen in the right way? So let’s watch it the right way. Let’s wait. It will be out in due time. Let’s not encourage piracy. That’s how cinema and art will survive. Love, Art. Artists. Technicians.”The makers’ legal team has issued a legal notice after the film was leaked online. A notice issued on behalf of KVN Productions, the film’s producer, revealed that they are mulling legal action. The legal notice read, “I am the legal counsel for KVN Productions LLP and issue this Public Notice under the instructions of my client. My client is the Producer of the film Jana Nayagan starring Vijay, directed by H. Vinoth and with music composed by Anirudh Ravichander. The film has been produced by investing several hundred crores and the film carries enormous theatrical, satellite, OTT and commercial value.” Directed by H. Vinoth and backed by KVN Productions, Jana Nayagan is a political drama that marks Vijay’s final on-screen appearance before his full-fledged entry into politics with his party, TVK. The film features an ensemble cast including Pooja Hegde, Bobby Deol, Prakash Raj, Mamitha Baiju, Gautham Vasudev Menon, Priyamani, and Narain in pivotal roles. It marks Vijay’s 69th outing as a lead actor, with music composed by Anirudh Ravichander.

What guests bring to Salman Khan and Shah Rukh Khan’s birthday celebrations is revealed by Ektaa Kapoor

Mumbai: Bollywood celebrities frequently host extravagant birthday celebrations that become star-studded events attended by numerous colleagues in the business. Filmmaker Ektaa Kapoor recently spoke with MK Talks on what people typically bring to the birthday celebrations of celebrities like Salman Khan and Shah Rukh Khan. “People don’t usually carry gifts to birthdays, especially for big names like Salman or Shah Rukh Khan,” Ektaa stated in response to a question on what people bring as gifts for celebrities like Salman Khan and Shah Rukh Khan. On their birthdays, what would you even bring? Actually, I don’t go to many birth-

day celebrations. I travel to Tirupati on my own birthday without inviting anyone. When you ask what individuals often gift on a significant other’s birthday, I’ve found that most people just give blessings. She added, “This impression about the film industry, that expensive gifts are exchanged, people drink heavily, and party all the time, is not true. In fact, you won’t find a more boring industry than this. The film industry is the most boring industry.” She further explained that everyone sleeps by 8 pm, wakes up early, and eats less food to focus on work and health. She added that the industry is not as glamorous or wild as people imag-

ine. Last year, when Shah Rukh Khan celebrated his 60th birthday, the actor hosted a star-studded party attended by celebrities including Karan Johar, Farah Khan, and Rani Mukerji. Several videos and photos from the event surfaced online. Ektaa is currently busy promoting her upcoming production, Bhooth Bangla. Helmed by Priyadarshan, the film stars Akshay Kumar, Paresh Rawal, Rajpal Yadav, Wamiqa Gabbi, and Tabu in key roles, among others. The trailer of the horror-comedy brought back nostalgia as Akshay and Rajpal recreated some of their iconic dialogues in the film. However, fans were not entirely pleased with it.

Ranveer Singh’s flick slows down but surpasses Rs 1055 crore

Day 23 box office receipts for Dhurandhar 2



Mumbai: Ranveer Singh starred in Aditya Dhar’s spy action thriller, which had an incredible opening three weeks at the box office and became the first Bollywood movie to earn more than ₹1000 crore in India. However, with the release of new movies, the movie appears to be slowing down at the box office in its fourth week. (See also: Mrunal Thakur claims that Ranveer Singh is her lucky charm and the reason she is in the movie business.)Day 23 box office receipts for Dhurandhar 2: Ranveer Singh plays Jaskirat Singh Rangı in Aditya Dhar’s movie.Day 23 box office receipts for Dhurandhar 2: Ranveer Singh plays Jaskirat Singh Rangı in Aditya Dhar’s movie. Dhurandhar The Revenge has made ₹6.70 crore on its 23rd day of release, according to the most recent Sacnilk data. The action-drama Dacoit, starring Adivi Sesh and

Mrunal Thakur, and the Tamil sci-fi romance Love Insurance Company (LIK), starring Pradeep Ranganathan, are new releases, making it the lowest single-day collection of the movie to date. This is especially true on a Friday.In its first week of release, Dhurandhar 2 brought in ₹674.17 crore. The movie made ₹263.65 crore in its second week of release. The movie made ₹110.60 crore by the conclusion of its third week.

As of day 23, the film’s total gross and net collections in India are ₹1,262.06 crore and ₹1,055.12 crore, respectively. A day ago, director Sandeep Reddy Vanga took to social media to share his review of the film and slam claims about it being propaganda. He also warned Aditya and Ranveer against the evil eye. Dhurnadhar 2 had paid premieres on March 18 and opened in theaters on March 19 in Hindi and all other South Indian language.

es. In the first movie, Ranveer Singh played an Indian spy who climbs the ranks of Pakistan’s underworld while infiltrating gangs in Lyari to destroy a terror network that targets India. It focused on clandestine intelligence operations against the backdrop of terror and geopolitical events such as the 26/11 Mumbai assaults, the 2001 Parliament Attack, and the hijacking of the Kandahar airliner. His training to become Hamza Ali Mazari was depicted in the sequel. Additionally, it advances the plot by depicting him seizing control of Lyari’s power structure while attempting to destroy a terror network in Pakistan that poses a threat to India. Arjun Rampal and Ranveer engaged in a fierce confrontation in the movie as well. Sanjay Dutt, Danish Pandor, Sara Arjun, R Madhavan, and Rakesh Bedi are also featured in Dhurandhar 2.

