

Mizoram Home Minister raises concern over refugees’ illegal commercial activities

Sapdanga says refugees running covert businesses illegally

Aizawl, Mar 02: Mizoram Home Minister K. Sapdanga has expressed serious concern over reports that some refugees sheltering in the state are allegedly engaging in illegal commercial activities. Addressing the ongoing Budget session of the State Assembly, Sapdanga stated that while the government has not received formal reports, authorities are aware of covert small-scale businesses being operated in violation of the law. The Home Minister noted that several individuals are already facing criminal charges and investigations are underway. He emphasized that the government is taking a firm stand against unlawful trade and warned that strict action will be taken against those found guilty. Sapdanga clarified that Mizoram continues to provide humanitarian assistance to refugees, but stressed that such support cannot extend to activities that undermine the law. “The government will not tolerate illegal trade or commercial practices by refugees. Action will be taken wherever violations are found,” he said. The statement comes amid growing concerns that unauthorized business operations could disrupt local markets and create tensions within host



communities. The government has assured that monitoring will continue and enforcement agencies have been directed to remain vigilant. Mizoram Home Minister K. Sapdanga has voiced strong concern over allegations that refugees residing in the state are engaging in illegal commercial activities, including un-

censed trade and small-scale businesses. Speaking during the ongoing Budget session of the Mizoram Legislative Assembly, Sapdanga acknowledged that while the government has not received formal reports from enforcement agencies, there are credible indications of unauthorized economic practices taking place.

Mizoram Funds District Projects

Aizawl, Mar 2: The Mizoram government, on Monday, for the first time, provided Rs 1 crore each to all the 11 districts of the state to execute prioritised projects under their respective district plans, officials said. Chief Minister Lalduhoma disbursed the District Catalytic Intervention Plan Fund, allocating Rs 1 crore to each district to facilitate effective implementation of district-level development initiatives. The Chief Minister formally handed over the funds through bank cheques. Disbursing the fund, Chief Minister Lalduhoma said that although District Planning Committees had been constituted earlier, no dedicated financial support had been provided to meaningfully implement their plans. “For the first time in Mizoram, we are disbursing Rs 1 crore to each district to fulfil their prioritised projects,” he added.

Assam: Court De-freezes Shyamkanu Mahanta’s Bank Account In Zubeen Garg Case

Guwahati, Mar 02: A local court on Monday ordered the defreezing of festival organizer Shyamkanu Mahanta’s bank account citing “technical lapses” in the Zubeen Garg death case, while fixing March 19 for a charge hearing, special public prosecutor (SPP) Ziaul Kamar told reporters. The Kamrup Metropolitan District and Sessions Court rejected a petition by another accused, Siddharth Sharma, seeking the Singapore Police report. Kamar said the court directed Sharma to access relevant details from Assam Police between March 10 and 12, from 2 pm to 4 pm. On Sharma’s plea to de-attach his Guwahati flat allegedly bought with Rs 16 lakh embezzled from Garg the court allowed it if he provides equivalent bank surety to police. Kamar confirmed the prosecution is prepared for the March 19 charge hearing, after which the trial begins. “The accused might file



more petitions,” he noted, accusing them earlier of delaying tactics. Garg’s wife, Garima Saikia Garg, and sister Palme Barthakur attended the hearing. Garima expressed disappointment over Mahanta’s account defreezing, calling it due to “procedural lapse and technical issue.” A related case against Sharma’s co-owned packaged water firm, Mahabir Aqua, is also listed for March 19. On a promised fast-track court, Kamar

said it’s pending between the government and Gauhati High Court, stressing it would speed things up without curtailing legal rights. Zubeen Garg, 49, drowned off Singapore’s Lazarus Island on September 19, 2025, during the 4th North East India Festival (NEIF). A Singapore coroner’s court ruled out foul play, citing intoxication and refusal of a life jacket. Assam Police’s CID Special Investigation Team filed a December chargesheet alleging murder against Mahanta (NEIF chief), Sharma (Garg’s manager), band members Shekhar Jyoti Goswami and Amrit Prabha Mahanta, cousin/suspended DSP Sandipan Garg, and PSOs Nandeswar Bora and Prabin Baishya all in jail. The state appointed a five-member prosecution team led by Kamar, with Brojendra Mohan Chaudhuri as additional PP and assistants Kishor Dutta, Pranjal Dutta, and Vikash Jammur.

In Brief

CM inaugurates projects, flags off road upgradation

Imphal: Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh inaugurated three projects i.e Itham Moirangpured Bridge, under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY), Model Residential School under Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram (PMJKV) and Science and Arts Block of Moirangpured Higher Secondary School under (Samagra Shiksha, Manipur) at Moirangpured. The Chief Minister also flagged off Upgradation of Roads from NH-202 at Lamlai to Thoubal Dam (1:18.50 km) at Napet Palli. Speaking at the function held at Moirangpured Higher Secondary School, Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh stated that the school has been unable to operate properly due to a shortage of teachers.

Army, AR, ITBP conduct joint artillery firing exercise

Guwahati: Army’s Spearhead Gunners in collaboration with Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), Assam Rifles (AR), and Army Aviation conducted a joint artillery firing exercise at Darranga in Assam. The exercise was successfully conducted, showcasing integrated employment of advanced surveillance resources, reconnaissance and surveillance flights and co-ordinated operations with Mortar Fire Controllers of Infantry, ITBP, and Assam Rifles. The exercise focused on enhancing real-time battle-field awareness, precision target acquisition and swift engagement capabilities in challenging terrain conditions. Surveillance assets and reconnaissance flights played a pivotal role in target detection and fire correction. Seamless integration with Mortar Fire Controllers of Infantry, ITBP and Arunachal Scouts further strengthened inter-agency coordination, communication and rapid response mechanisms.

Three insurgents arrested, arms recovered

Imphal: Security forces arrested an active cadre of PREPAK, identified as Khundrakpam Anilkumar Singh alias Manganglakpa (21) of Sawombung Thongkhong from Phaknung Awang Leikai under Lamlai-PS, Imphal East district. A mobile phone was seized from him. Security forces also arrested an active cadre of KYKL from Yairipok Lamkhai area in Thoubal. The arrested cadre has been identified as Ibungomacha Laishram alias Rocky alias Ibomcha (43) of Gaili village, Peren, Nagaland presently staying at Singamei Yumnam Leikai, Imphal West district.

CM reviews NDB-assisted water supply project

Imphal, Mar 02: Chief Minister Y Khemchand chaired a review meeting today at the Secretariat with regard to the New Development Bank (NDB)-assisted Water Supply Project. Informing this in a social media post, Chief Minister Khemchand said, “Chaired a comprehensive review meeting today at the Secretariat with Hon’ble MLAs and senior officials of PHED on the New Development Bank (NDB)-assisted Water Supply Project”. The Chief Minister said, “The deliberations were constructive



and strengthened with updated data inputs to further streamline implementation. Reiterated that priority is being accorded to the construction and upgradation of water supply systems, including elevated service reservoirs and extensive distribution networks, to ensure safe, sustainable, and equitable drinking water access across urban, semi-urban, and rural areas of Manipur”. “Our commitment remains steadfast towards strengthening public infrastructure and delivering improved quality of life for every citizen in our journey towards a Viksit Manipur and Viksit Bharat, 2047,” the Chief Minister added.

MLA Rameshwar lays stress on true value of education

Imphal, Mar 02: A new higher secondary institution, Excellent Academy, was formally inaugurated at Uyok Chingya under Kakching Turel Wangma. The academy, which is affiliated to the Council of Higher Secondary Education, Manipur (COHSEM), will begin its first academic session this year with classes for XI and XII (Higher Secondary). Speaking at the inaugural function, MLA of Kakching Assembly Constituency, Mayanglambam Rameshwar Singh, emphasised that the true value of education lies in sharing knowledge with society. He stated that education should not remain confined to individuals but must contribute to the greater good of the community. He expressed confidence that the academy would play a vital role in shaping the future of students and guiding them toward success in their respective fields. The programme was attended by several distinguished guests including Khumukcham Sundari, Principal of Excellent Academy; Mayanglambam Sanaton,



former Principal and Professor of Kha Manipur College, Kakching; Mayanglambam Kunjaraj, Head of the Department of Extension Education, Central Agricultural University, Imphal; and Dangmei Manglem (MCS), Additional Director (Hills), Directorate of Education (S), Government of Manipur, who graced the occasion as special guests. In his address, MLA Ramesh-

war highlighted that in today’s rapidly advancing world, knowledge has become one of the most valuable assets. He noted that students must utilise their intellect and learning to succeed in life. He further remarked that Excellent Academy aims not only to provide textbook education but also to impart moral values and life skills. Teachers, he said, bear the responsibility of nur-

turing students academically as well as ethically. Expressing optimism, the MLA stated that the newly established institution has the potential to become one of the leading schools in the region. He urged the faculty to work sincerely in producing capable and responsible students who will contribute positively to society and bring progress and development to the community.

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security personnel were reportedly implicated, the matter was brought to the attention of the Chief Minister. Taking a serious view of the input, the Chief Minister promptly directed the Superintendent of Police to conduct a thorough investigation into the matter. Further, the Chief Minister also directed the Deputy Commissioner of Imphal East to furnish the report of the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) of Laikhong village, who have not yet received the benefit for purchasing mattresses through Direct Benefit Transfer. The DC assured that after joint efforts with the Home Department, the gap would be bridged. The Moirangpured Higher Secondary School, Imphal East was built with an estimated cost of Rs 3,78,56,031 funded by Samagra Shiksha Manipur and implemented by EEW (Education Engineering Wing). The component included Classrooms, Laboratories, Library, Boys and Girls toilet, Rainwater harvesting.

The Model Residential School was constructed under Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram funded by Ministry of Minority Affairs, Government of India with the project cost of around Rs. 25.62 crore. The Itham Moirangpured Bridge over Thoubal River at 2.10 Km under Keirao Bitra Block of Imphal East District with a sanctioned cost is around Rs. 645.84 lakh. It was constructed by M/s NDS Construction, Special Class Contractor under the (PMGSY-1). The upgradation of roads from NH-202 at Lamlai to Thoubal Dam (1:18.50 km) is a part of a road network which connects two main Highways of the State i.e. NH-202 (Imphal-Ukhrul road) and NH -102 (A) (Shangshak Tegnoupal Road). The project for the upgradation of the said road is under the supervision of Public Works Department.

Shyamkumar lauded the Chief Minister for the guidance and unwavering support for the development of the Andro AC. MLA Lamlai AC Khongbantabam Ibomcha stated that after the formation of the new government the development process are taking place at a war footing pace in the State. MLA Phungyar AC Leishiyo Keishing expressed that if the road connecting Napet Palli and Ashang Khullen is upgraded to the status of a National Highway, it would greatly benefit the public. He explained that such an upgrade would improve connectivity, enhance transportation facilities, and support economic activities, thereby providing real-time advantages and better opportunities for the people living in the area. The programme was attended by Commissioner to Chief Minister N. Ashok Kumar, Chief Engineer PWD Chongtham Biswachandra Singh, officials of the Education (s) department, students, and locals among others.

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The exercise focused on enhancing real-time battle-field awareness, precision target acquisition and swift engagement capabilities in challenging terrain conditions. Surveillance assets and reconnaissance flights played a pivotal role in target detection and fire correction. Seamless integration with Mortar Fire Controllers of Infantry, ITBP and Arunachal Scouts further strengthened inter-agency coordination, communication and rapid response mechanisms. The

exercise validated joint operational commitment, high standards of combat readiness and synergy. This joint training significantly enhanced inter-operability, operational preparedness and collective capability to respond effectively to emerging security challenges. The exercise also validated robust framework for integrated surveillance and firepower employment and enhanced jointness, mutual confidence amongst the Indian Army and para-military forces.

Cong govt to enhance education, healthcare in Assam: Gaurav

Dibrugarh, Mar 02: Assam Congress president Gaurav Gogoi on Sunday said education and healthcare systems will be upgraded across the state once his party forms government after the assembly polls.

Leading the ‘Samay Paribartanar Yatra’ in Dibrugarh district, Gogoi said that when the Congress comes to power in the state, women will get the benefits of different schemes without attending any party meetings. “We want to create a better environment for education and healthcare in every village, including the tea garden areas. We aim to empower women by promoting small-scale enterprises so that they can become self-reliant,” he said.

Gogoi assured that under a Congress government, welfare schemes would be further improved and strengthened. “The present BJP government gives benefits of schemes to women who attend their party meetings. Once our party forms a government, all eligible women will receive benefits directly in their bank accounts without having to attend party meetings,” he added. Gogoi said that the Congress remains firmly committed to building a “new greater Assam” by uniting people across all communities, irrespective of caste, creed or religion.



He stressed that the march was not merely a political programme, but a heartfelt effort to connect directly with the people. The ‘Samay Paribartanar Yatra’ on Sunday started from

Naharkatia, and progressed through Duliajan and Tingkhong constituencies with a ‘padayatra’ and bike rally.

Gogoi interacted with members of the Ghinai Baptist Christian community in Dibrugarh and lit candles at the church, praying for the well-being of all. “Eligible women will receive aid straight into their bank accounts—no party meetings required,” he added, contrasting this with the current BJP administration’s approach. He was accompanied by Leader of the Opposition Debabrata Saikia, MP Pradyut Bordoloi, and former MPs Paban Singh Ghatowar and Ripun Bora, among others.

The ‘yatra’ will touch up on Makum, Doomdooma and Margherita in Tinsukia district on Monday.

The election to the 126-member assembly is expected to take place in March-April. Assam Congress president Gaurav Gogoi pledged major upgrades to education and healthcare across the state, including remote tea garden areas, should his party win the upcoming assembly elections. Addressing supporters during the ‘Samay Paribartanar Yatra’ in Dibrugarh district on March 1, Gogoi outlined plans to empower women through direct scheme benefits and small-scale businesses.

Mizoram reports India’s highest cancer incidence



Aizawl, Mar 02: Mizoram has the highest cancer incidence and mortality rates in India, with Aizawl district reporting an age-adjusted incidence rate of 269.4 per one lakh men, health officials said on Sunday. A senior Health and Family Welfare Department official said stomach and lung cancers are the leading causes of cancer in the state, largely driven by high tobacco and betel nut consumption, dietary habits, and genetic factors. The official said the Mizoram government signed an Externally Aided Project loan agreement with the Asian Development Bank on January 23, for a project titled “Supporting Public Health Care System Strengthening to Achieve Universal Healthcare for Mizoram”, popularly known as the Mizoram Universal Healthcare Scheme (MUHCS). He added that the World Bank-funded Mizoram Health Systems Strengthening Project has been successfully implemented and is expected to close by March 2026. Under this project, the Mizoram State Super Speciality Cancer and Research Centre is being set up in Aizawl under the Health and Family Welfare Department. Addressing a function on Saturday in Aizawl, State Health and Family Welfare Minister Lalrinpuui expressed concern that Mizoram has one of the highest cancer incidence rates in India relative to its population. She noted that even the Director of Tata Memorial Hospital in Mumbai, where many Mizo cancer patients seek treatment, had remarked on the unusually high number of cancer cases among Mizos.

The Minister said that according to experts, the high consumption of tobacco

products, unhealthy dietary habits including excessive intake of smoked meat, pork fat and oils, and lifestyle factors are major contributors to the state’s cancer burden.

She stated that among women in India, breast cancer is the most common, followed by cervical cancer. Highlighting that 99.7 per cent of cervical cancer cases are caused by Human Papillomavirus (HPV), she described the free vaccination programme as a welcome and crucial preventive measure and urged all eligible 14-year-old girls to avail themselves of the vaccine.

The Minister also appreciated the dedication and hard work of healthcare workers from the Directorate level down to Sub-Centres. Mizoram Chief Secretary Khilli Ram Meena, speaking at the same function, said that one out of every five cervical cancer patients globally is from India. He termed the free vaccination drive for adolescent girls, future mothers of the nation, as a vital and timely intervention.

The chief secretary pointed out that Mizoram has one of the highest rates of cervical cancer in the country and that screening rates among women in the state remain low. Meena expressed hope that the initiative would save lives, strengthen families, and contribute to the state’s overall development. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday launched the nationwide Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Vaccination Campaign for 14-year-old girls to prevent cervical cancer. The programme was launched virtually across all states and union territories by the Prime Minister from Ajmer.

Peace in Nagaland key to India’s progress: Kurian

Dimapur, Mar 02: Union Minister of State for Minority Affairs; Animal Husbandry, Fisheries and Dairying, George Kurian on Sunday underscored that lasting peace in Nagaland is fundamental to building a prosperous and secure India, while reaffirming that the North-East is not the country’s periphery but the gateway to the Act East Policy.

