

In Brief

Under-Construction Bridge on NH-27 Collapses

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Union Minister to review implementation of rural devp schemes in Majuli

Majuli: Union Minister of State for Rural Development Kamlesh Paswan will be visiting Majuli on February 24-25. On February 24, the MoS will hold a review meeting with district-level officials on implementation of various rural development schemes at the Conference Hall of the DC office at Garamur. He will also interact with SHG members, Lakhpatti Didis and beneficiaries of rural development schemes.

CM Khemchand calls on Rajnath Singh in Delhi

Imphal: Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh today called on Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh at his office here in New Delhi. He was accompanied by Deputy Chief Minister Losii Dikho of the Naga People's Front (NPF) during the meeting. This is the first time Khemchand met the Union Defence Minister after taking oath as the state's new BJP chief minister on February 4 last. Rajnath Singh has assured all assistance from the defence ministry in any endeavour of the state government. The Chief Minister also urged Rajnath Singh to raise one Territorial Army (TA) battalion for Manipur.

WBCC felicitates CLP leader Meghachandra

Imphal: Following the appointment of Wangkhem Constituency MLA and former Manipur Pradesh Congress Committee (MPCC) President Keisham Meghachandra Singh as the Congress Legislature Party (CLP) leader of the Indian National Congress in Manipur, the Wangkhem Block Congress Committee (WBCC) organised a grand felicitation ceremony. The felicitation programme was held at the WBCC office located at Yairipok Bishnunaha under the theme, "Strengthening Organisation, Serving the People – Upholding Democratic Values."

Sensitisation programme on ethical research practices held at RIMS

Imphal, Feb 23: The Research Ethics Board, Regional Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS), Imphal organised an Orientation and Sensitization Programme on Ethical Research Practices today at the Sushruta Hall, RIMS, Imphal. The programme was graced by Prof. S. Jibonkumar Singh, Dean, School of Human & Environmental Sciences, Manipur University, as the Chief Guest, while Prof. N. Sanjib Singh, Medical Superintendent of RIMS Hospital, presided over the function. Prof. A.K. Joy Singh, Dean, School of Medical Sciences, Manipur University; Dr. Shantibala Konjengbam, Professor & Head, Department of Community Medicine, RIMS; and Prof. L. Rajesh Singh, Dean (Academics), attended the programme as Guests of Honour. Addressing the gathering, Prof. S. Jibonkumar Singh stated that ethical clearance is mandatory for research involving human subjects across disciplines.

He noted that while some studies may be exempt, research with ethical concerns requires approval. He emphasized that journals require clearance for publication and in-

formed that the university has an Institutional Human Ethics Committee. During the programme, the resource persons delivered insightful lectures on "Checklist for Ethical Review of Research Involving Human Participation," emphasizing participant safety, scientific validity and regulatory compliance; "Bio-Cultural Competence

and Ethical Conduct," highlighting respect for socio-cultural contexts in research and healthcare; and "Foundational Ethical Frameworks: Cardinal Principles," underscoring autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence and justice as the cornerstones of ethical research practice. A key highlight of the programme was

the conduct of mock ethical review sessions, offering practical exposure to the review process and documentation requirements. The initiative reaffirmed RIMS, Imphal's commitment to ethical integrity and academic excellence, with participants expressing confidence in strengthening research practices within the institution.



93% of Myanmar refugees successfully enrolled in Mizoram

Aizawl, Feb 23: The Mizoram Government has nearly completed the biometric enrolment of refugees from Myanmar who have taken shelter across the State, Home Minister K Sapdanga informed the Assembly on Monday.

The minister said that deputy commissioners are currently supervising the final phase of the process. "Altogether, 93 per cent of the biometric enrolment for Myanmar refugees was completed as of February 5. We aim to complete the remaining work as quickly as possible," he said. According to the minister, Mizoram currently hosts 38,059 people, including refugees from Myanmar and Bangladesh as well as internally displaced persons (IDPs) from neighbouring Manipur. He said the registration process, which involves collecting biometric and demographic details of asylum seekers from Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), is also underway and expected to be completed soon.