Nora Fatehi claims that her statement that feminism up our society

Mumbai: Nora Fatehi is admitting that she has gotten enough attention for her remarks about feminism and how it has destroyed society. In a recent discussion with Lilly Singh on her podcast, the actor provided clarification on the subject of feminism. According to Nora, her remarks were exaggerated and taken out of context. “I had a podcast last year where we spoke about feminism, and then certain small clips come out on reels and TikTok, and they get blown up,” Nora stated during the conversation. People fail to consider the context. What I support is that I completely oppose radicalism. I come from a single parent, and I miss that nuclear family. I am aware of the value of having two parents—a mother and a father, or two mothers or two fathers—as well as the stability, love, care, and discipline that come with having two parents in a nuclear family. I support all of that. She continued that she would look at it from the perspective of a child and added, “I would have loved to be in a home with two parents because, eventually, that emotional baggage can spill over into adulthood. I would hate for us to live in a world where people don’t care about nuclear families anymore... I want us to advocate for balance,

get your money, fulfil your dreams, and work hard. But at the same time, let’s create an environment where men are accountable, where they should step up and be responsible. Why can’t we be independent, strong and still need each other? Why can’t we share and create balance? We have created this environment that we are so independent we don’t need you. Why can’t we be independent, strong and still need you? Why can’t you step up and we share, and we balance.” Nora previously discussed feminism when she appeared on the podcast of Ranveer Allahbadia. “This notion that I don’t require anyone.” feminism. I don’t think this s***. Indeed, I believe that feminism really f*****s up our culture,” she stated. Many people on the internet responded to her remarks in different ways. With the release of her new song, Sarke Chunar Teri Sarke, from the Kannada pan-Indian movie KD: The Devil, Nora recently made headlines. She and Sanjay Dutt appeared in the song, which drew criticism for its suggestive dancing and lyrics. After a few days, it was removed, and Nora even received a summons from the National Commission for Women.

Regarding her return to Bollywood, Raima Sen said, “I can’t be too picky about roles here”



Mumbai: Actor Raima Sen discusses her return to the Hindi film industry with Family Business and the pressure of being the daughter of Moon Moon Sen and Bharat Dev Varma. The enthusiasm is evident as Raima Sen returns to

the Bollywood screen. The actor is excited for her upcoming project after her last Hindi film, Mai (2022), was released four years ago. She says openly, “It’s always great to be back in the Hindi industry, but I must admit ab ki thoda time laga.” Raima Sen’s career path has been lengthy; she is currently commemorating 26 years since her Godmother debut while getting ready for Hansal Mehta’s Family Business, which is scheduled for later this year. “It has been decades,” she recalls, recalling her break. I can still clearly recall receiving the offer when Vinay Shukla had traveled down to Kolkata and I was seventeen years old. “Do this film, [you] fit the bill,” he remarked during screen testing. “I was terrified to perform with actors like Shabana Azmi while I was learning, but I promised myself to

give it a shot every day. “I won’t join movies if you can’t manage; I’ll do something else,” she remembers. Raima says her parents, Moon Moon Sen and Bharat Dev Varma, ensured she and her sister, (actor-Riya Sen) find their way, “My mum, in fact my parents, never asked the makers to cast us as sisters in either industries. In fact they were, ‘You want to join movies, take this journey alone, please.’ Also they never told us what to do, never came on the sets with us, and so as teenagers, whatever mistakes we made our parents were, ‘It’s your mistake.’ And that made us better, I feel, as artists, as we learned all along.” She smiles, adding, “Good point I am still working, so still have time, all thanks to my grandma’s genes that we still look like we can run around trees (laughs).”

Actor Vivek Sinha of Dhurandhar says he has run out of money from the Aditya Dhar movie



Mumbai: Actor Vivek Sinha clarified that he did not receive ₹80 lakh or ₹1 crore as rumored on social media regarding his earnings from Dhurandhar.At the box office, Dhurandhar The Revenge has been setting records and having an incredible run. The audience has shown a great deal of affection for every character in the movie. Actor Vivek Sinha, who appeared in the movie as well, recently refuted reports that he received ₹1 crore for it. Vivek, who plays terrorist Zahoar Mistry, one of the hijackers in the 1999 IC 814 Kandahar hijack, responded to the rumors that he received payment for his part in Aditya Dhar’s movie. “Kuch logon ne social media pe ek format banaya hai jismein likha hai ki Dhurandhar ke actors ko kitna paisa mila,” he said in a video he posted on Instagram to thank fans for their love. Usmein mera naam bhi hai aur kuch logon ne likha hai mujhe ₹80 lakh milen hai

aur kuch ne likha hai mujhe ₹1 crore mila hain. Itna paisa nahi mila hai kasam se” (On social media, some users have created a chart that displays the actors’ salaries from Dhurandhar). My name is on it too, and some people have written that I got ₹80 lakh, while others have said I got ₹1 crore. I swear, I did not get that much money). ”Jabse yeh daala hai, kasam se mere pass itne screenshots aayen hue hai ki sir baccha beemar hai, mere chot lagi hai, mere future ke liye paisa de do,” he continued, urging people not to disseminate such information. Lekin mere pass ho toh, bhai paisa de toh dun main. Just pass khudh paisa nahi hai. Mujhe Dhurandhar se paisa mila, accha paisa mila, jo respectable amount hai vo mila. “Lekin utna paisa nahi mila” (I swear, ever since I tweeted this, I’ve received a ton of screenshots and messages stating things like “Sir, my child is sick,” “I’m injured,” and “Please give me money