Kurian made the remarks while inaugurating the Peter Armacost Multi-Purpose Hall at North East Christian University (NECU), City Campus, Anchor Complex, Burma Camp, coinciding with the university’s Foundation Day celebrations. The minister was accorded a traditional welcome by NECU students dressed in ethnic attire, followed by a cultural dance reflecting the rich diversity of the North-East. He later unveiled the commemorative plaque of the newly inaugurated hall and laid the cornerstone for the proposed NECU North East Village Retreat, envisioned as a space representing the architectural styles and cultural ethos of the region. In his address, Kurian expressed appreciation for the infrastructural and developmental strides made in Nagaland and across the North-East in recent years. He conveyed gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for giving focused attention to the region and reiterated the Centre’s commitment to inclusive

growth.

Highlighting key initiatives, the minister referred to the Prime Minister Jan Vikas Karyakram (PMJVK), launched in 2018 to address infrastructure gaps in minority-concentrated areas, and noted that several projects had been completed in Dimapur district under the scheme. He also spoke about PM VIKAS, a skill development programme for minority youth, encouraging students to explore emerging sectors such as the Internet of Things and entrepreneurship. Commending NECU’s academic initiatives, He also appreciated the institution’s focus on traditional studies and certification in indigenous healing practices, underscoring the importance of preserving community-based knowledge systems and cultural identity. Cultural presentations by students added vibrancy to the occasion. Messages from the family of Dr. Peter Armacost were conveyed by his wife and daughter, reflecting on his enduring legacy in education. The event was attended by university officials, faculty members, distinguished guests, students and media personnel, marking a significant milestone in NECU’s continuing commitment to educational excellence, cultural preservation and community engagement in the North-East.

Massive public turnout in BJP’s Jan Ashirwad Yatra in Assam

Guwahati, Mar 02: The Bharatiya Janata Party’s ongoing ‘Jan Ashirwad Yatra’ received an overwhelming response on its second day, as Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma led a massive rally from Jagiroad to Morigaon, party leaders said.

Thousands of BJP supporters gathered along the rally route, turning the stretch into a vibrant display of party flags, slogans and enthusiastic crowds. The Chief Minister’s convoy moved slowly through key localities as people from different sections of society came out to greet him, creating a charged political atmosphere. The Jana Ashirwad Yatra, launched as part of the BJP’s extensive public outreach programme, aims to directly connect with citizens, highlight the government’s achievements and consolidate organisational strength ahead of upcoming political milestones in Assam. Assam Minister Pijush Hazarika and BJP Assam Pradesh President Dilip Saikia accompanied the Chief Minister during the rally. Senior party leaders and local workers actively engaged with the public, reiterating the government’s focus on development-driven governance and welfare-oriented policies. Addressing several roadside gatherings, Chief Minister Sarma outlined key initiatives undertaken by the BJP-led government, particularly in the areas of infrastructure development, welfare schemes, education, healthcare and economic growth. He said the government remains committed to ensuring that development reaches every section of society without discrimination.



“The Jan Ashirwad Yatra is not merely a political programme but an expression of gratitude to the people of Assam for their continuous support and trust,” CM Sarma said, urging citizens to continue blessing the government’s vision for a stronger and more prosperous Assam. Party leaders said that the large participation witnessed on the second day of the yatra reflects public confidence in the BJP’s leadership and

governance model. They added that the yatra will continue across multiple constituencies, serving as a platform to engage with citizens and share the government’s roadmap for the future. With strong public mobilisation and enthusiastic participation, the Jan Ashirwad Yatra has emerged as a significant political exercise, underlining the BJP’s organisational strength and sustained outreach efforts across Assam.

CM Khemchand of Manipur advocates for infrastructure development

Manipur chief minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh on Sunday said that his government was committed to infrastructure development for inclusive growth and economic security.

Addressing an event related to the inauguration of three infrastructure development projects at Moirangpured, a fringe area of Imphal East district adjoining hill districts of Kangpokpi and Kamjong districts, Singh said “Infrastructure development is the foundation of progress.” “Through such initiatives, we reaffirm our commitment to inclusive growth, economic security, and a brighter future for every corner of Manipur. Together, we are building stronger connections and stronger communities,” he added. The chief minister inaugurated three projects – Itham Moirangpured Bridge under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY), Model Residential School under Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram (PMJVK) and Science and Arts Block of Moirangpured Higher Secondary School under (Samagra Shiksha, Manipur) – at Moirangpured.

He also flagged off ‘Upgradation of Roads from NH-202 at Lamlai to Thoubal Dam (1:18.50 km) at Napet Palli’. Referring to the newly constructed bridge, the chief minister said that a bridge is more than a physical structure – it is a lifeline that will connect communities, strengthen relationships, and open new opportunities for our people.

With improved connectivity, access to markets, healthcare services, and educational institutions will become easier and faster, directly benefiting farmers, students, entrepreneurs, and families alike, he said. He described the upgradation of the 18.50 km road stretch from NH-202 at Lamlai to Thoubal Dam as an important project not just about building roads but about building opportunities.



Singh said, “Infrastructure development remains at the heart of our vision for a stronger and self-reliant Manipur.” “Together, we are laying the foundation for progress, prosperity, and inclusive growth for every citizen,” he added. He said that improved connectivity will link the farmers and traders to larger markets, make travel safer and smoother for commuters, and ensure easier access to quality education and healthcare for the people.

He stated that inaugurating the Model Residential School under the PMJVK was a significant initiative that marked a major step towards expanding quality educational infrastructure in the region. The Model Residential School will enhance inclusive access to education, while the new Science & Arts block will strengthen academic opportunities for our students, empowering them with knowledge and skills for the future, he said.

“Access to quality and affordable education remains a cornerstone of

our vision,” he said, adding that investing in the children today meant securing their future, preventing social exclusion and marginalisation, and paving the way for a developed Manipur and developed Bharat.

“Education is not merely about classrooms – it is about transforming lives and building a stronger, more prosperous society,” he asserted.

On the other hand, responding to a complaint, the chief minister directed the Imphal East DC to furnish the report of the internally displaced persons (IDPs) of Laikhong village who have not yet received the benefit for purchasing mattresses through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT).

The DC assured that after joint efforts with the state home department, the gap would be bridged.

Of the three projects inaugurated on Sunday, the Moirangpured Higher Secondary School was built with an estimated cost of Rs 3,78,56,031 funded by Samagra Shiksha Mani-

pur and implemented by EEW (Education Engineering Wing).

The Model Residential School was constructed under Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram funded by the Union ministry of minority affairs with the project cost of around Rs 25.62 crores. The Itham Moirangpured Bridge over Thoubal River at 2.10 km under Keirao Bitra Block was constructed with a sanctioned cost of around Rs. 645.84 lakh.

The upgradation of roads from NH-202 at Lamlai to Thoubal Dam (1:18.50 km) is a part of a road network which connects two main highways of the state – NH-202 (Imphal-Ukhrul road) and NH-102 (A) (Shangshak Tengnoupal Road).

The project for the upgradation of the said road is under the supervision of the Public Works Department. The construction is likely to be completed within a year. MLAs – Th Shyamkumar, Khongbantabam Ibomcha, Leishiyo Keishing – were among others who attended the event.

ICAR-IARI Assam organized Kisan Mela on ‘Natural Farming for Sustainable Livelihood’

Guwahati, Mar 02: ICAR–Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI), Assam successfully organized Kisan Mela at its campus in Dirpai Chapori, Gogamukh, Dhemaji, under the theme “Natural Farming for Sustainable Farming.”

The mega event witnessed enthusiastic participation of more than 1,500 farmers, farm women, rural youth, extension personnel, entrepreneurs, and stakeholders from across the Northeast region. The programme included 32 exhibition stalls, including stalls from Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and other states of the region, which showcased natural farming technologies, organic inputs, millet-based innovations, farm mechanization tools, value-added products, and drug-dry-reduction technologies.

Dr. Ch. Srinivasa Rao, Director and Patron, delivered the welcome address and emphasized the role of natural farming in ensuring ecological sustainability and enhancing farmers’ income. He reiterated the institute’s commitment to strengthening agriculture across the North-east region. Dr. L.K. Baishya, Head (NRM) and Chairman of the Kisan Mela, presented an overview of the event, while Dr. A.K. Balange, CIC & Head (APF) and Convener,



highlighted major achievements and initiatives of the Institute. In-stitute publications were released during the programme. The event was graced by Narendra Shivaji Patel, Minister of State for Public Health and Medical Education, Government of Madhya Pradesh; Krishnakantha Borah, Sangathan Mantri, North East, Bharatiya Kisan Sangha; Rahul Javir, District Commissioner, Dhemaji; and Jadav Pegu, Principal Secretary, Mising Autonomous Council. They appreciated the farmer-centric initiatives of IARI Assam and encouraged adoption of scientific and sustainable farming practices.

They emphasized the importance of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), value addition, and community participation in agricultural development. The Chief Guest, Ranaj Pegu, Minister of Education and Welfare of Plain Tribe and Backward Classes, Government of Assam, lauded the efforts of ICAR–IARI, Assam in promoting sustainable and climate-resilient agriculture. He highlighted the opportunities created by IARI Assam for local youth to pursue diploma programmes and establish agri-startups. He encouraged farmers to actively participate in such fairs and community plantation

drives and appreciated the dedication of scientists and students in improving the socio-economic status of farmers in the region. The programme included felicitation of innovative farmers and symbolic distribution of agricultural inputs. The Farmers-Scientist Interaction Session enabled direct dialogue on crop production, natural farming practices, millet mechanization, and sustainable technologies. Kisan Mela 2026 served as a vibrant platform for technology dissemination, strengthening farmer-scientist linkages, and promoting sustainable agricultural development in the NE region.

Tripura Transgender Welfare Board Seeks Legal Action Over Alleged Abuse of Trans-Woman

Agartala, Mar 02: The Tripura Transgender Welfare Board has called for legal proceedings against the in-laws of a trans-woman, Ishani Das, following allegations of physical and mental abuse. The board claims Das was subjected to harassment after her in-laws found her biological gender identity, accusing her of deception. Das, formerly known as Nayan, recounted her ordeal, stating that she had been transparent about her identity with her husband Akash Das from the beginning of their six-year relationship.

“I had disclosed my biological identity to him from the start and did not conceal any aspect of my background,” she said. Originally from Camperbazar in Agartala, Ishani left her parental home after facing rejection over her sexual orientation and later moved to Mumbai, where she worked at a beauty parlour. She eventually returned to Agartala after Akash allegedly pressured her into marriage, warning of extreme consequences if she refused. The marriage, solemnized in Agartala, reportedly



remained stable for only a few days before her in-laws confronted her about her gender identity.

Ishani alleged that she was verbally abused, physically assaulted and forcibly tonsured. Videos circulating on social media appear to show her confined in a room surrounded by relatives and locals before being taken to a police station. Members of the Tripura Transgender Welfare Board intervened, escorting her to safety from the

West Agartala Women Police Station. Payel Das, a board member, accused Akash of failing to support his wife during the incident despite being aware of her identity prior to marriage. “Her husband didn’t defend her when she needed his support. We want strict action against those involved in this inhuman act,” Payel Das said. The board has urged police to conduct an impartial investigation and ensure accountability for the alleged abuse.

15th Journalists’ Sports Meet Kicks Off With Sacred Torch Ceremony At Kangla

Imphal, mar 02: The 15th Journalists’ Sports Meet, organised by the All Manipur Working Journalists’ Union (AMWJU), commenced on Sunday with the ceremonial lighting of the sacred fire at Kangla Fort. Members of AMWJU, accompanied by Prof. G. Sunil Kumar Sharma, Director of the Regional Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS), carried the sacred torch from Kangla Fort to the Manipur Press Club at Majorkhul as part of the opening ceremony. The union flag was jointly hoisted by AMWJU President Asem Bhakta, Editors’ Guild Manipur (EGM) President Khogendra Khomdram and AMWJU Advisor Irengbam Arun in the presence of the chief guest, Prof. Sunil Sharma.

Addressing the gathering,



Prof. Sharma highlighted Manipur’s remarkable sporting legacy, stating that the state has produced the highest number of Olympians per capita in India, with nearly 19 Olympians hailing from the state so far. He noted that sports are deeply ingrained in Manipuri culture and that the state

is widely recognised across the country for its sporting excellence. Emphasising the role of the media, he described journalism as the mirror of society and underscored its vital contribution to strengthening democracy. Prof. Sharma also expressed concern over the growing prevalence of non-commu-

nicable diseases, attributing the rise to sedentary lifestyles and unhealthy dietary habits. He pointed out that conditions such as diabetes, hypertension and obesity have reached alarming levels, with diabetes now being diagnosed in individuals as young as 30 years — a significant shift compared to five decades ago. He appealed to the public to create greater awareness about organ donation. Announcing a welfare initiative for media professionals, he said a free health camp for journalists will be organised at the Manipur Press Club later this month. The torch rally from Kangla to the Manipur Press Club, originally scheduled for March 3, was advanced to March 2 due to the closure of the Kangla Temple in view of the lunar eclipse.

MEIPUN extends financial assistance to ailing family

Imphal, Mar 02: Meitei Eikhoi Punsinsi (MEIPUN), a social organisation committed to supporting vulnerable and distressed individuals, extended financial assistance to a needy family at Salungpham Maning Leikai under Thoubal district. The assistance was provided to Naorem Ongbi Madhabi, a 75-year-old woman, and her son Naorem Inaocha, who is unable to work owing to a serious health condition. The team handed over a sum of Rs.10,000 as immediate financial aid to support the family during their hardship. It may be mentioned that Naorem Inaocha had earlier met with a severe accident of falling from a tree a few years ago leaving him physically incapacitated and unable to earn a livelihood. Due to lack of financial resources, he has not been able to undergo proper medical treatment. His young daughter has also been unable to continue her education as the family struggles to meet basic needs. With Madhabi being the sole caregiver in the family despite her frail condition, the household has been facing extreme hardship. In the absence of any regular income or external support, the family has been living in distress.

Major Political Shift in Bodoland Ahead of Assam Assembly Polls

Guwahati, Mar 02: In a significant political development ahead of the upcoming Assam Assembly elections, several senior leaders of the United People’s Party Liberal (UPPL) have resigned from the party and are poised to join the Bodoland People’s Front (BPF), signalling a major realignment in Bodoland politics. Among the prominent leaders who stepped down is Kampa Borgoyary, a Member of the Legislative Council in the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) and former Leader of the Opposition in the BTC Legislative Council from the UPPL. His resignation is seen as a major setback for the UPPL, given his stature and influence within the Bodoland Territorial Region. In his resignation letter addressed to UPPL president Pramod Boro and issued from Kokrajhar, Borgoyary cited his “inability to continue active participation in the party’s activities” as the reason for stepping down. He expressed gratitude to the party leadership and members for the opportunity to serve as Vice President, describing his tenure as enriching and humbling. He also conveyed confidence that the party would continue to progress under Boro’s leadership. However, political observers suggest that Borgoyary’s exit is part of a broader churn within the UPPL ranks. UPPL Vice President Maothi Brahma Hazowary has also resigned from the party. In another blow to the organisation, Central Secretary Afzal Khan stepped down from both his party post and primary membership. In his resignation letter dated March 1, 2026, also addressed to Pramod Boro from Kokrajhar, Khan cited his “inabilities to participate in party activities” as the reason for quitting. He thanked the party leadership for entrusting him with the responsibility of Central Secretary and extended his best wishes for the party’s future. Political sources indicate that Afzal Khan, Maothi Brahma Hazowary, and Kampa Borgoyary are all expected to formally join the BPF, pointing to a coordinated shift ahead of the crucial Assembly elections. While the UPPL leadership has not yet issued an official response, the resignations are being closely watched, given the party’s role in the ruling alliance in Assam and its significant influence in the Bodoland Territorial Region.

SAHS students donate blood on Rare Diseases Day

Imphal, Mar 02: The Students’ Council of Shija Academy of Health Sciences, Langol, conducted a one-day voluntary blood donation camp in observance of Rare Diseases Day under the theme “Donate Blood, Save Lives.” The initiative



witnessed active participation from MBBS students of SAHS, with 57 volunteers including both regular donors and first time donors. To date, the Students’ Council has organised six such camps as part of its ongoing commitment to community service and strengthening the blood supply for patients in need. Ningthiba Thokchom, President of the Students’ Council and a fourth time donor, emphasized that blood donation is a meaningful way to support distressed families during critical times. Luchingba Thokchom, a third year MBBS student and second time donor, highlighted that beyond serving the community, blood donation also offers health benefits to the donors. The Council reaffirms its dedication to continuing regular blood donation drives in the future.

In a first, GI-tagged from Assam’s Karbi Anglong exported to London

Guwahati, Mar 02: In a major export push, a consignment of GI-tagged ginger from Assam’s Karbi Anglong district was flagged off to London from Guwahati on Sunday.

Assam Agriculture Minister Atul Bora flagged off the first-ever export consignment of GI-tagged ginger from Karbi Anglong to London, marking a significant milestone for the state’s agri-export ecosystem.

The consignment of 21.2 metric tonnes of premium fresh ginger was flagged off from Krishi Bhawan in the presence of senior agriculture department officials and stakeholders.

The ginger has been sourced directly from farmers in Karbi Anglong.

Terming the export push as a proud and historic moment for Assam’s agricultural sector, Bora said, “This marks the first-ever export of GI-tagged Karbi Anglong Ginger from Assam to London, signifying the growing global recognition of our state’s high-quality agricultural produce.”