for my future.” ’ Brother, I would give money if I had it, but only if I actually had it. I myself don’t have money right now. I did get paid for Dhurandhar, and it was a decent, respectable amount. But it wasn’t that much money). ”Jo paisa mila tha, khatam ho chuka hai,” he continued. Mumbai main rehna hoon, bahut kharche hain Mumbai ke. Saara khatam ho chuka hai Dhurandhar waala, usmein paisa milega toh koshish karunga, ab naye image ko aayegi. “Aur kasam se bata raha hoon, so achha paisa hoga toh mujhe help karne main koi dikkat nahi hai.” Mumbai, where I reside, is quite costly. I no longer have any of the money I made from Dhurandhar. I’ll try when I receive another movie and make money from it. And I swear, if I have good money, I have no problem helping people). He further requested fans to keep praying for him to earn more so that he can help others. Before rising to fame with Dhurandhar, Vivek worked in popular series such as Delhi Crime Season 3 and Tandav, as well as films like Sirk Ek Bandaa Kaafi Hai. Helmed by Aditya Dhar, Dhurandhar is a duology starring Ranveer Singh, Arjun Rampal, Akshaye Khanan, Sanjay Dutt, and R Madhavan in key roles. The first part, released in December 2025, earned over ₹300 crore worldwide at the box office and set high expectations for the sequel. Dhurandhar The Revenge, released in March, lived up to expectations and has so far collected ₹1,671 crore gross worldwide and ₹1,055 crore net at the domestic box office.

Cannes, quitting his job, and taking a charter flight with Big B Vijay Varma’s career full of unexpected turns

Mumbai: From traveling to Cannes with “Monsoon Shootout” to sharing a charter plane with Amitabh Bachchan after riding a rickshaw to the private terminal, actor Vijay Varma claims that his career has been a series of unexpected extremes with protracted periods of inactivity that only came to an end when “Gully Boy” finally opened all the doors. Varma claimed that his own career path in show business has been anything but straightforward, much like his character Brij Bhatti from the new series “Matka King,” a man who rides the highs and lows of fortune. Cannes was the first festival I attended with my film “Monsoon Shootout” before it was officially released. This was the biggest dhamaka I could have done, yet I was idle for years afterward. In an interview with PTI, the actor, who graduated from the Film and

Television Institute of India and moved to Mumbai in the early 2000s, said, “That was also a good surprise.” For his 2016 film “Pink”, in which he played a negative role, Varma travelled to Delhi in a private charter with co-star Amitabh Bachchan for a special screening with then-President Pranab Mukherjee, he recalled. “I remember I took a rickshaw from home to the private terminal. Then I took a private charter with Mr. Bachchan and went there. After finishing that, I came back from the jet, took a rickshaw and came back home. It was a lovely journey,” he said. After “Pink”, Varma went on to appear in a couple of films Tigmanshu Dhulia’s “Raag Desh”, Nandita Das’s “Man-to”, and Telugu title “Middle Class Abbayi”, co-starring Nani and Sai Pallavi.“ then again there was a lull until

‘Gully Boy’ happened in my life, which was a significant moment. The door suddenly started opening for me,” he added.“Gully Boy”, Zoya Akhtar’s 2019 musical drama starring Ranveer Singh and Alia Bhatt, turned out to be a gamechanger for Varma, who earned praise from the critics for his portrayal of Moeen Arif, a street thief who is a close friend of Singh’s budding rapper Murad. “First time I heard paps call out my name, my character’s name, that’s when I felt what a successful film does to you. It does not make the career of just one person but everyone’s career. Both me and Siddhant Chaturvedi benefited so much from ‘Gully Boy’. So, that was a surprise. Since then, I’ve been presenting three or four projects a year,” Varma said.Since “Gully Boy”, Varma has not looked back, delivering a string of varied

performances a supporting turn in Mira Nair’s “A Suitable Boy”, a dual role in “Mirzapur”, an alcoholic and abusive husband opposite Bhatt in “Darlings”, a smart and charming cop in “Jaane Jaan”, a serial killer in “Dahaad”, a pilot of a hijacked plane in “IC 814”, and a romantic lead in “Gustaakh Ishq”. Varma claimed that avoiding being “caged” into particular roles has been his ongoing struggle.It was difficult to break out and do anything that wasn’t a minor part or a friend who wasn’t giving the hero a high five, from having no employment to playing smaller roles and then being confined to them. They then presented me with a major villain and firmly placed me in that category.“I’m bigger than this, I can do more, break out of that and do something else,” I think to myself.

Purchases two opulent apartments in Worli, Mumbai, with parents for about Rs.60 crore

Mumbai: According to property registration documents, playback singer Shreya Ghoshal, along with her father Biswajit Ghoshal and mother Shamishtha Ghoshal, paid almost ₹60 crore for two luxurious apartments in Worli, Mumbai, as part of the Godrej Trilogy project, which Godrej Properties is developing. According to records, the listed real estate developer Godrej Properties is building a project called Godrej Trilogy, which includes both apartments.The first apartment has a carpet area of 2,430.06 square feet (225.76 square meters), a total size of 2,750.28 square feet.

“Scorching heat, yet enthusiasm” PM Modi praises the “West Bengal mood” while sharing a video of rally turnout

New Delhi, Apr 11: The Prime Minister wrote about the enthusiasm and attendance at his rally, which took place in West Bengal with the intense heat, in a video posted on X.Before attending a sizable public event in Purba Bardhaman on Saturday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi talked about his own experience. He claimed that the passion of West Bengalis represents the state’s overall sentiment. The Prime Minister spoke on the enthusiasm and attendance at his event, which was held in the sweltering heat, in a post posted on X.It’s midday, right before my huge rally in Purba Bardhaman, which just ended. intense heat. However, West Bengal’s zeal is present throughout the entire state,” PM Modi wrote.Before speaking at the public gathering, the prime minister can be seen talking with fans in a video that was included with the article. He describes the tremendous reception he received when he arrived. ”My dear friends,

you can see behind me what the mood of Bengal is. It’s only 11:00-11:30, and this is my first meeting of the day. Thousands of people, youth, mothers, and sisters are here just at the helipad. This is an amazing scene. Well, people are waiting for me at the public meeting, so I must go. Thank you,” PM Modi said in the video. The remarks come as the Bharatiya Janata Party continues to intensify its campaign in West Bengal ahead of the upcoming Assembly elections, with multiple high-energy rallies being addressed by senior party leaders. While addressing a massive rally here, the PM announced that a BJP-led government would release a “white paper” to provide a comprehensive accounting of alleged corruption under the 15-year TMC regime. PM Modi took direct aim at TMC’s leadership, alleging systemic loot involving ministers and local MLAs.“BJP will bring a white paper to ensure a legal accounting of corruption involving TMC’s



MLAs, ministers, and syndicates. It will present a full account of the government’s 15 years. Under a BJP government, strict action will be taken to stop every such crime,” said PM Modi.In an effort to consolidate the crucial women’s vote—a demographic that has traditionally supported Mamata Banerjee—the Prime Minister made a major financial pledge.“Seeing Bengal’s growing support for BJP, TMC is in panic and is misleading people with lies. You can be certain that BJP will shut down their shop of corruption. I have especially

come to assure all the sisters and daughters of Bengal that BJP has announced ₹3,000 per month for women,” PM Modi said. The Prime Minister’s visit coincides with West Bengal getting ready for important elections on April 23 and 29, with the results scheduled for May 4. The 2021 contest, in which the TMC won a resounding 213 seats, is followed by the next elections. But the current high-stakes conflict has been made possible by the BJP’s rise from a minor player to 77 seats in the previous cycle.

Spurs fall into the bottom three while West Ham defeats Wolves to escape the relegation zone



London: With a 4-0 victory over Wolves on Friday, West Ham moved out of the Premier League relegation zone and dropped Tottenham into the bottom three. At the London Stadium, Konstantinos Mavropanos’ header in the first half gave Nuno Espirito Santo’s team the lead. West Ham, who began the game in the relegation zone, pulled two points ahead of third-bottom Tottenham thanks to two goals from Valentin Castellanos in the second half. In an ironic turn of events, Mavropanos’ second goal in the final moments of the match sent his former Arsenal defender’s fierce rivals closer to the drop. Tottenham hasn’t been in the bottom three at the end of a Premier League matchday since their 1-0 loss to Manchester United in August 2015.If Tottenham wins at Sunderland on Sunday in Roberto De Zerbi’s debut game in charge, they can escape the relegation zone once more.The north Londoners have seven games left to avoid dropping to the second division for the first time since 1977–1978. West Ham recovered with a crucial win in their own struggle for sur-

vival after losing to Leeds on penalties in the FA Cup quarterfinals last weekend.This kind of event is something that all of us, especially our supporters, deserve. Nuno remarked, “London Stadium was fantastic today, bouncing with energy.”It was difficult in the first half. The game didn’t flow, and we couldn’t find any spots. After the break, we made significant progress.We demonstrated to ourselves that we can’t give up by the way we accomplished it. From the start, that was the spirit of teamwork. ”We are in the fight. I realise we have a lot of work to do yet. We made a big step today, important for us, but nothing has changed.”Bottom of the table Wolves are 15 points from safety and, with only six matches left, they are destined for relegation to the Championship. Wolves looked rusty in their first game for 25 days due to the international break and their exit from the FA Cup.El Hadji Malick Diouf’s poor pass gave Adam Armstrong a sight of goal, but the Wolves striker couldn’t keep his effort on target.Armstrong

wasted a better chance moments later when his close-range header was saved by Mads Hermansen.West Ham took advantage of those escapes to steal the lead in the 42nd minute. Replays showed West Ham were lucky to be awarded a corner when the final touch came off Jarrod Bowen and the England forward quickly rubbed salt into Wolves’ wound.When Bowen’s corner was headed back to the forward, he produced a far better cross with his second attempt and Mavropanos rose to thump his header past Wolves keeper Jose Sa.Bowen hit the post with a dipping curler early in the second half and Castellanos delivered the knockout blow in the 66th minute.Playing a one-two with Pablo, the Argentine striker surged through the Wolves defence but his tame shot should have been saved by Sa before it trickled over the line.Castellanos struck again two minutes later with a deflected shot that squirmed past the hapless Sa.Mavropanos volleyed home at the far post from an 83rd minute corner to compound Wolves’ misery.

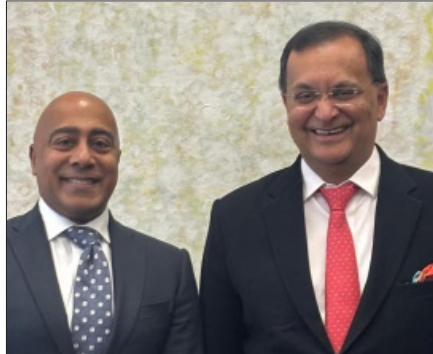
SC summons UP police for failing to file the proper charges in the child rape case

New Delhi,: Senior Uttar Pradesh police officers were called by the Supreme Court on Friday for their alleged “insensitive” behavior in failing to file the proper charges regarding the alleged rape and murder of a four-year-old girl and for reportedly intimidating the parents for filing a complaint. ”The facts and circumstances of the case prick the conscience of the court,” stated a bench led by Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant. We firmly believe that an impartial agency or special investigation team (SIT) must conduct a time-bound, court-monitored probe.The event in this case happened on March 16 in Nandgram, Ghaziabad, when the petitioner father came home from work and the girl was taken outside by his neighbor, who is designated as the accused, under the guise of buying her a chocolate. The petitioner went in search of her after she failed to return home and noticed the neighbor emerging from a neighboring field. The toddler was discovered laying in a pool of blood in the field. She was taken to two nearby private hospitals who refused to admit her. A district hospital in Ghaziabad conducted the post-mortem and a case of murder and destruction of evidence under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita 2023 (BNS) was registered at Nandgram police station.