“Assam continues to expand its agricultural footprint in international markets. This milestone reflects our government’s commitment to strengthening farmers’ income, enhancing value addition, and building strong global market linkages for Assam’s GI-tagged products,” the Minister said.

Bora complimented APEDA and NextOn Foods Pvt. Ltd. for facilitating the landmark export initiative in collaboration with the Agriculture Department and the farmers of the district.

“We will continue to work tirelessly towards increasing agricultural production across the state, promoting

quality enhancement, encouraging exports, and ensuring that Assam’s farmers receive the global recognition and economic opportunities they truly deserve.

Senior officials from the state agriculture department, APEDA and NextOn Foods Pvt. Ltd were present on the occasion.

IIT-Guwahati, conventry university Group-UK sign MOU to drive innovation in AI, health

Guwahati, Mar 02: Indian Institute of Technology-Guwahati (IIT-G) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Coventry University Group (CUG), UK with an aim to boost global research and innovation in AI (artificial intelligence) and healthcare.

The collaboration aims to formalise a strategic partnership to enhance research collaboration, academic mobility and joint degree programmes.

The MoU was exchanged during

the visit of CUG’s senior research leadership to IIT Guwahati.

The leadership visit was led by Prof. Richard Dashwood, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), who also discussed a joint Research Colloquium in hybrid mode involving experts from both CUG and IIT Guwahati. The key focus area of this partnership is the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Data Science in Healthcare. Highlighting IIT Guwahati’s focus on translational research and its collaboration with

CUG, Prof. Devendra Jalihal, Director, IIT Guwahati, said, “Guwahati is emerging as a research centre. AIIMS and NIPER are our partners in our health sciences and technology programme, with a focus on medical devices and drug discovery. In addition, IIT Guwahati’s upcoming 400-bed research hospital will anchor active collaborations between medical professionals and scientists from the School of Health Sciences and Data Sciences.”

Speaking during his visit to IIT

Guwahati, Prof. Richard Dashwood, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), Coventry University, said, “Our research always comes with real-world change in mind, and working alongside institutions and partners in India, we can have a lasting impact on areas such as AI and healthcare.” The partnership marks a significant milestone in Indo-UK academic relations, positioning both institutions at the forefront of the global technological transformation of healthcare.

Three insurgents arrested, arms recovered

Imphal, Mar 02: Security forces arrested an active cadre of PREPAK, identified as Khundrakpam Anilkumar Singh alias Manganglakpa (21) of Sawombung Thongkhong from Phaknung Awang Leikai under Lamlai-PS, Imphal East district. A mobile phone was seized from him. Security forces also arrested an active cadre of KYKL from Yairipok Lamkhai area in Thoubal. The arrested cadre has been identified as Ibungomacha Laishram alias Rocky alias Ibomcha (43) of Gaili village, Peren, Nagaland presently staying at Singjamei Yumnam Leikai, Imphal West district. A mobile phone along with a SIM card was seized from him. Security forces also arrested an active cadre of PREPAK (Pro), namely

Khaidem Narendra Singh alias Angou alias Maikeringakpa (29) of Wangoi Khaidem Leikai, Imphal West district from his residence under Wangoi-PS. From his possession, one 9 mm pistol along magazine, four 9 mm ammunition and one mobile phone along with SIM card were recovered. On the other hand, Manipur Police recovered a two-wheeler Honda Activa from Mayang Imphal area that was reportedly stolen on February 11 last from the jurisdiction of Patsoi- PS, Imphal West district. Meanwhile, security forces continued to conduct search operations and area domination in the fringe and vulnerable areas across districts.

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Editorial

Frequent Jolts in NE

The Northeastern region has been experiencing an increase in the frequency of earthquakes in the past few days. This has once again firmly established it as one of the most seismically active regions in the world. Situated in Seismic Zone V, the region is a hotbed of tectonic activity, experiencing on average an earthquake of magnitude 6.0 or greater every year. The surge in tremors, including recent frequent, moderate-intensity quakes in Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Sikkim, has heightened concerns among scientists and residents alike about the possibility of another ‘great’ earthquake. The primary reason for this high, increasing seismic activity is the region’s location at the convergence of three major tectonic plates: the Indian Plate, the Eurasian Plate, and the Burmese Plate. The Indian Plate is moving northward and subducting under the Eurasian Plate, creating massive crustal compression. Additionally, the Indo-Burma subduction zone in the east and the active Himalayan collision zone in the north contribute to the strain. This intense, continuous interaction makes the region highly volatile. The Northeast has a long history of devastating, high-magnitude earthquakes, including the 1897 Shillong earthquake (measuring 8.7) and the 1950 Assam-Tibet earthquake (8.6). Modern studies indicate that several more localised faults are currently active, most notably the Kopili Fault Zone, which runs through the Assam Valley. The Shillong Plateau and the Indo-Myanmar range are also major sources of frequent shallow- to intermediate-depth earthquakes. Several factors contribute to the rising danger posed by these tremors. First of all, the region is home to numerous, frequently active faults and fault lines. Secondly, certain studies suggest that strain accumulation in the region has reached a point where a major earthquake (magnitude > 8.0) is apparently overdue, following the ‘return period’ theory. There are opinions that alluvial soil, particularly of Assam, can amplify seismic waves. Furthermore, rapid, often unregulated development and the use of heavy construction in hilly terrain make the region highly vulnerable to damage. The increased frequency of earthquakes in the Northeast is not random but a result of its unique, complex, and highly active tectonic setting. While the exact timing of a major event cannot be predicted, the high, ongoing, and increasing seismic activity requires robust, long-term disaster management, risk-informed development, and strict adherence to earthquake-resistant building codes to minimize future devastation.

Iran may yet endure this war, but the Islamic Republic as we have known it cannot survive unchanged

The coordinated strikes on Iran launched by the United States and Israel in the early hours of Saturday morning formally reignited a conflict that had been simmering since last summer’s 12-day war. They targeted key command structures and killed senior figures, most notably Iran’s supreme leader Ali Khamenei, who had been in power since 1989.

Donald Trump marked his demise with a post saying “one of the most evil people in history” was dead, adding: “This is not only justice for the people of Iran, but for all Great Americans.”Israel has published reports claiming that Mohammad Pakpour, commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), defence minister Aziz Nasirzadeh and Admiral Ali Shamkhani, head of the defence council, have also been killed. In response, Iranian forces have fired missiles and drones at Israel, at US bases in the Gulf, Iraq and Jordan, and at some civilian targets across the Gulf. Events are moving quickly, but far from predictably.

An ebullient Trump embarked on this attack casting it not as a limited action, but as a decisive campaign to eliminate what he called a longstanding threat to the US, one that he argued previous US presidents had been unwilling to confront directly.It followed rounds of regionally supported diplomacy aimed at a preliminary nuclear deal. But instead of allowing those efforts to mature Trump, perhaps swayed by Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu and conservative hawks in his administration, chose to strike now, at what is widely seen as a moment of Iranian weakness.

He immediately suggested that the Iranian people should now determine their own future, making it clear that Washington supports internal regime change and reiterating that as he announced Khamenei’s death on Saturday night. “This is the single greatest chance for the Iranian people to take back their country,” he posted on Truth Social.

Some context is useful in terms of timing, because this weekend’s escalation was not a sudden rupture but the culmination of two years of widening confrontation. Since 7 October 2023, Israel has conducted sustained military campaigns not only against Hamas in Gaza, Hezbollah along Israel’s northern border and Houthi targets tied to Red Sea attacks, but indirectly against Tehran itself.

These operations steadily eroded Iran’s forward defence strategy and weakened its core military capabilities. What remained comparatively intact until now was Iran’s



territory, its missile programme and, crucially, the regime leadership. The strikes have yielded immediate results. Yet wars rarely unfold according to initial design. While Iran can by no means match US conventional capabilities, it retains asymmetric tools. Its only viable option has been to widen the theatre, distributing the costs of conflict and increasing regional risk.

The immediate retaliation against Israeli territory and US installations across the Gulf signals precisely that strategy. This has been a dangerous gamble, particularly given Tehran’s fragile ties with neighbouring states in the Gulf, but it sees sustained escalation as the only means to secure an eventual ceasefire.It is important to note that the three principal actors enter this confrontation with distinct objectives. For the Islamic Republic, the priority is survival: achieved by absorbing the shock, maintaining sufficient military and political cohesion, and continuing its military response. Iran is not fighting to win in conventional terms, but the regime is fighting to endure.

Trump, in contrast, appears to be seeking a decisive outcome that shows he has neutralised a longtime US adversary.

On Saturday night he promised that the bombing “will continue, uninterrupted throughout the week or, as long as necessary to achieve our objective” and his strategy rests on the assumption that overwhelming force targeting infrastructure, strategic assets and senior leadership can dismantle Iran’s strategic posture and compel either capitulation or internal rupture.Israel’s objectives broadly align with Washington’s, though its focus is narrower.

While Netanyahu continues to call on Iranians to rise up and respond to a historic opportunity to change the regime, Israel is really focused on ensuring that Iran remains internally preoccupied and strategically, if not permanently, weakened.After the first few days of bombing and Khamenei’s death, several interconnected pathways now lie ahead. In the coming few days, the White House could halt operations, having inflicted substantial damage, to test whether

coercion produces concessions and duress leads to de-escalation measures.

What remains of Tehran’s leadership would then face a stark calculation as to whether preserving some semblance of the regime justifies submission to Washington’s demands.With Khamenei removed from the scene, the system does not automatically collapse. The constitutional mechanism for succession could be activated, with the assembly of experts formally appointing a new supreme leader. In practice, however, the decisive influence is likely to rest with the revolutionary guard and the security establishment, which would seek to manage the transition tightly and prevent fragmentation of the elite.

A collective leadership arrangement, even if temporary, could emerge to stabilise the system – but here it would be vulnerable to internal military pressure, if not further US and Israeli pressure. Alternatively, prolonged military pressure could expose fractures within Iran’s political elite. Economic strain, military losses and internal rivalries could weaken central authority and create openings for internal contestation that might be supported by opposition groups. The most destabilising scenario would be uncontrolled fragmentation. Libya offers a cautionary parallel.The fall of Muammar Gaddafi did not produce an orderly transition, but institutional collapse, competition between militias and external intervention layered on to domestic rivalry. Iran is a far more complex state, with stronger institutions and a deeper bureaucratic tradition, but decapitation of the regime without a managed political transition could still empower armed factions and invite proxy competition on its territory.What is already clear is that the region will not revert to its pre-war equilibrium. Gulf states that cautiously pursued de-escalation with Tehran now face renewed exposure. Energy markets and maritime security, particularly around critical chokepoints, will remain sensitive to further escalation. Regional actors will reassess alliances and defence postures considering the risks revealed by direct US and Israeli action.Iran may endure this war, but the Islamic Republic as we have known it will not survive unchanged. The decisive phase of this conflict will not be the opening strikes, but the emergence of a political order from sustained military pressure. The US may achieve its immediate objectives. The more consequential question is whether it is prepared for the Iranian and regional landscape that follows.

Appointing a new Bangladesh Bank governor has never been so chaotic

If morning shows the day, appointing a new governor to the central bank of the country by abruptly ousting his predecessor testifies neither prudence nor fairness for the newly elected BNP government. It does not dovetail with the philosophic call of BNP’s iconic leader, Khaleda Zia, who spoke about building a “knowledge-based society” on the very day when the previous prime minister, Sheikh Hasina, was ousted from power.

Nor does it pass the litmus test for BNP’s election manifesto where the party vowed to build a “meritocratic Bangladesh.” There has been no sign of upholding those commitments, particularly during what went down on the central bank premises on February 25. Appointing a new governor has perhaps never been so chaotic and frustrating, particularly under an elected regime. The way the former governor, Dr Ahsan H Mansur, was forced to walk out of office, and the way the governor’s adviser, Ahsan Ullah, was treated by a mob in a place like the Bangladesh Bank set a bad precedent for the central bank history.

It also tarnished the image of the new government under the leadership of Tarique Rahman, who has so far been applauded for his economy of words and measured conduct.While Tarique Rahman’s oath as prime minister heralded the demise of mobocracy, its re-emergence on the central bank premises was not only disrespectful to a monetary scholar and an erudite banker, but also



ominous to the future of leadership in the money and financial industry. The government failed to handle the situation in a tactical, respectful manner at a time when its welcoming flowers were still fresh. If the forced ouster had happened during the Yunus government—the interim period that was largely characterised by mobocracy and vandalism—people would likely have accepted

it as one of so many similar occurrences. But the resurfacing of mobocracy under a ruling party that earned an absolute majority in parliament via a landslide victory becomes unacceptable, and demands justice.

It is hard to believe that only the agitation factor of some Bangladesh Bank employees was at the root of the outburst that led to the mishap. Rather, conspiracies of certain

oligarchs, who grew fat during the Awami League regime and were quite antagonistic to Dr Mansur’s steps of bank consolidation and other reforms, led to an unceremonious departure of a brilliant economist. Ahsan Mansur’s Bangladesh Bank stood out for institutional resilience at a time when most organs of the Yunus regime appeared to be facing strain and uncertainty. His main

challenges included reducing inflation, stabilising the exchange rate, raising the level of foreign exchange reserves, increasing remittances and exports, completing the merger of the dysfunctional Islami Shari’ah-based banks, and finally ensuring financial stability in the market. He was not necessarily successful in achieving all his goals effectively, but his policy directions purely complied

with the textbook solutions of central banking, whose conspicuous absences during the Awami regime rule triggered high inflation and dwindling reserves.

Mansur failed to bring inflation down to five percent not for his inaction but for the utter fiscal incapacity of the finance ministry. Monetary tightening by raising the policy rate and thus restricting private credit growth ex-

erted downward pressure on inflation for sure, but excessive government borrowings from the banking system contributed to excessive liquidity, which in turn revitalised price hikes. Eventually, inflation didn’t cascade down as expected—a failure attributable mainly to three inefficient ministries: finance, commerce, and home.

The home ministry was undoubtedly the worst during the interim. Institutional factors such as syndication by big cartels and extortion by political mastans added fuel to the flame of inflation. And the governor did not get adequate cooperation from his colleagues sitting at the Secretariat. That largely says why inflation dominated the market while reserves were on the rise, diluting the fear of any abrupt shortage of foreign currencies. What the market expected was that the former governor would continue with the new government until the regime found another “Mansur,” with formidable qualifications in the line of macroeconomics, central banking, financial markets, and public policy. These expectations became more valid when the BNP championed meritocracy in its manifesto and speeches. The selection of ministers made a respectable balance between political loyalty and expertise. But the choice of the new governor became highly disproportionate with BNP’s recent nominations for other leadership positions.Being a businessman is not a fault for the new governor. Rather, his business experi-

ences can add value to his policymaking. But being recorded as a loan defaulter in the past and now being appointed as a regulator to fight the indomitable culture of default create doubts about whether the governor will really be a good fit for this position. The selection process of the central bank governor in all developed countries is highly rigorous and challenging. While stakeholders pay little attention to the selection of different ministers, who are picked from the winning party, the governor’s selection goes through huge debates and intellectual scrutiny.

The US president, for example, proposes the name of the Federal Reserve chair and Congress jumps into a wide-scale investigation and evaluation of the candidate.While most governors hold doctorate degrees in economics, finance, banking, or public policy, having PhDs is not enough to be eligible for the position. Other attributes such as publications, policy advocacy, profound knowledge, professional background, strong personality, and recognition in the relevant fields are deeply desired when a central bank governor’s credentials are examined before making the final decision on the leadership post. It will be hard for the government to convince the stakeholders, economists, and policy experts that the party leaders carried out a serious homework before making the decision about the post of the governor of the Bangladesh Bank that holds the helm of the economy.

Nifty28,000 Why PL Capital is positive amid selective signs, EPS downgrades

New Delhi: Nifty has remained confined within a narrow 5-6 per cent trading band over the past nine months, a noted PL Capital, attributing the long consolidation following a 9-9.5 per cent reduction in Nifty EPS projections for FY26 and FY27. Its latest report highlights that global geopolitical uncertainties and ambiguities surrounding tariffs have also contributed to this consolidation. PL Capital notes encouraging signs emerging from recent trade agreements, particularly with the USA and EU, and observes that a revival in demand is being supported by lower inflation, rationalised GST, and a softer interest rate environment. On the profitability front, auto, building materials, capital goods, NBFCs, oil & gas, and telecom posted over 20 per cent Ebitda growth. Cement, logistics, EMS, and renewables achieved over 30 per cent EBITDA growth, while chemicals, media, education, and travel lagged. There was a near balance in analyst rating changes, with 18 upgrades and 17 downgrades across industries. Capital goods and oil & gas had four upgrades each, while IT services had two. Oil & gas had three downgrades, and several other sectors saw two downgrades each. Major rating upgrades included Hindustan Petroleum Corporation, Bharat Petroleum Corporation, JSW Steel, Cholamandalam Investment and Finance Company, Ingersoll Rand, Apar Industries, Tech Mahindra, Tata Elxsi, and Torrent Pharma.