As bilateral ties grow, an Indian envoy meets with a Canadian minister

New Delhi, Apr 11: India and Canada hope to sustain the “positive momentum” in their relationship while carrying on with the “close engagement” that has surfaced in recent months.On Friday, Canada’s Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, Arun Thangaraj, met with India’s High Commissioner to Ottawa, Dinesh Patnaik, who confirmed the present status of bilateral relations.Similar to the Foreign Secretary of India’s Ministry of External Affairs, Thangaraj was recently named as the top official in Global Affairs Canada, serving as the nation’s foreign minister. David Morrison, the Prime Minister’s Senior Diplomatic and International Affairs Advisor, was replaced by Thangaraj. In a statement after the meeting, India’s High Commission in Ottawa said they met to “review the full spectrum of India–Canada relations” and “discussed progress on key initiatives and outcomes announced during Prime Minister (Mark) Carney’s recent visit to India, including strengthening economic cooperation, deepening people-to-people ties, and enhancing collaboration in priority sectors.” “Both sides agreed to maintain the positive momentum and continue close engagement,”



it added.Carney’s visit to India culminated with his bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, which resulted in several outcomes including the launch of negotiations towards a comprehensive economic partnership agreement or CEPA between the two countries. Those negotiations are in progress as the two sides attempt to complete the process by the end of the year, as envisaged by the two PMs. Trade ties are expected to get a further boost as Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal visits Canada next month, and he will bring along a large business delegation.

During the IPL 2026 match against SRH, Punjab Kings players wear black armbands in remembrance of the victims of the Vrindavan tragedy

New Delhi: In remembrance of those impacted by the sad boat tragedy in Vrindavan, the Punjab Kings (PBKS) players wore black armbands during their Saturday game against Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) at the New International Cricket Stadium. During this trying period, the franchise showed support for the community and the bereaved family. “Standing in solidarity with the families affected by the tragic incident in Vrindavan,” the franchise wrote on X. PBKS had posted “Vrindavan Boat Tragedy” on the platform before to the start of the match. I am deeply saddened by the terrible accident. We send our deepest sympathies to the victims’ families. I hope their souls are at peace. Speaking about the game, SRH got off to a scorching start after being asked to bat first,

taking just two wickets in the first ten overs to establish a dominant position. Abhishek Sharma and Travis Head, the opening duo, dismantled the bowling attack right away by setting the tone with aggressive intent. The main aggressor was Abhishek, who quickly reached a half-century and put Punjab’s bowlers under constant pressure by hitting boundaries and sixes at ease. As SRH raced past milestones at a breakneck speed, Head offered solid support, seizing any opportunity. The carnage in the powerplay saw SRH breach the 100-run mark in record time, with the duo showing exceptional power-hitting and clean striking. Even when Punjab tried to vary pace and lengths, the momentum barely shifted, as both openers kept finding boundaries across the ground.However, Punjab Kings finally found a



breakthrough through Shank Singh, who turned the innings around with a sensational over. He removed Head first, who mis-cued a shot straight to long-on, before striking again in the same over to dismiss the in-form Abhishek for a sensational 74 off just 28 balls. His double strike

briefly halted SRH’s charge and brought Punjab back into the contest. Despite the wickets, SRH reached 132/2 at the halfway mark in the innings, with Ishan Kishan and Heinrich Klaasen at the crease, looking to rebuild and carry forward the momentum after the explosive start.

The Indian women’s team is focused on the FIFA series and the future



Nairobi: The Indian women’s national football team will start a new chapter with new-found vigor at the FIFA Series 2026 Kenya, 32 days after their AFC Women’s Asian Cup campaign came to an agonizing end. On Saturday, the Blue Tigresses will play their first game at Nairobi, Kenya’s Nyayo National Stadium against the hosts. According to a press release from the AIFF Media, the players’ main motivation ahead of the four-team friendly tournament is their awareness that the end of one chapter is the beginning of the next, even though their disappointment at missing out on the knockout stage hasn’t completely subsided yet. ”The idea is to start building for the

future already,” emphasized Crispin Chettri, who is once again in charge as the Blue Tigresses’ head coach. For the upcoming World Cup qualifiers in 2031 and the AFC Women’s Asian Cup in 2029. We must start right now. Last year, Chettri helped India qualify for the Asian Cup and assisted Amelia Valverde in the championship match. ”I believe that everyone expected us to at least go from the group stage to the quarterfinals. “I think they are a little low right now because even the players had that expectation,” Chettri remarked.India has had two training sessions since arriving in Nairobi on April 7 and will have one more on Friday before the match against the home team.

international delgates commend India’s electoral process

New Delhi: After visiting polling places in Assam, Kerala, and Puducherry, international representatives from 22 nations have applauded the way elections are conducted in India, according to the Election Commission.The International Election Visitors’ Programme (IEVP) 2026 was attended by 38 delegates. On April 8 and 9, they traveled to the three areas to observe the scope and administration of the Assembly elections. The delegates looked over dispatch and distribution centers at the start of their visit. They saw how polling teams and supplies were transported with planned logistics and standard operating procedures.In order to comprehend election administration and security measures.

Zeel Desai and Sahaja Yamalapalli win easily as India ties Mongolia In the King Cup of Billie Jean

New Delhi: Zeel Desai defeated 15-year-old Anu-Vjin Gantor in straight sets during her Billie Jean King Cup debut, and Sahaja Yamalapalli followed suit, winning the Asia/Oceania Group I match against Mongolia without dropping a game on Friday. India had a dominant day at work. Before Sahaja Yamalapalli defeated 32-year-old Jargal Altansarnai by the same score in 42 minutes at DLTA Complex, Zeel easily defeated her opponent 6-0 6-0 in just 37 minutes. Since the unranked opposing players lacked the game to harm them, it was nothing more than a lighthearted hitting session for the home players. On Satur-



day, the competition’s closing day, India will play Korea in their final tournament match, and the hosts will probably maintain their spot in Group I.India’s prospects of placing in the top two were harmed with the loss against Thailand.

In the six-team competition, the top two teams advance to the playoffs, while the bottom two are demoted to Group II.Vishal Uppal, the captain of India, didn’t mind sending in Desai, giving her some match practice, given Gantor’s inex-

perience and the team’s one victory in the competition thus far. Clearly, the unranked Gantor is not yet ready to play at this level. She has a lot to learn but such defeats can be demoralising too. Putting an uncooked player at this level could only be because of lack of options. Gantor hardly won a point on her own. Only when Zeel made an unforced error, the Mongolian had a point to her name. The Mongolian teenager seemed to have no will to fight, having resigned herself instead. She could not return properly as the balls consistently flew outside the lines, reducing it to a drab affair.

A Delhi real estate company accused of collecting Rs.2,000 cr from 19,400 homebuyers is searched by the ED

New Delhi, Apr 11: The federal financial crimes investigative agency found ₹6.3 crore in cash during the searches, which were conducted on Friday at ten sites in Delhi and Gurugram connected to promoters and affiliated businesses of EIL.Five FIRs filed by the Economic Offences Wing (EOW), Delhi Police, against Earth Infrastructures Ltd., its directors, and associated entities under various sections of the Indian Penal Code for cheating, criminal breach of trust, and conspiracy are the basis for ED’s money laundering investigation against EIL and its group entities. Additionally, the promoters and directors of Earth Group are the target of a criminal complaint filed by the Serious Fraud Investigation Office (SFIO) under section 447 of the Companies Act. According to an ED probe, Earth Group promoted several

timepieces during the searches, which were conducted on Friday at ten sites in Delhi and Gurugram connected to promoters and affiliated businesses of EIL.Five FIRs filed by the Economic Offences Wing (EOW), Delhi Police, against Earth Infrastructures Ltd., its directors, and associated entities under various sections of the Indian Penal Code for cheating, criminal breach of trust, and conspiracy are the basis for ED’s money laundering investigation against EIL and its group entities. Additionally, the promoters and directors of Earth Group are the target of a criminal complaint filed by the Serious Fraud Investigation Office (SFIO) under section 447 of the Companies Act. According to an ED probe, Earth Group promoted several

real estate projects under the “Earth” name in Delhi-NCR, Gurugram, Greater Noida, and Lucknow through Earth Infrastructures Ltd. and its affiliated businesses. Earth Towne, Earth Sapphire Court, Earth Copia, Earth Techone, Earth Iconic, Earth Titanium, Earth Elacasa, Earth Gracia, and Earth Skygate are among the major projects, according to an officer who wished to remain anonymous.



Russia Friendlies Set To Shape Young Tigresses' Readiness For Upcoming U17 Women's Asian Cup

New Delhi: The Indian U17 women's national team will take a significant step in their preparations for the AFC U17 Women's Asian Cup China 2026 when they face Russia in a three-match friendly series at the Matsesta Football Centre in Sochi on April 11, 14 and 17. The Young Tigresses, who had been training in Bengaluru, arrived in Sochi on April 6. Having spent close to three months with the squad since joining in January, head coach Pamela Conti expressed satisfaction with the group's progress, particularly their approach to training and learning, according to a press release from the AIFF Media. "To be honest, I'm very happy with them," said the Italian. "It has been an incredible experience, especially because of their attitude. Even though they are still very young, as I always say, they have shown the best possible attitude to train and to learn. I am sure they have a very bright future ahead," she told AIFF.com. The upcoming matches against Russia are expected to provide a different kind of challenge, one that closely mirrors the physical demands India will face in the Asian Cup, particularly against a team like



Australia. "I've watched Russia, and we've done an analysis," Conti said. "They are a very physical team, which will help us a lot when we play against Australia. I think they will have some advantages, especially due to the climate and the pitch, which will probably be very wet. For us, it's about continuing to work and doing our best to get a good result, but also keeping an eye on what lies ahead. They are physically very strong, with tall, fast players, and they are technically good as well.

We need to find ways to press them high up the pitch, because if we give them too much space, they can hurt us a lot." India enters the series on the back of a positive outing in Yangon last month, where they secured two wins against Myanmar (2-0 and 3-2) in friendly games. The team then continued their camp in Bengaluru before departing for Sochi. The larger objective remains next month's AFC U17 Women's Asian Cup China 2026, where India have been drawn in a challenging Group C alongside

Australia, Japan, and Lebanon. "I think it's a very strong group, one that will make things very difficult for us," Conti said. "Japan and Australia are clearly superior teams. We have to be realistic about that. We will try to do our best and make things difficult for them throughout the 90 minutes in both matches. Lebanon is a team we can potentially beat, but it will still be complicated because these are international matches. We need to stay very focused and not be overconfident, especially against a team like Lebanon, because if you make a mistake, they can score." Conti stressed that the preparation phase is not just about results, but about understanding the broader context of development within Asian football. Comparing the women's football scenario in South America and Europe, the only two continents she coached in the past before taking up the Young Tigresses job, with Asia, she said, "In South America, teams are very technical and play more instinctively, like street football. In Europe, the game is much more organised. In Asia, I think some teams are still developing and need more time, especially in of development.