Downgraded companies included Shree Cement, Viniti Organics, Bajaj Electricals, Hindalco Industries, Oil and Natural Gas Corporation, OIL India, Mahanagar Gas, Lupin, Safari Industries, and Bharat Electronics. PL Capital's model portfolio remains overweight on banks, diversified financials, healthcare, consumer, auto, and capital goods/defence, while maintaining underweight positions in IT services and commodities. Allocations have increased to capital goods, NBFC, consumer, and metals, and reduced in auto and IT services. PL Capital has added Torrent Pharma to the

model portfolio. High conviction picks have been reshuffled, with HealthCare Global Enterprises, Ingersoll-Rand (India), and Ipca Laboratories have been included. It has removed HDFC Life Insurance Company, State Bank of India, Aster DM Healthcare, Fine Organic Industries and Max Healthcare Institute from the model portfolio. PL Capital's strategy update values Nifty at a 5 per cent discount to its 15-year average PE, pegging the index at 18.3 times with a December 2027 EPS forecast of 1,525. The 12-month target for Nifty is now 27,958, down from 28,814. For the

bull case, Nifty is valued at a PE of 20 times (target: 30,497), while the bear case assumes a 10 times discount to the long-period average (target: 26,486). Trade deals are expected to boost traditional sectors like textiles, gems and jewellery, marine, leather, and handicrafts, putting India as a manufacturing hub for auto components, data centers, defense, aerospace, and consumables it noted. The brokerage remains overweight on banks, diversified financials, healthcare, consumer, auto, and capital goods/defense as key themes. "We believe renewed thrust on Defense, Data Centers, Infrastructure/Ports, High Speed Rail Corridors, Renewables and Manufacturing ecosystem bodes well for growth in coming years. Next 5-10 years will be driven by asset creation and technology intensive industries which will find favor with markets," said PL Capital. PL Capital reports that third-quarter results beat estimates, but Nifty EPS forecasts were trimmed by 0.7-2.9 per cent for FY 26/27/28. Sales, Ebitda and PAT growth for its coverage universe were 9.9 per cent, 16.4 per cent, and 16.7 per cent year-on-year (YoY), respectively. Key sectoral performers included auto, EMS, renewables, NBFCs, hospitals, cement, durables, telecom, logistics, and ports, all of which surpassed 15 per cent sales growth. Capital goods, consumer, metals, and pharma reported between 10-15 per cent sales growth.

Porinju Veliyath's secret bet: 2 small-cap stocks the super investor is silently

New Delhi: The small-cap segment in the Indian market is considered by many as shark-infested. It is a segment that most risk-fearing investors ignore while a few navigate its murky depths with as much practiced patience as Porinju Veliyath. One of the most followed and highly respected super investors of India when it comes to proving that smallcaps are not risky if you know what you are doing, Veliyath has a current portfolio of 16 stocks worth Rs 235 cr as per Trendlyne.com. He has built a reputation on the understated art of identifying value where others see only risk. But something he has been doing consistently in the last few quarters is what has caught the attention of the investor circles. He has been steadily, but in small spurts, increasing his stake in two of his existing small cap holdings. Such persistent buying by an investor like Veliyath is rarely accidental. It signals a conviction in the underlying business cycle that the current market price has yet to wake up to, suggesting a gap between perceived risk and actual value. Let us look at these two smallcap favourites of Porinju Veliyath. The stock has gained roughly 14% over the past week and about 13% over the month. On a year-to-date basis, it is up close to 1%. It had touched a 52-week low of Rs 3.975 on February 24, 2026, while its 52-week high of Rs 5,894.50 was recorded on June 30, 2025. The sharp earnings growth has clearly altered short-term sentiment. Netweb Technologies India shares advanced over 4% during the midday following the announcement of a strategic collaboration with US-based Vertiv Holding Co. The company said it will partner with Vertiv to jointly engineer and validate its in-house designed GPU compute platforms with Vertiv's integrated AI data centre solutions. Here are the stocks mak-



ing the biggest moves at midday: The stock had touched its 52-week high of Rs 447.80 on May 20, 2025, while its 52-week low of Rs 301.20 was recorded on December 9, 2025. Orient Bell: Why Veliyath is Betting on the Tile Sector's Turnaround? Incorporated in 1977, Orient Bell Ltd is in the business of manufacturing, trading and selling of ceramic and floor tiles. The current market cap of the company as on 27th February 2026 is Rs 444 cr. Porinju Veliyath bought a stake in the company through his holding company Equity Intelligence India Private Limited, as per the filings for the quarter ending June 2020. And this is how the holding has changed in the last few quarters. As we can see, he has steadily increased the stake in the last few quarters. The current holding as per the filings for the quarter ending December 2025 is closer to 5% worth Rs 22 cr. Let us dive into the. The EBITDA (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization) saw a roller coaster ride in the past few years. For the 3 quarters of FY26 ending in December 2025, EBITDA of Rs 25 cr were recorded, hinting at a stronger finish to FY26. The net profits also saw jumps and fall in the last 5 years.

Nifty down 76 points; Nifty, Sensex, and Nifty Bank key levels

Mumbai: Indian equity benchmark indices are set for a flat start on Friday as a US tech sell-off and subdued Asian cues keep sentiment restrained, while the absence of fresh domestic triggers reinforces consolidation. IT stocks will be in focus amid AI-disruption fears, while oil prices retreated from nearly seven-month highs. Oil prices fell on Friday and were on track for a weekly decline after the United States and Iran extended talks over the OPEC member's nuclear programme, easing concerns about potential hostilities that could disrupt supply. While US crude rose 0.09 per cent to \$65.27 a barrel, while spot gold fell 0.23 per cent to \$5,175.03 an ounce. The market hovered throughout the day within the 25,400/82,000 to 25,370 /82,500 range after a muted open. The intraday activity was non-directional, with bearish candle indecisiveness between bulls and bears. The current market texture is non-directional, and traders are likely waiting for either side to breakout, said Shrikant Chouhan, Head of Equity Research at Kotak Securities. "Short term support seen at 60,500-60,200 levels being the confluence of the 20 days EMA and the key retracement of previous up move. Volatility is likely to remain elevated amid uncertain global cues. The near-term index is likely to trade in the range of 60,000-61,750. A decisive move beyond this range could trigger fresh directional momentum," he said. "On the higher side, 25,600/82,600 would be the immediate breakout zone for traders. Above this level, the market could rally towards 25,700-25,750/82,900-83,000. On the flip side, below 25,400/82,000, selling pressure is likely to accelerate. If the level is breached, the market could slip to 25,300-25,275/81,700-81,600," he added. "The underlying trend of Nifty remains choppy. Crucial lower supports to be watched around 25,400-25,350 levels on any weakness from here. Immediate resistance is placed at 25,600," he said.

Nifty Bank outlook
The 60,800-60,700 range will continue to serve as a crucial support base for Nifty Bank. A sustained hold above this zone will maintain the positive undertone and prevent a deeper corrective move. On the upside, the region between 61,400-61,500 is expected to act as a significant resistance band, said By Sudeep Shah, Head - Technical and Derivatives Research at SBI Securities. "If the index successfully surpasses this hurdle, it could pave the way for a near-term rally toward the 62,000 mark, followed by a potential extension toward 62,500 in the short term. Such a move would indicate a shift in momentum in favour of the bulls and could re-establish a stronger trending phase for the banking index," he said.

Nifty Bank formed a high wave candle

with a small real body and shadows in either direction signalling consolidation amid stock specific action. PSU banking stocks continue to outperform the private banking stocks. Bias remains positive and we believe dips should be used as a buying opportunity, said Bajaj Broking. On the daily charts, Nifty50 has been consistently failing to reclaim the 21-EMA, exhibiting an overall lack of strength. The RSI is in a bearish crossover, indicating weakening momentum, said Rupak De, Senior Technical Analyst at LKP Securities. "The sentiment may remain weak in the near term, with a possibility of falling towards 25,300. On the higher end, resistance is placed at 25,550-25,600." A small negative candle was formed on the daily chart with lower shadow. Technically, this market action signals a lack of strength in the market to sustain the highs. Frequent lower highs have been formed recently and the repeated testing of the crucial lower supports was seen around 25400 levels, said Nagaraj Shetti, Senior Technical Research Analyst at HDFC Securities. Supportive global developments, including a recovery in global markets—especially the US—and continued strength in overseas technology stocks, helped ease some of the downside pressure, said Ajit Mishra, SVP of Research at Religare Broking. "Participants are advised to maintain a stock-specific approach, focus on sectors showing strength, and disciplined risk management." Provisional data available with NSE suggest that FPIs turned net sellers of domestic stocks to the tune of Rs 3,465.99 crore on Thursday. On the other hand, domestic institutional investors (DIIs) turned buyers of Indian equities to the tune of Rs 5,031.57 crore on a net-net basis. Oil prices fell on Friday and were on track for a weekly decline. The United States and Iran extended talks over the OPEC member's nuclear programme, easing concerns about potential hostilities that could disrupt supply. While US crude rose 0.09 per cent to \$65.27 a barrel, while spot gold fell 0.23 per cent to \$5,175.03 an ounce. Supportive global developments, including a recovery in global markets—especially the US—and continued strength in overseas technology stocks, helped ease some of the downside pressure, said Ajit Mishra, SVP of Research at Religare Broking. "Participants are advised to maintain a stock-specific approach, focus on sectors showing strength, and disciplined risk management." Provisional data available with NSE suggest that FPIs turned net sellers of domestic stocks to the tune of Rs 3,465.99 crore on Thursday. On the other hand, domestic institutional investors (DIIs) turned buyers of Indian equities to the tune of Rs 5,031.57 crore on a net-net basis.

Suzlon shares fall 20% in 2026 to hit new 52-week low; analyst see over

New Delhi: ICICI Securities has reiterated its 'buy' rating on Suzlon Energy, following a comprehensive review of Suzlon's transformation, debt reduction, and strategic management changes, with further details of the plan anticipated in the coming months. Suzlon's recent initiatives are considered a positive signal for growth prospects by ICICI Securities. Suzlon has announced its 'Suzlon 2.0' vision, aiming to expand from wind energy solutions into diversified renewable energy (RE) offerings, including solar and battery energy storage systems (BESS). The move is seen as a response to recent execution challenges in the wind sector, particularly those related to transmission infrastructure, land acquisition, and regulatory delays. ICICI Securities points out that demand for wind power has found new growth pillars in FDRE and hybrid power. The company's order book reached approximately 6.4GW in January 2026, providing more than two years' execution visibility. "Suzlon, being the market leader in the wind turbine industry, is a natural beneficiary of this shift," it said. The broader renewable sector benefits from regulatory changes such as the government's annual tendering of at least 10GW of wind capacity. The outlook for wind energy remains positive in the medium to long term, given India's ambitious RE and wind targets. According to ICICI Securities, wind may play a crucial role in RE generation going ahead. It recently onboarded Ajay Kapur as CEO, who is expected to drive growth in Suzlon's existing business. Meanwhile, the newly formed Group Executive Council, comprising Chairman and MD Vinod Tanti, Executive Vice Chairman Girish Tanti, and former CEO JP Chalasani, will focus on diversification and strategy. ICICI Securities believes the diversification could improve growth visibility. Suzlon's order book, as of January 2026, is 4.1 times its FY25 wind turbine delivery volume. ICICI Securities remains positive on the stock with a target price of Rs 65 apiece, suggesting nearly 53 per cent from today's low. Key risks include potential surprises in wind turbine generator execution, order intake, and any unforeseen delays, as flagged by the brokerage. Suzlon Energy reported a 14.8 per cent rise in net profit on a year-on-year (YoY) basis to Rs 445.2 crore, while its revenue rose 42.4 per cent YoY to Rs 4,228.1 crore for the December 2025 quarter. Ebitda increased 48 per cent YoY to Rs 730.5 crore, while Ebitda margins improved by 70 basis points to 17.3 per cent for the reported period. "We believe that bringing in a slew of high-profile CXOs with non-core expertise under a single business (WTG manufacturing) risks setting in unfavourable group dynamics and unrelated diversification. Critically, such a reshuffle is unlikely to relieve the pain of widening gap between deliveries and commissioning," said JM Financial. This is corroborated by a marketing veteran Deepesh Nanda leaving Tata Power Renewable Energy (TPREL) as MD & CEO in the face of persistent execution challenges, it added, maintaining a 'buy' on Suzlon with a target price of Rs 64 based on 25 times FY28E EPS considering 2.5GW/3GW/3.2 GW deliveries during FY26E/27E/28E

Over the past three years, Suzlon has significantly improved its balance sheet, reducing debt from Rs 12,000 crore in FY20 through debt-to-equity conversions and a successful Rs 2,000 crore equity raise in



Q2FY24. Amid the ongoing weakness, shares of Suzlon Energy dropped another 2 per cent on Friday, to hit new 52-week lows, and the stock dropped nearly 20 per cent in 2026. Suzlon Energy share price hit its 52-week low of ₹43.85 on Monday, February 23 despite positive trends on Dalal Street. The company reported its December quarter results last month, posting a consolidated net profit of ₹445 crore, marking a 15% increase from ₹388 crore recorded in the corresponding quarter last year. During the quarter, the wind energy major registered its highest-ever quarterly deliveries of 617 MW, compared with 447 MW in Q3FY25, which helped lift consolidated revenue to ₹4,228 crore. In the year-ago period, the company had reported revenue of ₹2,969 crore. On the operating front, EBITDA rose sharply to ₹739 crore from ₹500 crore, reflecting a growth of 47%. Operating margins also expanded meaningfully, improving by 700 basis points to 17.5% during the quarter. As of the end of the December quarter, the company's order book stood at 6.4 GW. Within this, the S144 platform accounted for 5.69 GW, reinforcing its position as the company's flagship product and a leading offering in the domestic market, according to regulatory disclosures. Commenting on the performance, JP Chalasani, Chief Executive Officer, Suzlon Group, said, "Our closing order book of 6.4 GW stands higher than the opening order book for the quarter, despite the highest-ever deliveries in 30 years. This reflects the demand for our solutions and the effectiveness of our execution. Our balanced EPC strategy—targeting around a 50% share of the EPC business by 2028—is progressing steadily, with the EPC share increasing from 20% to 27% this quarter." The multibagger stock opened on a muted note at ₹44.47, then rose to its intra-day high of ₹44.97. However, from day's high, the scrip fell 2.5% to its intra-day low of ₹43.85, also its year-low. On the other hand, the benchmark indices, Nifty 50

and Sensex were trading around 0.6% higher today after the twists in the US tariffs over the weekend. Suzlon Energy stock began its downward run in September, which later turned into a prolonged correction, resulting in it losing 41% of its value from the recent peak of ₹74.30 apiece, hit in May 2025. Suzlon shares: Amid the ongoing weakness, shares of Suzlon Energy Ltd dropped another 2 per cent on Friday, to hit new 52-week lows. The stock is down 44 per cent from its 52-week lows at Rs 74.30 in May 2025, while the stock is down 20 per cent in 2026 so far. Despite this weakness, brokerage firms continued to remain positive on the stock, citing over 50 per cent upside. ICICI Securities has reiterated its 'buy' rating on Suzlon Energy, following a comprehensive review of Suzlon's transformation, debt reduction, and strategic management changes, with further details of the plan anticipated in the coming months. Suzlon's recent initiatives are considered a positive signal for growth prospects by ICICI Securities. As of September 2024, it reported net cash positivity with a cash reserve of Rs 1,300 crore, which ICICI Securities highlights as a major factor for financial stability. Suzlon shares: Amid the ongoing weakness, shares of Suzlon Energy Ltd dropped another 2 per cent on Friday, to hit new 52-week lows. It recently onboarded Ajay Kapur as CEO, who is expected to drive growth in Suzlon's existing business. Meanwhile, the newly formed Group Executive Council, comprising Chairman and MD Vinod Tanti, Executive Vice Chairman Girish Tanti, and former CEO JP Chalasani, will focus on diversification and strategy. ICICI Securities believes the diversification could improve growth visibility. The stock is down 44 per cent from its 52-week lows at Rs 74.30 in May 2025, while the stock is down 20 per cent in 2026 so far. Despite this weakness, brokerage firms continued to remain positive on the stock, citing over 50 per cent upside.

Russia Strikes Cities Across Ukraine Ahead of Talks Between U.S. and Ukrainian Envoys

Washington: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky says another round of negotiations with Russia will likely take place in Abu Dhabi in early March. His remarks came after U.S. and Ukrainian officials wrapped up talks in Geneva on Thursday, where they discussed postwar reconstruction and an economic package for Ukraine. Ahead of the talks, Russia launched a massive drone and missile attack against multiple cities in Ukraine, wounding 23 people, including a child. This is a resident whose apartment building in Zaporizhzhia was attacked by Russia. Pakistan’s defense ministry declared an “open war” against Afghanistan’s Taliban government as it launched cross-border attacks and airstrikes on the Afghan capital, Kabul. Pakistani officials claimed their attacks killed 133 Taliban fighters, while the Afghan government claimed its counterattacks killed 55 Pakistani soldiers. Thirteen civilians were reportedly killed in a refugee camp near the Torkham border crossing, including women and chil-

dren, with several others wounded. A congressional committee is deposing former President Bill Clinton today over his connection to serial sex offender Jeffrey Epstein. This comes after former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton denied ever meeting Epstein or knowing of his crimes during separate closed-door testimony to the House Oversight Committee Thursday, which the former presidential candidate denounced as “partisan political theater.” Clinton spoke to reporters in Chappaqua, New York, after her closed-door deposition. Hillary Clinton: “I never met Jeffrey Epstein, never had any connection or communication with him. I knew Ghislaine Maxwell casually as an acquaintance. But whatever they asked me, I did my very best to respond.” Democrats on the House Oversight Committee have called on President Trump to also be deposed, following mounting reports that key documents related to a woman who accused Trump of assaulting her while she was a mi-

nor are missing from the Justice Department’s release of the Epstein files. This is Democratic Rep. Robert Garcia. Rep. Robert Garcia: “ This committee has now set a new precedent about talking to presidents and former presidents. And we’re demanding immediately that we ask President Trump to testify in front of our committee and be deposed in front of oversight Republicans and Democrats.”We’ll have more on the Epstein files after headlines with investigative journalist Barry Levine, author of “The Spider: Inside the Tangled Web of Jeffrey Epstein and Ghislaine Maxwell.” Sher Zaman: “Something fell, and I thought it had landed on top of our tent. My wife’s hand was injured badly, and my nephew was injured too. Both are now lying in the hospital in critical condition.”The escalation follows weeks of violence along Pakistan’s 1,600-mile-long border with Afghanistan. The fighting has largely shut land border crossings, worsening Afghanistan’s already dire

humanitarian crisis. Troshko Mykola: “It’s been four years, and they still haven’t ended the war. That’s what we want. We want them to reach a deal, but there are no agreements. And now we don’t know where to go or what to do. Our apartment is completely ruined.” U.S. and Iranian officials have concluded another round of indirect talks over Iran’s nuclear program without a breakthrough, though a mediator cited “significant progress” in the Geneva negotiations. Iran’s foreign minister said afterward that further technical talks are scheduled for next week in Vienna — the home of the International Atomic Energy Agency — and that progress toward a deal had been “good.” The talks came President Trump assembled the largest fleet of warplanes and aircraft in the Middle East in decades ahead of possible U.S. strikes on Iran, even though Congress has not authorized an attack.

US and Israel begin combined strike on Iran as Trump calls for regime change



Washington: Israel and the United States have initiated a war against Iran, with Donald Trump proclaiming the commencement of “major combat operations” and urging Iranians to revolt against their government. The US president’s remarks came shortly after explosions were reported throughout central Tehran. One alleged strike

occurred near the headquarters of the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. An Iranian official warned Reuters that Iran is planning a “crushing retaliation”. Explosions erupted throughout northern Israel on Saturday as the nation attempted to intercept incoming Iranian missiles fired in response. The government has already

pected explosion. US and Israel commence strikes on Iran: everything we know thus far. The strike on Iran occurred hours after Trump stated that he was “not happy” with the ongoing discussions with Iran over its nuclear program. The United States had increased its military posture in the region in recent weeks in preparation for an assault, including two aircraft carrier strike groups. Following Saturday’s assaults, both the United States and Israel called for Iranian government change and a public revolt. Trump urged Iranians to “take over your government” in a video posted on his Truth Social platform. He promised the Iranian military “immunity” if they surrendered, or “certain death” if they did not, and urged Iranians that the “hour of your freedom is at hand,” encouraging people to rise up and “take over your government.”

Rising fury over health financing pacts with African countries

African: A series of bilateral health agreements being discussed between African countries and President Donald Trump’s administration have been dubbed “clearly lop-sided” and “immoral” amid mounting concern about US demands, such as forcing countries to share biological resources and data. Zimbabwe has terminated discussions with the US for \$350 million (£258 million) in health financing, citing concerns that the plans might undermine its sovereignty and independence. According to a letter sent in December by Albert Chimbindi, Zimbabwe’s secretary for foreign affairs and international trade, the president, Emmerson Mnangagwa, “directed that Zimbabwe must discontinue any negotiation, with the USA, on the clearly lop-sided MoU [memorandum of understanding] that blatantly compromises and undermines the sovereignty and independence of Zimbabwe as a country.” Meanwhile, a deal with Zambia, which has been linked to a separate agreement with the US on “collaboration in the mining sector,” has yet to be finalized, with Asia Russell, director of the HIV advocacy organization Health Gap, accusing the US of “conditioning life-saving health services on plundering the country’s mineral wealth.” It’s flagrant exploitation, which is wrong.” At least 17 African nations have signed agreements with the United States, totaling \$11.3 billion in health aid, but raising worries about the sacrifices made in exchange. Critics claim there has been a lack of engagement with community organizations that supply much of the healthcare in African countries, as well as worries about data privacy (the US seeks patient record data as part of the arrangements) and the prioritizing of faith-based healthcare providers. In Nigeria, US remarks imply that the financing is contingent on authorities addressing what the Trump administration regards to be Christian persecution in the country. The Trump administration is pursuing bilateral deals with several countries as part



of its America First global health agenda. The new strategy comes after the United States dismantled its main assistance agency, USAID, and withdrew from huge multilateral organizations like the World Health Organization. The quick push for treaties is viewed as part of the United States’ efforts to create and consolidate control on the continent. The agreements also require African states to rely on US regulatory clearance of new pharmaceuticals and technology before implementing them. The US-Rwanda agreement explicitly states that it will expand US private-sector engagement in the country’s health sector. A Zimbabwean government official said on Wednesday that the US had requested “sensitive health data, including pathogen samples,” but there was no promise of access to any ensuing medical advancements. “Zimbabwe was being asked to share its biological resources and data over an extended period, with no corresponding guarantee of access to any medical innovations - such as vaccines, diagnostics or treatments - that

might result from that shared data,” he told journalists. “In essence, our nation would provide the raw materials for scientific discovery without any assurance that the end products would be accessible to our people should a future health crisis emerge.” Zimbabwe was also concerned that bilateral agreements would weaken WHO institutions intended to ensure justice in any future pandemic response. a sovereignty, or access to strategic resources, it fundamentally alters the nature of the relationship from one of partnership to one of unequal exchange.” Pamela Tremont, the US ambassador to Zimbabwe, told X that she regretted the country’s choice. “We believe this collaboration would have delivered extraordinary benefits for Zimbabwean communities - especially the 1.2 million men, women and children currently receiving HIV treatment through US-supported programmes,” she told reporters. “We will now turn to the difficult and regrettable task of winding down our health assistance in Zimbabwe.”

A military cargo jet carrying cash crashes in Bolivia

Bolivia: At least 20 people were killed and many injured when a military cargo plane carrying banknotes crashed while landing in Bolivia’s capital on Friday, damaging nearly a dozen automobiles on a highway and scattering bills on the ground, according to an official. Local TV footage showed individuals racing to gather currencies as police in riot gear sought to disperse them with tear gas. Authorities were then observed igniting the money in a bonfire at the crash site. According to the defense ministry, the money delivered in the crashed airplane lacks an official serial number and hence has no legal or buying authority. In addition, “its collection, possession, or use constitutes a crime.”

The aircraft, a C-130 Hercules cargo jet, went off the runway when it landed at El Alto International Airport and drifted down an avenue before coming to rest in a field, according to local TV footage. The reason of the accident was not immediately clear, although witnesses told Agence France-Presse that the weather was dangerous. Cristina Choque, a 60-year-old vendor whose car was hit by airplane wreckage,



recalled lightning and a violent hailstorm when the jet landed. “The tyre is what fell on top of us my daughter is injured, she has a head wound,” she told me. Choque stated that she and her family waited inside their crushed vehicle for fear of the large gathering at the disaster site. The Ministry of Defence said that it will conduct an inquiry following the disaster. Col Rene Tambo, chief of El Alto’s police murder branch, informed reporters that “there

are about 20, maybe a few more,” casualties. Col Pavel Tovar of the National Fire Department had previously estimated that the tragedy killed “between 15 and 16 people”. “We are recovering the bodies of these people who have sadly suffered in the accident,” he informed us. The Bolivian health ministry said that at least 28 persons were hurt. The Bolivian air force jet was transferring fresh banknotes from the central bank to

other locations, and there were many bills scattered on the ground near the accident scene. The Bolivian Air Navigation and Airports Authority (NAABOL) announced in a statement that the C-130 left the eastern city of Santa Cruz and crashed while landing at the international airport in La Paz, suspending operations. According to Bolivian Air Force Gen. Sergio Lora, two of the plane’s six crew members were still missing as of late Friday.

Special Report: U.S. & Israel Launch Unprovoked Attack on Iran, Risking Broader Regional War

Washington: The U.S. and Israel have launched an unprovoked attack on Iran, striking sites across the country, including the compound of Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Iranian state media reports one Israeli strike hit an elementary girls’ school in Minab, killing at least 85 people, including scores of children. Iran responded by launching attacks across the Middle East targeting Israel and U.S. military installations in the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain and Jordan. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says there are “growing signs” that Iran’s supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, was killed in the attack. The U.S. and Israel have launched an unprovoked attack on Iran, striking sites across Iran, including the compound of Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. The Israeli military says it’s struck over 500 targets, including three sites where senior Iranian officials were gathering. Iranian state media reports one Israeli strike hit an elementary girls’ school in the south of Iran in Minab, killing at least 85 people, including at least 60 children. Two more students were killed in a strike on a school east of the capital Tehran. Iran reports the U.S. and Israeli attacks have killed at least 200 people so far. Iran responded by launching attacks across the Middle East targeting Israel, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain and Jordan. Several U.S. bases were reportedly hit. In a video message, President Trump called for regime change and urged

Iranians to take over the government. Trump launched the attacks without congressional approval. Oman’s Foreign Minister Badr Albusaidi criticized the U.S. for attacking Iran in the middle of negotiations. He wrote online, quote, “I am dismayed. Active and serious negotiations have yet again been undermined. Neither the interests of the United States nor the cause of global peace are well served by this,” he said. The U.N. Security Council is scheduled to hold an emergency meeting today. In this special broadcast, we’ll be joined by a number of guests. We begin with Trita Parsi, executive vice president of the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, who has written a number of books about Iran and the United States. TRITA PARSI: This is clearly an illegal war and a war of aggression. It’s illegal in terms of international law. It clearly is illegal in terms of domestic American law. This issue has not been debated. It has not been voted on by Congress. And this is Trump, really, also, in addition to all of these things, betraying his own base, who, to a very large extent, voted for him precisely because he presented himself as the candidate that would end endless wars. But this is clearly a war of choice. The Omani foreign minister laid out yesterday on CBS News clearly that inside the negotiations the Iranians had moved significantly and offered concessions that made the deal on the table dramatically stronger than what the Obama deal from 2015 was. For instance, not

only would the Iranians not be amassing any low enriched uranium or any enriched uranium at all, whereas in the Obama deal they would be able to have up to 300 kilos at any time. Now they will be down to zero. With zero amassed enriched uranium, you cannot build a bomb, obviously. But on top of that, based on the needs basis for continued enrichment, the Iranians actually would likely not enrich anything at all for another three to five years, which means that during the duration of Trump’s presidency, there would be no enrichment in Iran. Despite all of this, despite the ease in which he could declare victory and say that he got a much better deal than Obama, Trump opted to go for war, because what he clearly seems to be looking for is not a deal, but capitulation and surrender. TRITA that very interesting, because it’s very clear, based on that, in my reading, that he knows that he’s going to have a very hard time actually selling this to his own base. The starting point is already extremely low, with no more than 20% of the American public supporting this, in general, and amongst Republicans, it’s not stronger than 35%, which is a very low level. Remember, when Bush went into Iraq in that illegal war, he had managed to lie enough to get the American people to support that war at 79%. AMY GOODMAN: The latest you have heard about the casualties in Iran, and then also the hitting of the Gulf states, not to mention sending drones to Israel and hitting U.S. bases, as well, Trita Parsi.

Frictionmaxxing: Why Gen Z Is Seeking Real, Unfiltered Experiences In Cafés And Restaurants

In an era defined by algorithmic optimisation and aesthetic perfection, a quiet shift is underway. Gen Z, raised in the age of curated feeds and performative lifestyles, is increasingly gravitating toward something less polished and far more human. This emerging mindset, often referred to as “frictionmaxxing,” reflects a desire to move away from seamless performance and toward experiences that feel emotionally textured, spontaneous and real.Unlike earlier slow-living movements that focused on withdrawal, frictionmaxxing is not about disengagement. Instead, it is about reintroducing emotional friction, the unpredictability, imperfection and presence that make experiences meaningful. And perhaps unexpectedly, cafés and restaurants have become some of the most important stages for this cultural shift.

From Performative to Personal

For years, hospitality spaces were designed with visual perfection in mind. Interiors were optimised for Instagram grids, menus engineered for shareability and experiences carefully choreographed. But consumers, particularly younger ones, are beginning to crave something less scripted. “Frictionmaxxing reflects a growing fatigue with hyper-curated living,” says Priyanka Kotak, founder, Dough & Joe. “For years, hospitality spaces were built to be photographed, now they’re being built to be felt.”

This distinction between



being seen and being felt is crucial. Kotak explains that at Dough & Joe, the emphasis is on sensory honesty rather than visual perfection. “We embrace the sensory and the imperfect, pizza torn by hand, cheese that stretches, tables that get loud, conversations that aren’t rehearsed. There’s honesty in that friction. Not everything needs to be polished for the feed.”Her observation reflects a broader generational shift. Gen Z, she adds, is not rejecting aesthetics altogether but rejecting inauthenticity. “They’re choosing spaces where presence replaces performance.”

The Return of the Human Touch

At its core, frictionmaxxing represents a reclaiming of human unpredictability in environments that had become overly controlled.“In my opinion, frictionmaxxing is about reclaiming the human touch in hospitality,” says Goumtesh Singh, Founder, Raasta and co-founder, Yeti – The Himalayan Kitchen. “For a space that for long has been

dominated by performative experience, there seems to be a growing want for places that feel obvious, happily flawed and humane.” At Raasta, that philosophy manifests through energy rather than restraint. “It’s a space where music is loud, conversations are louder, and the night skips the script,” Singh says. “That rawness, the spontaneity of a dancefloor moment or a shared table, is exactly what people are gravitating to.At Yeti, however, the same impulse takes a quieter form. “Frictionmaxxing exists differently,” he explains. “It’s in the storytelling, food that carries geography, memory and heritage. The experience isn’t engineered to be slick; it’s meant to feel warm and personal. Guests don’t just have a meal, they engage with culture.”His insight underscores an important nuance: frictionmaxxing is not about abandoning quality but redefining what quality means. “It’s about redesigning for presence,” Singh says. “The most memorable experiences today aren’t the

most curated ones.”

Designing Spaces That Allow People to Simply Be

For many founders and chefs, this shift is less a trend and more a validation of instincts they have long followed. “Frictionmaxxing is about choosing emotional connection over perfection,” says Ruhi Gupta, Head Chef and Co-Founder at August Cafe. “At August, that philosophy has always been intuitive to us.”Rather than scripting interactions, Gupta explains that the café prioritises responsiveness and emotional ease. “We’ve created a space that feels personal rather than performative,” she says. “This means staying responsive and human, adapting to guests’ needs in real time rather than scripting every interaction.”That flexibility allows something increasingly rare in public spaces: emotional vulnerability.“When that trust is felt, guests let their guard down,” Gupta says. “And that’s where the most genuine, unfiltered moments happen.”The emphasis here is not on spectacle but on

emotional safety — spaces where people do not feel compelled to perform versions of themselves.

Authenticity as the New Luxury

This desire for emotional texture reflects a deeper cultural recalibration.“Every generation seeks its own rhythm,” says Vaishali Karad, Founder of Paashh. “What is being described as frictionmaxxing reflects a deeper human instinct — the desire to feel texture, to experience time fully and to engage without the pressure of constant display.” Karad believes hospitality spaces carry a unique emotional responsibility in this moment. “A thoughtfully designed café or restaurant can become a setting for reflection, layered conversation and meaningful presence,” she says.At Paashh, this translates into restraint rather than excess. ”

Presence Over Performance

The rise of frictionmaxxing reveals a paradox of modern life. In a world that has made self-presentation frictionless, people are rediscovering the value of friction itself.What makes a place memorable is no longer how perfect it looks, but how it makes people feel. Increasingly, the cafés and restaurants resonating most deeply are not those that promise flawless experiences, but those that allow room for imperfection, spontaneity and emotional presence.They are spaces where nothing is optimised for the algorithm, and everything is open to the moment.And in a culture built on performance, that may be the most radical experience of all.

Aneet Padda's Ivory Gauri & Nainika Saree Moment Is A Masterclass In Modern Minimalism

There’s something undeniably powerful about restraint on a red carpet. While sequins compete and silhouettes swell for attention, the rare look that chooses stillness often leaves the deepest imprint. This time, that calm belonged to Aneet Padda, who stepped out in an ivory-draped saree that felt less like a fashion statement and more like a second skin. It wasn’t designed to trend. It was designed to endure.