Virat Kohli Gifts Signed Cap To Vaibhav Sooryavanshi After Sensational IPL Blitz Kohli Gifts Cap After Sooryavanshi's Blitz

New Delhi: Vaibhav Sooryavanshi was overjoyed after Virat Kohli gifted him a signed cap following his match-winning knock in the Indian Premier League against Royal Challengers Bengaluru. Sooryavanshi powered Rajasthan Royals to a six-wicket win on April 10 at the Barsapara Stadium in Guwahati, smashing 78 off 26 balls with eight fours and seven sixes. After the match, the franchise shared a video showing the 15-year-old rising star beaming as he displayed the Royals cap signed by Kohli, which read, "Dear Vaibhav, Well Done." Sooryavanshi was also seen wearing the Orange Cap as he is currently the tournament's leading run-scorer. Sooryavanshi has, in the meantime, proved former India batter Robin Uthappa wrong with his stupendous performances. Earlier this year, Uthappa Had suggested Sooryavanshi Could



face second-season blues, saying bowlers would adjust to him and his output might dip compared to his record-breaking debut season, where he hit the fastest century by an Indian. However, after the youngster's latest performances, Uthappa admitted he was happy to be proven wrong, stating there are no second-season blues for him. He praised Sooryavanshi's improved preparation, said he looks ahead of bowlers, and called him a generational talent, while clarifying he never labelled his earlier per-

formances a fluke. "I am only SO HAPPY to be wrong about this. Second season blues are a reality in professional sport. It's a part and parcel of professional sport. I have absolutely no qualms in saying that he's not having second season blues at the moment and he's come to this season heaps better prepared than the last one," Uthappa wrote on X. The win against RCB meant that Royals stayed unbeaten in the competition with victories in all four of their matches and a net run rate of +2.055.

Sindhu Unpacks the Secret Behind Ayush Shetty's Historic Asia Championships Run



New Delhi: Ayush Shetty's run at the Badminton Asia Championships 2026 has caught the attention of PV Sindhu, who called the youngster a "generational talent" after his push into the final. The 20-year-old pulled off the biggest win of his career in Ningbo, coming from a game down to beat World No. 1 Kunlavut Vitidsarn 10-21, 21-19, 21-17 in the semi-final. After being outplayed in the first game, Shetty settled in, stayed patient, and found a way back into the contest before taking control in the decider. The result also carries historical weight. He is only the second

Indian after Dinesh Khanna in 1965 to reach the men's singles final at the event. He had already sealed a medal by making the semis, becoming the first Indian men's singles player since HS Prannoy in 2018 to do so. The last Indian medal at the championships came in 2023, when Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty won the men's doubles title. "I have consistently maintained that he is a generational talent. In terms of pure natural ability, he stands right up there with the very best young players I have come across," Sindhu said. "He has been training in my

group for the past three weeks along with coach Irwan, and that has only strengthened my belief. His reach, the weight on his smash, and the way he handles pressure in rallies really stand out," she added. Sindhu also pointed out that fitness and staying injury-free will be key if Shetty is to sustain this level, while praising his attitude in training over the past few weeks. Shetty's run in the tournament has been built on big wins. He started by beating Li Shi Feng, then got past Chin Yu Jen, before producing a composed performance against World No. 4 Jonatan Christie in the quarters.

Without Dhoni and Points, Can CSK's Fading Fortress Withstand Delhi's Fierce Raid?

Chennai: Rarely have Chennai Super Kings appeared this fragile at the start of a season. While the five-time champions usually take the field carrying the weight of high expectations, that hope now seems to be evaporating, even among the franchise's most ardent faithful. Chennai have endured poor starts in the past, but they have never been outplayed this comfortably. Three matches have resulted in three comprehensive hammerings at the hands of Royal Challengers Bengaluru, Rajasthan Royals, and Punjab Kings. Consequently, they sit as the only team yet to open their account in IPL 2026. The fortress is not just under siege; it is falling. The Super Kings, who have lost their last six matches at the iconic Chepauk, welcome a wounded Delhi Capitals on Saturday. On paper, the Capitals appear far more threatening and well-rounded. They began their campaign with two dominant victories, including a clinical performance against Mumbai Indians. However, Delhi arrive with their own scars after failing to chase 211 on a batting belter against Gujarat Titans on Thursday. That loss followed a rare brain fade in the final over from David Miller, who otherwise played a heroic knock. In contrast, Chennai have had no such recent drama. They head into Saturday's evening encounter following a much-needed five-day break to



Reset their tactical plans. CSK vs DC is the second match of the IPL 2026 Saturday double-header on April 11. JioHotstar will provide live streaming, while television coverage will be hosted on Star Sports. Delhi Capitals have won 12 and lost 19 of their 31 meetings with Chennai Super Kings. Crucially, they beat CSK at Chepauk last year, finally ending a 15-year drought at the venue. Chennai Super Kings are desperate for a spark of inspiration. With consecutive home games against



Delhi on Saturday and Kolkata on Tuesday, this stretch will likely define their entire campaign. Much to their relief, South African batting sensation Dewald Brevis is expected to return. 'Baby AB' missed the opening three fixtures due to a side strain suffered in training. Brevis provided the firepower the Super Kings lacked last season and was earmarked to be the face of CSK's structural pivot from 'Dad's Army' to a more youthful core. His absence was keenly felt during the initial win-

less run. Head coach Stephen Fleming spent much of Friday's press conference addressing criticism regarding his job security and the team's form. While he stopped short of a formal confirmation, Brevis is widely tipped to feature on Saturday. Conversely, MS Dhoni is unlikely to take the field. Although he has been training rigorously in the Chennai nets, the legendary keeper-batsman is expected to remain sidelined with a knee injury until Tuesday's clash against the Knight Riders.