Created by couturier duo Gauri & Nainika, the custom saree embraced architectural simplicity. Think fluid drapes, precise pleating and a blouse that offered clean structure without overpowering

the silhouette. No ornate embroidery, no dramatic embellishments – just fabric doing what it does best when cut right: move. Under the lights, the ivory tone glowed rather than gleamed. It lent a softness that felt modern and deeply flattering, allowing the craftsmanship to speak instead of competing for spectacle. In a sea of maximal gowns, the look felt like a pause – elegant, measured and confident. The accessories followed the same philosophy of edit, not excess. Statement earrings from Jet Gems added just the right glint, framing her face without turning the ensemble into a jewellery showcase. Rings from Mia by Tanishq stayed delicate and deliberate. Even her

barely-there Eridani stilettoes melted into the look, lengthening the line without distracting from it.

Stylist Lakshmi Lehr approached the ensemble with a clear intention: amplify, don’t alter. Instead of constructing a persona, the styling leaned into Aneet’s natural ease – soft waves, luminous skin, and makeup that enhanced rather than masked. It’s the kind of restraint that feels luxurious today. Less theatre, more authenticity.And perhaps that’s why the look resonated. Aneet Padda didn’t appear styled within an inch of perfection; she looked comfortable, present and entirely herself. The result? A red carpet moment that felt personal rather than performative.

‘Muslim women are not afraid to be seen’ – the power of the printed hijab

There’s a common sentiment among my hijab-wearing friends: a plain black headscarf is the equivalent of putting your hair in a slickback bun. A slickback bun is classic, timeless and polished – it can go with almost anything. But, it can also look a little tired. I love bold prints, and it isn’t just me. A friend of mine gravitates toward leopard prints and pashmina-style scarves, a nod to her Kashmiri heritage. And it’s not only an aesthetic choice – for many hijab-wearing women, patterned scarves feel like a push against the idea that Muslim women should blend in.Loud and proud printed hijabs are having a full-throttle revival. At London fashion week last weekend, hijab-wearing models appeared in jewellery-adorned scarves, inspired by traditional Yemeni fabrics, at the show of British-Yemeni designer Kazna Asker. Florals, tartans, polka dots, and graphic motifs fill my TikTok feeds. Keffiyeh-inspired designs sell out within hours.

For gen Z Muslim women in particular, the printed scarf has shifted from something coded as “too much” to a deliberate part of an outfit.Driving this resurgence is Vela, the US-based label founded in 2009 by sisters Marwa and Tasneem Atik whose scarves, featuring everything from Bambi-style prints to Syrian-inspired motifs, regularly sell out within minutes of going on sale. “There’s no better way to stand out in your style and your fashion than in the printed hijab,” says Tasneem. For her, this new wave represents a “boldness” among Muslim women, and an assertion of how they want to be seen. It signals a move away from blending in for safety and comfort, toward dressing in a way that stands firm in their identities. The brand has become a cornerstone for young Muslim women online, spawning a subculture of ‘Vela girls’ who share styling tips and tutorials on TikTok and Instagram. Its popularity has even inspired knock-offs on fast-fashion sites such as Shein, prompting criticism that the fast-moving trend cycle risks feeding the same culture of overconsumption that modest fashion once positioned itself against. In the UK, Soooqlina, a London-based modest fashion retailer founded by Lina Salih in 2024, represents this new wave. After noticing there was a gap in the market for digitally printed jersey-material hijabs, Salih released polka dot and plaid headscarves, which sold out within a few days.All of these colourful, patterned styles are a refreshing break from the hijab styles that dominated during the mid-2010s. This was when the aesthetic that dominated was sleek and controlled: chiffon fabrics, careful draping, and a palette of beige,

is projected to reach \$428bn (£327bn) by 2027, and fashion influenced by Islam is increasingly mainstream – even as politicians continue to single out and stigmatise women that wear the hijab and burqa. On social media, the results are evident. Diana Lomani, a 23-year-old social media manager and content creator who posts fashion content, describes the subcultures she has seen emerge: “There are Gyarur [a Japanese fashion subculture] hijabis now – that wasn’t a thing five years ago. People realise you can wear prints on your hijab like a T-shirt. When people see us styling hijabs uniquely, they realise we’re actually people instead of dehumanising us.”At the same time, experimenting with her personal style has brought joy. “People tell me that they didn’t know a headscarf could be styled, it’s made me enjoy wearing it a lot more,” she says. Lomani often weaves her Palestinian heritage into her style, wearing headbands, decorated with tatreez (Palestinian embroidery), and gold coin jewellery with her headscarf. “It’s an invitation to spark conversation,” she says.For the Vela founders, this reclamation of culture is integral. Many of their customers are women in the diaspora trying to connect with their roots. Their Baladi collection, loosely translated as “home”, was designed with this in mind. Their prints draw on cultural references and symbolism of Guinean, Egyptian and Pakistani cultures. In an increasingly polarising and Islamophobic climate, Marwa says this representation is a “form of resistance”.Plain or black scarves might still be a go-to for comfort and familiarity, but seeing friends and other young Muslim women embrace bold and expressive personal style makes me feel part of something bigger. It’s energising to be in a generation that wears its culture and faith unapologetically on its sleeves ... and on its heads.



Touch, sound and style: how London fashion week is opening up to visually impaired guests – photo essay



“If you put your hands out and run your fingers along this skirt, you’ll feel that there are soft feathers appliquéd on to it,” says the fashion designer Chet Lo. “The skirt is emerald green in colour with black panels on the side and it is designed to be very fitted on the body.” Lo is speaking to a group of six guests ahead of his London fashion week show, offering them a sneak preview of his new collection that will shortly be unveiled on the catwalk. The group stands huddled around Lo, listening intently as he talks them through each piece, pausing to pass around everything from jackets featuring spiky back panels to clingy knitted dresses. The opportunity to feel each piece is crucial for the group standing in front of Lo: each person has low vision or is blind.This “touch tour” has been organised by Making Fashion Accessible, an initiative from the non-profit Hair & Care founded by the celebrity hairstylist Anna Cofone in 2019, which aims to foster more inclusivity in the fashion and beauty industries. After the tour, guests are invited to sit front row at Lo’s show where they are presented with a pair of headphones that allow them to listen to audio descriptions of each look on the catwalk alongside a booklet featuring samples of the fabrics used

in each piece.“I am fully blind so I got so much out of it,” says Jane Manley, who works as a data analyst at the Royal National Institute of Blind People. “As someone with no usable sight, I am all about feeling the energy in the room and hearing people ‘umming’ and ‘ahhing’ as a model walks by. I can connect that energy with the swatch booklet and the audio description to create a picture of each look in my mind.” Livi Deane, a model and beautician who lost her right eye to cancer age 12, says that without the swatches, she would “struggle to see the texture as my depth perception is quite bad. With the swatch booklet and audio descriptions, I feel I am not missing out on anything.”Catrin Pugh, a disability activist, describes the experience as giving her “the feeling that sight loss takes away”. Pugh has vision loss due to an accident in 2013 that left her with 96% burns. “I have enough vision that I can kind of see the general silhouette of a look on the catwalk and maybe the colours. So I used the fabric swatches when I could tell there was some detail I was missing. Having the capacity to feel, imagine and sense the detail opened the whole show up to me so I could feel completely part of it.”Cofone, who has worked with clients including Dua Lipa and Lana Del

Rey, credits growing up with a father who was blind as the inspiration behind the initiative. “There is this preconceived idea that a blind or low-vision person won’t care about how they look and actually that couldn’t be further from the truth,” Cofone says. “I saw first-hand as my father was losing his eyesight how dressing well really helped him to retain his identity and independence.”Cofone started by hosting hair and self-care workshops for blind and low-vision women and later expanded her efforts to try to make fashion week more accessible. “If we think about fashion as a whole, especially catwalk shows, they are so not inclusive. I was already working in the industry, so began chatting to my team about what features we could implement that would help blind and low-vision guests create their own visual of the looks.” Cofone launched Making Fashion Accessible in 2024 and has since teamed up with designers including Roksanda, Erdem and SS.Daley. Lo has been involved from the beginning.

The New York-born, UK-based designer is known for his tactile pieces that have been worn by Doja Cat and Kylie Jenner. “Low-vision and blind people are a demographic that are really overlooked in the industry because a lot of people wrongly assume that they aren’t able to enjoy fashion because they cannot see or experience clothes in the same way a sighted person can,” says Lo. “I wanted to prove to other designers that it is really easy to integrate this demographic into our work. It’s not difficult to consider what their needs are.” The purple pound that represents the spending power of disabled people and their households was estimated to be worth £274bn in 2023. However, it is a cohort that is regularly overlooked, especially in fashion. Bricks and mortar shops can be difficult to navigate and websites often fail to include detailed alternative text on images that would allow shoppers to visualise the look and fit of a piece. Adaptive features such as braille clothes tags to identify colours and fabrics, and easy fastenings such as magnets rather than buttons, are also overlooked by luxury designers and the high street. “I have always

adored clothes,” says Lucy Edwards, a disability activist and content creator who lost her sight age 17 due to a rare genetic condition called Incontinentia Pigmenti. “Fashion was part of my identity and suddenly I couldn’t access it. Fashion is also a massive part of our wider culture and I felt I had lost that too.”Edwards’s guide dog Miss Molly sits next to her at Lo’s show where the feathered looks are her favourite because they are “massively tactile”. She compares the touch tour to how she shops for clothes: “I’m feeling for the cut of a neckline or if a piece is cut on the bias, the type of stitching or the length of sleeves.”Vix Seffens, a brand strategist who has a vision impairment due to Stargardt’s disease, describes the event as “a multi-layered sensory experience”. Stargardt’s disease is a genetic eye condition: “I had normal eyesight up until I was 11 and then it began to deteriorate,” Seffens says. “It means I can’t drive a car. I can’t recognise someone unless they are standing right in front of me. I can’t pick up a newspaper and read it. I need things on a screen to be really big and zoomed in.” As a result, the touch tour and fabric swatches let Seffens form a clearer image of what appears on the catwalk.“I am so used to looking at things and not really being able to see them,” Seffens says. “Attending the show is like a puzzle you are able to put together in your mind. You have felt the fabric at the touch tour so you also know how heavy it is and how it moves. And for me, I have got to see the colours up close. Then you hear the audio so it’s all those pieces coming together. Suddenly the experience of seeing the show is so much richer.” Edwards says the experience of attending fashion week and hearing from Lo first-hand makes her more daring in her own styling choices. “Previously, I would not have clashed colours and textures as I was sticking to an arbitrary fashion law I had in my head. Now, it’s like we can do whatever we want and we can be whoever we want to be. That’s what fashion week represents. I went blind through no fault of my own so why should I stand here and be like: ‘Oh, I’m going to just accept not feeling like myself.’ I don’t have to do that in 2026.”

ENTERTAINMENT

Hundreds of admirers gather to catch a glimpse of newlywed Vijay Deverakonda and Rashmika Mandanna as they visit his birthplace

Rajasthan: Actors Vijay Deverakonda and Rashmika Mandanna married on February 26 in Udaipur in front of close friends and family. On Monday, they celebrated their gruhapravesam (entering the house) and Satyanarayana Vratam puja in their new home in Thummanapeta, Telangana. Following the puja, the newlyweds saw hundreds of admirers who had flocked to catch a sight of them in the neighborhood. (Read: Newlywed

Vijay Deverakonda and Rashmika Mandanna seek blessings at TTD, distribute sweets.) In a video that has surfaced on social media, Rashmika and Vijay were seen coming on a small stage to meet the fans who had gathered there. Hundreds of them stood and cheered as Vijay held Rashmika's hand and helped her onto the stage. She waved at them and, with her hands folded, bowed in gratitude. Vijay smiled and stood beside

her on stage. Rashmika and Vijay performed the Satyanarayana Vratam at their new home, a traditional puja performed by newly married couples to thank God for the successful completion of a wedding and to begin a new chapter in their lives with blessings. Rashmika thanked fans on stage and said, 'I love you' as she took the microphone. Vijay also expressed his gratitude. There was security, with many police personnel to

control the crowd. Earlier, several fans had gathered around the newlyweds at the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams, eager to click pictures and congratulate them. The two were seen distributing sweets to the crowd at the temple. Rashmika shared a video from the day on her Instagram Stories and wrote, "Our hearts are so full!" Rashmika and Vijay got married in Udaipur on February 26 in the presence of their closest friends and loved ones.

Their reception will be held in Hyderabad on March 4 on an invite-only basis. The reception was originally planned as an exclusive gathering for members of the film fraternity across Telugu, Hindi, Tamil, Malayalam and Kannada industries, along with distinguished leaders from political and administrative circles. After consulting the police, the guest list has been restricted, and fans have been advised not to turn up at the venue.



Ranveer Singh's film makes 9 times as much as Yash's in advance bookings in the United States

New Delhi: As March approached, the greatest movie office fight in recent memory got closer. This month, on the 19th, two big films, Dhurandhar: The Revenge and Toxic: A Fairytale for Grown-Ups, will be released in theaters simultaneously. There is a lot of speculation regarding the massive box-office duel and which picture will win. While advance reservations are yet to start in India, restricted pre-sales for both films began in the United States at the end of February. So far, Dhurandhar 2 has established an early lead. Aditya Dhar's Dhurandhar 2 sees Ranveer Singh reprise his role as Hamza, or Jaskirat Singh Rang, in the much awaited sequel to the 2025 smash. The sequel to the previous film, which made over ₹1300 crore internationally, is projected to match or exceed its success. According to Sacnilk, owing to an early broad release in the United States, Dhurandhar 2 has raised



\$33,723 in advance sales as of March 1, selling 1953 tickets over 209 scheduled presentations in 151 theaters. The number of sites and shows will grow in the following days. Part 1 grossed \$21 million in the United States and Canada. Toxic, Kannada superstar Yash's come-

back film, will be released globally on the same day. So far, pre-sales for the Geetu Mohandas-directed film in the United States have been modest. As of Sunday, the film has 122 screenings in 81 theaters. The film's advance ticket sales for its debut were \$3,665, with 189 sold. Early comparisons reveal that

Dhurandhar 2 has taken a significant lead, but the difference might close fast once additional shows open for Toxic, which is expected in the next two weeks. Yash's latest film, KGF Chapter 2, grossed slightly under \$7 million in North America, but the actor's popularity has grown significantly since its release in 2022. Dhurandhar: The Revenge was shot concurrently with the first segment. The project was originally intended to be a single picture, but was broken into two parts months before its premiere last year. Aside from Ranveer, Dhurandhar 2 stars Arjun Rampal, R Madhavan, Sanjay Dutt, and Sara Arjun in significant roles, with Akshaye Khanna slated to return in a cameo. Toxic, on the other hand, has Yash in three roles, as early promotions suggest. Nayanthara, Kiara Advani, Tara Sutaria, Huma Qureshi, and Rukmini Vasanth co-star in the violent action flick with Yash.

Shreya Ghoshal feels like a misfit for Bipasha Basu's voice in "Jaadu Hai Nasha Hai"



Mumbai: Shreya Ghoshal, a popular playback singer, made her Bollywood singing debut with Devdas, directed by Sanjay Leela Bhansali, when she was 16. However, in a recent interview with ABP Network, the singer discussed a dull period following her debut and how she felt like a mismatch for her second song, Jaadu Hai Nasha Hai from Jism. When asked how singing in a film like Devdas and winning a National Award for the song Bairi Piya helped her career, Shreya responded, "Devdas was a tremendous launchpad. When you sing in a film with stars like Shah Rukh Khan and Madhuri Dixit, your start is quite powerful. However, it took me a long time to receive my next song. It wasn't like I was calling every-

one every day looking for job. I waited for the appropriate opportunity. I feel that every piece of music needs the perfect casting, and that if it does not occur at the correct time, magic is not created." She then talked about how she felt like a misfit for Jaadu Hai Nasha Hai in Jism. "I felt like a misfit for Bipasha Basu, but it was a daring decision by composer M. M. Keeravani, who is globally famous. He stated that he wanted that precise voice. I don't believe I tried to be sensual in it since it doesn't come easily to me. I believe it was intended to capture the rawness of adolescence - I was 18 at the time. I was unable to deliver. When they presented the circumstances to me, I attempted to channel my inner Asha Bhosle ji and imagine what she would have done if she had been there. But I did it my way. Jaadu Hai Nasha Hai was a song from Jism, a 2003 film starring Bipasha Basu and John Abraham on his Bollywood debut. With lyrics by Neelesh Misra and melody by M. M. Keeravani, the song became a chartbuster and is still remembered by audiences. Shreya is presently a judge on Indian Idol Season 17, with Badshah and Vishal Dadlani. The show started in October 2025 and recently had Anil Kapoor as a guest, promoting his forthcoming film Subedaar, which will be released on Prime Video on March 5.

Vishwanath and Sons, Suriya is armed with a baby in title poster for Venky Atluri film

New Delhi: The title and release date for Venky Atluri's film, which stars Suriya and Mamitha Baiju, have been revealed. The company dubbed Suriya 46 has been renamed Vishwanath and Sons, according to an announcement made on Monday. Suriya and the producers, Sithara Entertainments, released the first look poster, heralding it as a return of 'vintage' Suriya. Suriya released the title poster and release date on his X (previously Twitter) page, stating, "Love with a difference, family with a purpose—we arrive in July as a wholesome entertainer." Sithara Entertainments stated, "Power in his presence. Warmth in his hug. Bringing back Suriya off's old brilliance in a heartwarming family spectacle. "The biggest family drama of the year, VishwanathAndSons, arrives in July." Suriya is smiling as she holds a milk bottle in one hand and

a baby in a carrier in the other. "This one will be special after Lucky Bhasker," wrote an X user, alluding to Venky's last film with Dulquer Salmaan. "Suriya looks absolutely dapper and effortlessly stylish," a different person said. One fan even referred to him as "Cute Thalaivaa," while another said, "Cuteness overload." Fans even began to speculate, with one X user writing, "Don't tell me that baby is Mamitha." Someone else wrote: "venky atluri cooking suriya vintage mode theatre lo goosebumps package (Goosebumps in theatre)." One admirer even said, "This is the Suriya we've been waiting for." Vishwanath and Sons is directed by Venky Atluri of Vaathi and Lucky Baskhar fame, and it is produced by Naga Vamsi under Sithara Entertainments. Suriya, Mamitha Baiju, Radhika Sarathkumar, and Raveena Tandon co-star in the film. Raveena returns to



Tamil cinema after a 24-year absence since the 2001 film Aalavandhan, starring Kamal Haasan. The soundtrack was composed by GV Prakash Kumar. Vamsi told Gulte about the film in December of last year: "The film explores relationships, love, and emotions between a 45-year-old man and a 20-year-old woman." Suriya 46 will be a proper, cheerful family film with a

strong human element." Suriya last appeared in Karthik Subbaraj's 2025 film Retro. Aside from Vishwanath and Sons, he also has Karuppu with RJ Balaji and Suriya 47 with Jithu Madhavan scheduled. Karuppu also stars Trisha Krishnan, and Suriya 47 will co-star Nazriya Nazim and Naslen. The former's release date and the latter's title have yet to be confirmed.

Maresh Babu praises Varanasi co-star Priyanka Chopra in his review of The Bluff 'Ticking all the boxes'

New Delhi: Priyanka Chopra and Maresh Babu will feature in SS Rajamouli's Varanasi. It is one of the most highly anticipated films of recent years. On Sunday, Maresh Babu went to his X account to express his admiration for Priyanka's action-packed performance in her latest film, The Bluff. (Also read: Fans laud Priyanka Chopra as a 'hard working mom' as she practices for The Bluff while caring for Maltie in BTS video) In his article, Maresh Babu stated, "The Bluff is a well-mounted picture with compelling action and emotions!!! (applause emoticons)Priyanka Chopra delivers an excellent performance, swashbuckling and fulfilling all expectations. Sending all my love to the team for their fantastic effort (red heart emoticons)."

The pirate action-adventure film is directed by Frank E. Flowers and written by Flowers and Joe Ballarini. It stars Priyanka Chopra, Karl Urban, Ismael Cruz Cordova, Safia Oakley-Green, and Temuera Morrison. The film garnered mixed reviews from critics, although Priyanka was praised for her action-packed performance. It's available for streaming on Amazon Prime Video. The Hindustan Times praised Priyanka's performance



in the film. An extract stated, "Priyanka Chopra is the one bright light among it all - well, her and the heavy-duty action that bursts on screen every time she appears. Priyanka must be aware of a recent increase in hyperviolent action films in her own country. It would be incorrect to label The Bluff as an attempt to capitalize on that trend, given the intended audience here is really worldwide. However, comparisons may be seen between the Marcos and the Animals back home. Mary is equally cruel and merciless as Ranbir's Ranvijay and

Unni's Marco. However, comparisons may be seen between the Marcos and the Animals back home. Mary is equally cruel and merciless as Ranbir's Ranvijay and Unni's Marco. However, she has the benefit of being portrayed by Priyanka Chopra, who gives empathy and gentleness to the role, which is new terrain in this genre. She excels at the action and even convinces the viewer that she is capable of such brutality. But Priyanka's great triumph in The Bluff is that she maintains her character's humanity, which is unusual in this genre.

"Arijit Singh Sang Kirtan In Gurudwara" Singer's Father Reveals How His Sikh Family from Lahore Settled In Bengal



New Delhi: Arijit Singh's announcement to retire from playback singing on January 27, 2026, startled admirers across India. While the music industry was in shock, a quieter and more intimate drama was emerging in Jiaganj, a lit-

tle riverbank town in West Bengal's Murshidabad district. Arijit Singh was born, bred, and lives here to this day. I chatted with the singer's father, Surinder Singh, who told me how the family migrated to West Bengal many decades ago. The

Singhs' adventure began before Arijit Singh was born. "Our ancestral home was near Lahore." After Partition, my father and his three brothers moved to Lalgola," Surinder Singh explained. Like many families during Partition, they were forced to leave everything behind and start again. They were cloth merchants by trade and worked tirelessly to reconstruct their lives. "They were cloth merchants and somehow ended up in Jiaganj and found their home by the river," he told me. From Lalgola, the family finally relocated to Jiaganj. Other relatives settled in the region that is now known as Panjabipara. The Sikh community there built a gurdwara, which became a popular location for prayer and

meeting. Jiaganj eventually became more than just a place to survive. It became home. Arijit Singh grew up in Jiaganj as "Shomu" to his family and neighbours. Even after becoming one of India's most successful singers in 2013, he remained linked to the community. Music was a part of his life since a young age. The singer's father recalls accompanying his mother to the gurdwara to sing kirtan on special occasions. Surinder Singh also discussed what it is like to be the father of such a famous performer. "Moja, lagey. I am amused. "People ask me 'what is your son doing' and 'what is his next project'," he explained. Despite his success in Mumbai, Arijit Singh has always re-

turned to Jiaganj. "This is a really calm spot. Even my kid couldn't stay in Mumbai and had to return. Ei maatir emoni taan," his father added, describing their deep connection to their homeland. Even after reaching national prominence, Arijit Singh remains tied to Jiaganj. His children attend local schools, and many of his humanitarian endeavors aim to improve the town's schools and services. Meanwhile, he recently published a new song called Raina, which has already piqued the interest of fans. Shekhar Ravjiani composed the song, while Priya Saraiya wrote the lyrics. Fans may listen to the music and view the official video on Garuuda Music's YouTube account.

Esha Gupta discusses the 'unpleasant' scenario in the UAE

New Delhi: Actor Esha Gupta has stated that being stranded in Abu Dhabi during the recent travel disruption in the UAE due to the rapid escalation of the Israel-US-Iran crisis is not a "pleasant situation." She praised the local officials for keeping everyone calm and added that all she wants to do now is travel back to India. On Sunday, Esha used Instagram Stories to convey her thoughts and emotions, saying that the situation in Abu Dhabi is presently under control. However, the actor agreed that being caught in the midst of uncertainty is unpleasant. "Uaegov did an incredible job of caring for every stranded individual at the airport, from food to airport transportation to hotel accommodations. The way the crisis in Abu Dhabi is controlled demonstrates how powerful the country is, as does the calmness with which they safeguard everyone," Esha remarked. The actor went on to say, "Special mention to mod-govae. Again, everyone, I apologize for the unpleasant circumstance. I am not receiving calls or messages; I simply want to be able to travel home soon." Earlier on Sunday, Esha used social media to reassure supporters of her safety. "To everyone that checked in and messaged, I apologize for not responding. We are well; we are safe! The times are scary, terribly terrible. God is there to protect us. We believe the mod-



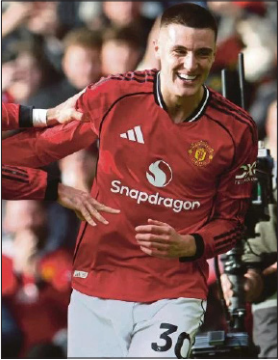
govae is doing its best to defend and intercept," Esha remarked in an Instagram Stories post. She continued, "I'm praying for everyone affected. Above all, all individuals who have become trapped must be safe. "I hope to be home soon." Apart from Esha, Tamil movie star Ajith Kumar and actor Sonal Chauhan are trapped in the UAE due to travel cancellations caused by the Israel-Iran war. They are now in Dubai. A military struggle between the United States, Israel, and Iran has erupted into a larger regional conflict, with direct strikes and retaliations throughout the Middle East. It all began on Saturday. What began as heavy US and Israeli strikes on Iranian military targets, including the assassination of Iran's supreme leader Khomeini, sparked a series of missile and drone barrages from Iran, drew in allied armed groups such as Lebanon's Hezbollah, and prompted attacks on US forces and Gulf partners.

PV Sindhu Recalls ‘Scary’ Ordeal Following Explosion Near Dubai Airport

Dubai: PV Sindhu, a two-time Olympic medalist, recalled a “tense and scary” episode at Dubai International Airport on Sunday, where she and her Indonesian coach were delayed following an explosion near where they were staying amid growing Gulf tensions. The interruption comes as the US and Israel started a major attack against Iran, prompting retaliatory missile strikes across the Gulf, including the UAE. The events led some airlines to cancel or reroute flights. Sindhu, who was slated to participate in the All England Open Badminton Championships in Birmingham starting March 3, has been stranded in Dubai since Saturday due to airspace limitations caused by missile attacks in the region. When our aircraft arrived in Dubai, events beyond our control began to unravel. Shortly after, airspace was closed, and the previous few hours have been incredibly stressful. “We could hear the sounds of interceptions overhead,” Sindhu told PTI in videos. “A few hours later, an explosion occurred pretty near to where we were holed up at Dubai Airport. My coach was just around 100 metres away at the time, and he had to flee the scene fast.

“Experiencing something like this in such close quarters truly shakes the very foundation you’re built on,” she explained. Her coach, Irwansyah Adi Pratama, verified the event to PTI, calling it a tight escape. “There was an explosion in the airport, so we’re stranded here right now. They’ve put us in a motel; we’re fine, but there’s still some fear. We wish to visit All England. “I hope we can fly out today because Sindhu’s match is on Wednesday,” Irwansyah stated. Sindhu and her support personnel have been relocated to a safe area. We are all safe now and have been relocated to a safer location, thanks to the tireless efforts of the staff at Dubai Airport and the Dubai authorities,” she said, thanking the Indian High Commission in Dubai for responding quickly and deploying officials to assist stranded passengers. Air India confirmed the cancellation of all flights to and from key Gulf destinations, while Dubai International Airport ceased operations indefinitely owing to airspace limitations. The Badminton World Federation (BWF) is working with Badminton England and national associations to address travel problems.

Sevilla Rescues Derby Draw, Dealing Betis Top Four Setback



Spain: Sevilla rallied from two goals behind to earn a dramatic 2-2 draw against Real Betis in La Liga on Sunday. Isaac Romero scored from outside the box in the 85th minute to give his team a point at Betis’ temporary La Cartuja home. The draw drops Manuel Pellegrini’s Betis to fifth place, eight points behind Atletico Madrid and Villarreal, who are third and fourth, respectively, jeopardising their chances of qualifying

for the Champions League. Former Manchester United winger Antony put the hosts ahead in the 16th minute with a spectacular overhead kick after the ball dropped to him in the box. Midfielder Alvaro Fidalgo scored the second goal just before halftime after being sent in by Ez Abde, who also contributed to the opener. Alexis Sanchez, a veteran Chilean attacker, equalized for Sevilla with an angled header after an hour. It set up a thrilling finish, with Romero ultimately scoring the goal Sevilla sought, blasting home from well beyond the box to equalize. Abde almost put Betis back in ahead but hit the post with three minutes remaining, while Akor Adams had a shot pushed off the line at the other end. Earlier, Elche drew 2-2 with Espanyol in a game marred by an alleged racist incident.

PM Modi speaks with UAE. In response to Iranian strikes, the president condemns the actions



New Delhi: On Sunday night, Prime Minister Narendra Modi talked with UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, forcefully condemning the assaults on the Gulf Kingdom. He also thanked the UAE president for caring after the Indian population in the Gulf nation, saying New Delhi supports de-escalation, regional peace, security, and stability. “I spoke with the President of the UAE, my brother Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan. Strongly

denounced the attacks in the UAE and expressed condolences for the lives lost. “India stands in solidarity with the UAE during these trying times,” he wrote on X. Modi continued, “I thanked him for looking after the Indian community in the UAE. We advocate for de-escalation, regional peace, security, and stability. Iranian assaults in the Gulf nation over the last two days have killed three people and injured 58, including an Indian person who is currently safe, officials revealed on Sunday.

The Indian Embassy in the UAE stated on social media that it was aware of an Indian national’s injury and was in contact with medical officials.

The UAE defense ministry reported intercepting 165 ballistic missiles. Of these, 152 were demolished, with 13 falling into the water. The ministry also said that two cruise missiles and 541 Iranian drones were downed, with 506 being shot down. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran’s Supreme Leader, was assassinated in a combination US-Israeli bombing on Tehran early Saturday. Iranian official media reported his death on Sunday. Iran then began shooting missiles toward Israel and many Arab countries in the area in reaction to the assassination of its supreme commander.

Lionel Messi scores twice as Inter Miami beats Orlando

Fort Lauderdale: Lionel Messi scored twice as Inter Miami rallied from 2-0 behind to win 4-2 over Orlando City in Major League Soccer’s Florida Derby on Sunday. Reigning MLS champions Miami, who were defeated in their season opener last week, appeared to be headed for another setback when powerful Orlando raced out to a 2-0 first-half lead in front of their home crowd. Croatian international winger Marco Pasalic scored the goal after 18 minutes, sliding in a low finish from Ivan Angulo’s cross after Miami surrendered possession in midfield. Orlando made it 2-0 six minutes later thanks to a charging run from right back Griffin Dorsey, who lay off for Argentine attacker Martin Ojeda to finish. Miami responded, and Messi and his Argentina international teammate

Rodrigo DePaul came close to equalizing midway through the first half. In the 28th minute, De Paul’s rasping long-range shot was parried away by Maxime Crepeau, Orlando’s Canadian international goalie. Crepeau then made another stunning stop to deny Messi inside the box shortly later. However, the situation changed after halftime, with replacement Matteo Silvestri scoring a 25-yard goal in the 49th minute to give Miami hope. Messi made it 2-2 eight minutes later, receiving the ball on the edge of the box and firing a left-footed effort past Crepeau. The Argentine maestro then helped Miami take a 3-2 lead in the 85th minute, laying off a delicate ball for Telasco Segovia to score into the corner. Messi then completed the comeback in the 90th minute with a low.



Suryakumar caps Sanju Samson’s night with the ultimate gesture as Eden yells ‘Maa Tujhe Salaam’ in a spine-tingling moment



Kolkata: On a night destined for Sanju Samson, skipper Suryakumar Yadav delivered the last, memorable strike, not with the bat, but with a soul-stirring gesture. As ‘Maa Tujhe Salaam’ boomed throughout the Eden Gardens stands and the renowned venue transformed into a cathedral of noise, Suryakumar’s gesture reflected the thoughts of billions of Indians globally, creating a spine-tingling moment for the ages. Samson has always been under scrutiny, and after years of flying under the radar, he finally rose to the occasion on Sun-

day with a masterclass in Kolkata. He scored an unbeaten 97 off 50 balls to propel India beyond the goal of 196 and into the T20 World Cup 2026 semifinals. As Samson hit the winning shot over the fielder at mid-on for a boundary, he sank to his knees to thank heaven above in what he later described as a “private celebration” before shaking hands with the West Indies players and making his way to the dressing room, where jubilant Indian teammates awaited him. Suryakumar kicked off the celebrations by tipping his cap to Samson and

kneeling down to him for his chase masterclass, followed by hugs from Ishan Kishan, Hardik Pandya, and the rest. However, the moment that drew notice on social media was amplified when the 65,000 people in attendance at Eden Gardens sang ‘Maa Tujhe Salaam’ together. Asked to bat first, the West Indies followed a clear offensive design, building on Roston Chase’s foundation before unleashing a late assault via Rovman Powell (34 not out off 19 balls) and Jason Holder (37 not out off 22 balls) to register an impressive 195 for 4. In response, India’s in-form hitters struggled under pressure. But Samson never appeared agitated. He took his time in the early stages and batted with composure and authority throughout the chase, scoring a brilliant knock that helped India reach 199 for 5 in 19.2 overs. It was just his third participation in a T20 World Cup, spanning two editions. He was unable to compete in the 2024 edition and only appeared in one group-stage match this year after Abhishek Sharma was sidelined with a stomach virus. However, he returned to the game when South Africa revealed India’s vulnerabilities.