Vaibhav Sooryavanshi Smashes Bumrah and Hazlewood to Lead the IPL 2026 Orange Cap

New Delhi: Vaibhav Sooryavanshi is making a habit of taking on the best in the business. After taking apart Jasprit Bumrah earlier in the tournament, the Rajasthan Royals teenager tore into Josh Hazlewood, smashing 19 runs in an over and racing to a 15-ball fifty in the chase of 202 against Royal Challengers Bengaluru. The 15-year-old opener got going early with two boundaries off Bhuvneshwar Kumar, setting the tone for what followed. Yashasvi Jaiswal played his part with two sixes off Hazlewood before falling for 13, but the dismissal did little to slow things down. Sooryavanshi kept the pressure on, striking two fours and a six off Abhinandan, and then taking Hazlewood apart in a brutal over that read 4, 4, 4, 6. Hazlewood began with his usual hard length and a tight line when he bowled to the teenage sensation for the first time. However, Vaibhav cut him off the back foot, sending the ball racing past the point fielder. The second boundary was lofted over mid-on, as Vaibhav used the field to perfection. The third delivery was full, but Vaibhav responded with a feisty cover drive, piercing the gap on the off side. Hazlewood then tried to outfox the left-hander with a slower bouncer. However, Vaibhav waited on the back foot, read the ploy, and pulled it into the stands, leaving everyone on the field – including Hazlewood – in awe. "On facing Bumrah, Bhuvneshwar and Hazlewood) Back of the mind, it is there (on who is bowling). I try To play the ball and not the bowler, and play my game," Vaibhav said after helping RR beat RCB. The fifty put him among the fastest by an Indian in IPL history. Only Jaiswal and KL Rahul have got there quicker, while Yusuf Pathan also had a 15-



ball fifty. Sooryavanshi has now reached the mark in 15 balls twice this season, against CSK earlier and now against RCB. He brought up the milestone with back-to-back sixes off Bhuvneshwar, the first a clean hit over long-on and the second flying over deep backward square despite coming off the top edge, with Phil Salt unable to cut it off. Dhruv Jurel added to the surge with a 24-run sixth over as Rajasthan Royals powered to 97/1 at the end of the power-play. By the time the strategic timeout was taken, RCB had conceded 97 in six overs and the equation had eased significantly, with the required rate dropping to 7.5. Sooryavanshi kept control of the chase even as RCB tried to respond with fuller, straighter lines. He dug out a near-yorker from Bhuvneshwar and drove it straight back

for four, before finishing the over with a lofted boundary over cover-point. Hazlewood tried the usual methods to contain an attacking batter. He went into the body, looked to reduce room, and forced Sooryavanshi to adjust. One such delivery climbed into him and cramped him for space. It was the kind of ball that often results in a dot or a mistimed shot. Instead, Sooryavanshi managed to free his hands and chopped it away for four. What followed shifted the momentum completely. The next ball was lifted cleanly over mid-on, and then came a pick-up shot from outside off that sailed into the square-leg stands. The shots came quickly, but there was no sense of panic. Each stroke was controlled, with early reading of length and quick decision-making. This has not been a one-off.

Watch Ayush Shetty vs Kunlavut Vitidsarn: Live Streaming Guide for Badminton Asia Semifinals

New Delhi: Ayush Shetty is on the verge of the biggest match of his young career as he prepares to take on Kunlavut Vitidsarn in the semi-finals of the Badminton Asia Championships 2026. The clash, set to be played in Ningbo, China, pits one of India's brightest emerging talents against the current World No. 1. The Indian shuttler has been on a giant-killing run throughout the tournament. He began by defeating World No. 7 Li Shi Feng in straight games, before getting past Chi Yu Jen in the next round. But it was his quarter-final win that truly turned heads, a straight-games victory over third seed Jonatan Christie. That result not only confirmed his arrival on the big stage but also ensured India a rare medal at the continental event. It has been a welcome boost for Indian badminton, especially after early exits for Lakshya Sen And HS Prannoy earlier in the tournament. Now, standing between Shetty and a place in the final is Vitidsarn, the reigning world champion and one of the most consistent performers on the circuit. It is a classic test of youth and momentum against pedigree and experience. With



Lakshya Sen and HS Prannoy exiting early, Shetty is the last Indian left in the men's singles draw. That alone puts a bit more weight on this run. Shetty's journey to this stage has been nothing short of remarkable. The 20-year-old has stitched together a series of statement wins, knocking out higher-ranked opponents and showing a level of composure that belies his age. With confidence high and momentum firmly on his side, he now faces his toughest test yet. He's already done enough to secure a medal, becoming the first Indian men's singles player since Prannoy in 2018 to reach the podium at the Asian meet. It also ends a short wait for India overall, with the last medal coming from Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag

Shetty in 2023. "I faced two break points in the first game, but after that I felt I was playing better than him. I wasn't expecting a 6-0, 6-0 win, but I kept my focus because you never know-it can take just one break to change a match," he added. Berrettini has been in remarkable form this week, not dropping a single game in his opening two matches, including a 4-0 lead when Roberto Bautista Agut retired in the first round. The 29-year-old former Top 10 player will next face Joao Fonseca or Arthur Rinderknech in the third round. Competing on clay for the first time this season, Medvedev struggled badly on Court Rainier III, committing 27 unforced errors and failing to create a single on his serve.