Indian citizen is among 58 foreign workers hurt in Iranian assaults in the UAE

New Delhi: An Indian person was among 58 foreign workers hurt in Iranian assaults on the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and is now safe, the Indian consulate in Abu Dhabi said on Sunday, as Tehran intensified its strikes on West Asian countries. Three people from Bangladesh, Nepal, and Pakistan have been murdered in Iranian strikes since Saturday, according to the UAE defense ministry’s social media posts.

It stated that 58 individuals from 15 countries, including India, the Philippines, Pakistan, Iran, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka, had “minor injuries.” The Indian embassy in Abu Dhabi later confirmed that an Indian person was hurt and stated it was in contact with medical officials. “The Indian national is not in risk. “We are providing all possi-



ble assistance,” the embassy stated on social media. The UAE defense ministry reported dealing with 165 ballistic missiles, two cruise missiles, and 541 drones since the Iranian strike. The military destroyed 152 ballistic missiles, and 13 fell into the water. The military also destroyed two cruise missiles and 506 drones,

with 35 drones striking civilian targets and causing material damage.

The UAE defense ministry stated that the casualties were caused by drone strikes. Air defense systems intercepted missiles and drones, causing moderate damage to residential structures. The Indian mission in the UAE advised Indian

people to take care due to increased tensions caused by US and Israel’s military attacks on Iran. The strikes killed Iran’s Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, as well as other key military officers. Iran replied by hitting Israeli and US military locations in Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates.

Airlines reroute services to conduct flights to the United States and Europe amid the Iran war

New Delhi: Even as 350 flights operated by Indian domestic carriers were canceled on Sunday due to rising unrest in the Middle East, airlines are seeking to maintain essential west-bound connectivity by dynamically rerouting services rather than discontinuing long-haul operations completely. Air India, the sole Indian carrier that serves the United States, has announced that all of its flights to North America would resume as planned on Monday. The airline cancelled 50 foreign flights on Sunday and claimed that flights to the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Israel, and Qatar will continue until 2359 hours IST on Monday. “Additionally, select flights to Europe scheduled on 2

March 2026 have been cancelled, along with the scheduled return legs of AI117: Amritsar-Birmingham, AI151/AI152: Delhi-Zurich, AI157/AI158: Delhi-Copenhagen and AI114: Birmingham-Delhi,” a spokeswoman for the airline informed me. “All other flights to North America and Europe will run on schedule, taking alternate routes over open airspace in the Middle East, which is likely to increase travel delays. Flights to New York (JFK) and Newark (Liberty International) will also make technical stops in Rome (Fiumicino Airport), according to the announcement. IndiGo has announced the cancellation of about 360 flights till March 3, as well as extended flexibility and

waivers to impacted travelers. Due to geopolitical limitations in the Middle East, Indian domestic airlines suspended 350 flights on March 1, 2026. The Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) is working closely with airlines, airport operators, and other stakeholders to proactively monitor the situation and provide essential passenger support.” Airspace restrictions in Tehran, Kuwait, Israel, and Baghdad Flight Information Regions have interrupted the northern route, which is generally utilized for India-Europe overflights, prompting airlines to consider southern detours or technical stops. “The closure of Baghdad Flight Information Region at 1310 IST on February 28 is especially

significant for Indian carriers since it immediately closes the northern channel utilized for the India-Europe overflights. The current prolongation keeps the airspace blocked till 2.30pm IST on March 2. “The Doha Flight Information Region has been closed since February 28 evening, with validity currently limited to 11.30pm March 1 (IST),” an official stated. “The weekly effect on Indian and international airlines traveling to and from India is an extremely cautious estimate of Rs. 875 crore. At the present, Pakistani, Iranian, and UAE airspaces are closed, preventing practically all flights to Europe, the United States (westward flights), and flights into the Persian Gulf.

‘Black flags will be placed on homes’ All India Shia board condemns Khamenei’s death

New Delhi: Following Shia Muslim protests in India over the death of Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, General Secretary of All India Shia Personal Law Board Maulana Yasooob Abbas declared on Monday that businesses would remain closed and black flags would be flown to mourn his death. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran’s Supreme Leader, was murdered in the February 28 US-Israeli strikes, along with his daughter, granddaughter, daughter-in-law, and son-in-law. Abbas told ANI, “All businesses will be closed for three days.” Black flags will be flown from people’s houses. There will be gatherings to mourn his demise. A day earlier, in Lucknow, the capital of Uttar Pradesh, Shias congregated at the Chhota Imambara to pay honor to Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. During the rally, Shia cleric Maulana Syed Kalbe Jawad proclaimed that the Iranian people will never give up, and



that Israel and America would be vanquished. Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) students staged a candle march in protest of Iran’s Supreme Leader’s assassination. During the event, the demonstrators

said funeral prayers for Khamenei. According to Maulana Bahlol Raza, the demonstration sends a message to the world that they would continue to speak out for the downtrodden people.

The batter who came in from cold: Sanju Samson’s Eden Gardens legendary night

Samson seizes spotlight at Eden Gardens

New Delhi: History loves Kolkata’s Eden Gardens. It likes to be written on its haloed greens. It yearns to be witnessed from its noisy stands. And no cricket match here is just a game—it is almost always a legend. Sunday (March 1) was destined to be an ode to Sanju Samson. The ground was ready. India needed to beat West Indies in what was effectively a quarter-final of the T20 World Cup. The target, 196, was a mountain. India had never climbed more than 173 in a T20 World Cup. Cometh the hour, cometh the man. But that man was never expected to be Samson. Samson made his T20I debut in 2015, a 20-year-old from Kerala with soft hands, a still head, and a gift for the outrageous stroke. Eleven years later, he had played only 59 T20Is. Fifty-nine. The number sits uncomfortably beside his talent, like a biography with half its chapters torn out. He was repeat-



Edly set aside. Sometimes to accommodate others. Sometimes because of his own failures. He was cast as a reserve in a squad that always had someone else ahead of him, a name on the fringes of selection meetings. He was a player perpetually described as gifted, as if the gift was a curse, a proph-

Cy Standing Between Him and his destiny. He entered this World Cup squad as the first-choice opener. Then two things happened: failure and Ishan Kishan. Soon he was the back-up opener, thrust into the XI only because oppositions had begun targeting India’s left-hander heavy batting line-up with

offspinners. Even his opportunity arrived through the back door. And yet, when the door opened, Samson walked through it as though he had always known it would. There is something about the Eden Gardens that defies logic. On this ground, failure often begins with a celebration—almost like a cruel joke. And legends almost always begin with a doubt. Ask VVS Laxman. In 2001, Steve Waugh’s Australia arrived at Eden Gardens having won 16 consecutive Tests, a juggernaut that seemed unstoppable. India followed on. The match looked dead. The celebrations in the Australian dressing room had already begun in spirit. And then Laxman walked out and played 281 runs worth of the most beautiful cricket the game has ever seen. Eden Gardens had looked like the site of a surrender. It became the site of a resurrection. And ask Vinod Kambli.

Manchester United claim top-three spot

After comeback win over Crystal Palace

Manchester : Manchester United captain Bruno Fernandes scored a penalty before delivering a free kick that Benjamin Sesko nodded home for a 2-1 comeback win over 10-man Crystal Palace that moved the hosts into third in the Premier League standings on Sunday. Interim boss Michael Carrick’s unbeaten run since his appointment in mid-January stretched to seven matches, his side now sitting on 51 points from 28 games. Palace slumped to 14th, stuck on 35. United remain unbeaten since the January 5 sacking of Ruben Amorim and having won six of their last seven matches under Carrick, they moved up to third for the first time since May 2023. It feels like a big result. We were behind and had to show some character,” Fernandes told Sky Sports. “There are a lot of games to go still (in the chase for a top-four finish) and it is important that we don’t feel that we are in the position that we need to be. We need to make as many points as we can.” “It feels like a big result. We were behind and had to show some character,” Fernandes told Sky Sports. “There are a lot of games to go still (in the chase for a top-four finish) and it is important that we don’t feel that we are in the position that we need to be. We need to make as many points as we can.” Oliver Glasner’s Palace dominated the first 30 minutes, aided by United’s poor passing and pedestrian pace. The home sidewere caught napping as Palace struck after four minutes, Maxence Lacroix muscling



Past Leny Yoro To power Home a header from a corner. It was the earliest goal United have conceded all season. Daniel Munoz had a chance to put the visitors 2-0 up when he ran onto a through ball from Ismaila Sarr, but his shot was saved by goalkeeper Senne LamMens. When United finally got a foothold, Sesko’s header from a Fernandes cross late in the first half forced a save from goalkeeper Dean Henderson. The keeper also leapt to tip a Fernandes free kick over the bar shortly after. United improved after the break and in the 57th

Minute, Fernandes hauled them level From the spot, sending Henderson the wrong way, after Matheus Cunha was dragged down by Lacroix. The defender was shown a red card after a lengthy VAR check. Eight minutes later, Sesko completed the turnaround, leaping to head home Fernandes’ free kick. Carrick’s team had numerous chances to add to their lead, including a volley from Casemiro that forced a diving save from Henderson. Amad Diallo forced another diving save with a shot from distance in stoppage time, while fellow substitute Joshua Zirk-

Zee had a couple of chances blocked And Kobbie Mainoo unleashed a rocket that sailed just wide of the post. The biggest thing for us to take from the game is really the first time that we have been in that situation going in at halftime,” Carrick said. I thought we’re a little bit off to start with ... being in that position and how we react and showing that personality and the belief, you’re never always going to have it your own way, but to then come back like we did second is the biggest thing for me today.” Palace pressed in the dying minutes, victory.

Prague Chess: Gukesh implodes, loses to Abdusattorov, remains winless again



Prague: World Champion D Gukesh’s torrid run at the Prague International Chess Festival extended to a fifth consecutive day. Another cruel defeat at the hands of Nodirbek Abdusattorov left the Indian prodigy languishing near the bottom of the standings. In what has become an unwelcome pattern,

Gukesh once again held a commanding position before the wheels came off spectacularly. Operating with the black pieces, the 18-year-old unleashed an inventive strategy that put immediate pressure on his opponent’s king. He built what appeared to be an insurmountable advantage throughout the middle-

game. Gukesh was steering towards his maiden victory in the tournament’s Masters section. Yet the merciless countdown of the clock proved his undoing. With time evaporating in a position still demanding precision, Gukesh cracked, approaching the first time control. This allowed Ab-

dasattorov an escape route from what looked like certain defeat. The drama intensified when Abdusattorov nearly reciprocated the error. He offered Gukesh a lifeline to salvage a draw from the wreckage. But fortune showed no mercy to the beleaguered champion. He stumbled once more in the dying moments, enabling his rival to drive a decisive pawn forward for victory. This painful loss represents the second time in a month that Abdusattorov has conquered Gukesh after the Indian blundered from a superior position. The previous incident occurred at the Tata Steel Masters. The defeat has sent Gukesh tumbling to world number 17 with a rating of 2734.5. Abdusattorov has soared to 2778.3. Meanwhile, Dutch sensation Jorden van Foreest continued his barnstorming form.

English Premier League: Arsenal subdue Chelsea, Manchester United climb third

London: Arsenal reestablished a five-point lead at the top of the Premier League as the Gunners overcame 10-man Chelsea 2-1 on Sunday, while Benjamin Sesko fired Manchester United up to third with victory over Crystal Palace. Defenders William Saliba and Jurrien Timber got Arsenal’s goals as Chelsea’s ill-discipline saw them lose ground in the battle for a place in next season’s Champions League after Pedro Neto was sent off 20 minutes from time.

The Blues could not cope with Arsenal’s prowess from corners as Mikel Arteta’s men edged closer to a first league title in 22 years. Saliba forced home the opening goal on 21 minutes after Gabriel Magalhaes headed Eberechi Eze’s delivery back across goal. Chelsea levelled from a corner of their own when Pedro Hincapie turned Reece James’ cross into his own net. Timber’s winner just after the hour mark was the 16th goal Arsenal have scored from a corner in the Premier League this season -- equalling the competition record. The Dutch international headed into an empty net after Robert Sanchez got caught underneath Declan Rice’s ball in. Neto then became the ninth Chelsea player to see red this season for two quickfire bookings. Chelsea had a late equaliser ruled out for offside but defeat leaves Liam Rosenior’s men



Three points outside the top five, who will almost certainly secure a place in next season’s Champions League. Second-placed Manchester City still have a game in hand on Arsenal and home advantage when the sides meet in the league next month. But Arsenal have quietened questions over their ability to handle the pressure of the title race over the past week after also defeating Tottenham in last weekend’s north London derby. “We are really happy because we know we had two difficult games in the last week or so. The attitude and willingness to go for it and be dominant, I am happy with it,” said Arteta. Sesko was handed his first start

In seven games since Michael Carrick took charge at Old Trafford and rewarded his boss with another vital goal to edge United closer to a return to the Champions League with a 2-1 win. Palace had taken an early lead at Old Trafford when Maxence Lacroix outmuscled Leny Yoro to guide in a header from Brennan Johnson’s corner. But United hit back to remain unbeaten under Carrick and take their tally to 19 points from a possible 21. The game swung on one incident as Lacroix was sent off and conceded a penalty for pulling back Matheus Cunha just before the hour mark. Bruno FerNandes confidently stroked charge.

T20WC: Samson discusses self-doubt, Rohit, Virat after Kolkata masterclass



Kolkata: Following his masterclass 97* against West Indies to seal the semifinal spot in the ICC T20 World Cup, Indian batter Sanju Samson spoke on battling self-doubt and learning from the greats like Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli. Samson played one of the most mature knocks of his career on Sunday at Kolkata’s Eden Gardens, single-handedly helping India to chase a challenging total of 196 runs against the West Indies in a must-win virtual quarterfinal clash. This knock comes after a long battle with inconsistency, either struggling to convert his starts into something of substance or not taking off at all. India will now play England in the Second semifinal on March

5 in Mumbai. Speaking after The match in the post-match proceedings, Samson spoke on maintaining his self-belief despite self-doubt. It means the whole world, actually, to me. I think right from the day I started playing, started dreaming to play for the country, I think this is the day I was waiting for. And I am very grateful, very thankful. And I have always had a very special journey with lots of ups and downs, but I have kept on doubting myself, kept on thinking, what if, what if, can I make it, can I make it? But I kept on believing and thanks to the Lord Almighty for actually blessing me today,” he said. He also reflected on learning from greats like Rohit and Virat, saying that

while he has played 50-60 T20Is, it was his experience of watching hundreds of matches involving greats which also helped him. So I am very happy. Yeah, I think that’s why I have been playing this format for a very long time. I think playing IPL around 10 to 12 years and playing for the country from last 10 years, I have not been playing, but looking from the dugout, learning from the greats like Virat Kohli, from Rohit Sharma, like all the greats. I think it is very important to observe and learn and see what they were doing. I think that really helped me to, I think with my experience, I have only played maybe 50, 60 games, but I have seen around my life.

Arvid Lindblad hails Max Verstappen, expressing deep respect ahead thrilling Formula One debut

Greater Noida: Rising racing talent Arvid Lindblad has opened up about his relationship with four-time Formula One world champion Max Verstappen, praising the Dutch driver for his humility and willingness to support younger competitors. Lindblad is Formula 1’s newest sensation. His journey holds a special place for India, with his maternal roots tracing back to Punjab. Just a week before his much-awaited Formula 1 debut, Lindblad made a special visit to India for the Red Bull Moto Jam event. Red Bull Moto Jam, which is one of India’s biggest motorsports festivals, was held in Delhi NCR on Sunday. After its first edition in Chennai, the motorsports event successfully conducted its second edition in Delhi NCR. The event featured world-class athletes, including Racing Bulls Formula 1 driver Lindblad, who dazzled the audience in



A VCARB-branded F1 car. Speaking to ANI ahead of the Red Bull Moto Jam event, the Racing Bulls Formula 1 driver revealed that he has known Verstappen for several years and described him as consistently kind and approachable deSpite his remarkable success at the pinnacle of motorsport. “I’ve known Max for a few years now, and he’s always been incredibly kind and willing to offer advice or Help

Whenever I’ve needed it,” Lindblad said. “He really tried to support me, and I have a lot of respect for him because of that.” Verstappen, widely regarded as one of Formula 1’s most dominant drivers of the modern era, has enjoyed immense success. However, Lindblad believes it is the Dutchman’s character off the track that stands out just as much as his performances on it. “In sport,

when you achieve success, it can be easy to let the spotlight change you,” Lindblad added. “But Max has remained humble, generous with his time, and genuinely kind despite everything he has accomplished. That’s something I find truly impressive.” Lindblad will become the fourth-youngest driver in F1 history when he debuts for Racing Bulls at the 2026 Australian Grand Prix, aged 18 years and seven months old. As he prepares to enter the 2026 Formula 1 season as the only rookie on the grid, Lindblad has identified Verstappen as the driver he would most likely turn to for advice. The 18-year-old Lindblad highlighted the parallels between his own career trajectory and Verstappen’s early arrival in Formula 1. Verstappen is the youngest driver to make his debut in Formula 1 history. In 2015, when the Dutchman was 17 years, five months, and 13 days old, Prix, victory.