A senior official of the State Home Department said 13 per cent of over 2,300 Bangladeshi nationals have been enrolled to date. Among foreign nationals sheltered in the State, Myanmar nationals form the bulk,



with over 28,000 people staying across all 11 districts. Asylum seekers from Bangladesh are lodged mainly in Lawngtlai and Serchhip districts, the official said. Additionally, nearly

7,000 Kuki-Zo people from Manipur displaced by ethnic violence are also sheltered in the state, another official said. The enrolment drive for refugees from Myanmar and Bangladesh began

in late July last year through the 'Foreigners Identification Portal and Biometric Enrolment' system following a directive from the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). The senior official said

district authorities faced impediments such as technical glitches and weak or unavailable internet connectivity in remote villages, particularly in Lawngtlai district.

While it is easier to collect data from refugees living in relief camps, it is difficult to undertake the task of collection of those people residing with relatives or friends or in rented houses, he said. "Although the number of Myanmar refugees keeps changing due to frequent in and out migration, we are trying our best to ensure that no refugee is left. We also hope to complete the process soon," the senior official told the media. Mizoram shares a 510-km long international border with Myanmar in the east and a 318-km stretch with Bangladesh in the west.

Myanmar nationals, mostly from Chin State, fled to Mizoram following a military coup in the neighbouring country in February 2021, while the asylum seekers belonging to the ethnic Bawm tribe, one of the Mizo tribes, from Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tracts came to the state after a military offensive against an ethnic insurgent group in 2022. The Chin, Bawm and Zo-Kuki people share close ethnic ties with the Mizo people.

Khongnangthaba University celebrates 5th foundation day

Imphal, Feb 23: Khongnangthaba University, Khurai Konsam Leikai, Imphal East, celebrated its 5th Foundation Day today in the presence of dignitaries, faculty members, staff, students, parents, and well-wishers.

The programme was graced by Prof. Kiran Hazarika, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Central University of Punjab, Bathinda; Dr. G. Mariappan, Professor and Head, St. Mary's College of Pharmacy, Telangana; and Dr. Jawahar J. Shah, world-renowned homeopathic physician, as Guests of Honour. The function was presided over by Prof. N. Joykumar Singh, Vice-Chancellor, Khongnangthaba University, as President of the function. The welcome address was delivered by Dr. K. Bheigyachandra Singh, Dean, School of Social Sciences and Humanities, Khongnangthaba University, who welcomed the dignitaries and the



gathering. Dr. Atom Sunil Singh, Registrar, Khongnangthaba University delivered keynote address with an overview of the university's progress, academic activities, and institutional achievements. In his presidential address, Prof. N. Joykumar Singh, Vice-Chancellor, highlighted KHU's a major academic milestone, reflecting the university's progress from institution-building to delivering research outcomes. Following the keynote address, two faculty members delivered addresses: Dr. S. Ingotombi

(Ringo) Singh, Department of Geology, Khongnangthaba University Chungkham Yashawanta Singh, a prominent scholar in Manipuri linguistics and faculty member of Khongnangthaba University. Speeches were subsequently delivered by the dignitaries as per the programme schedule. The programme concluded with the vote of thanks delivered by Dr. L. Imoba Singh, Assistant Registrar, Khongnangthaba University. Refreshments were served after the formal proceedings.

Union Minister to review implementation of rural devp schemes in Majuli

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On February 24, the MoS will hold a review meet-

ing with district-level officials on implementation of various rural development schemes at the Conference Hall of the DC office at Garamur. He will

also interact with SHG members, Lakhpatti Didis and beneficiaries of rural development schemes.

He will inspect PMAY-G houses and interact with PMAY-G beneficiaries at Garamur, and inspect Madhupur-Puranibari road constructed under

PMGSY. On February 25, the MoS will attend a Seminar on Vikasit Bharat - Guarantee for Rojgar and Aajeevika Mission - Gramin (VB-G RAM G) at the DC office.

Shah assures Manipur CM of centre's help to restore peace in State

New Delhi, Feb 23: Union Home Minister Amit Shah has assured Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh all possible help from the central government to bring peace and normalcy in the strife-torn state.

The Manipur Chief Minister, along with two Deputy Chief Ministers, Lo-

steps taken up by the new government to remove the barriers between different communities.

Ever since the BJP-led coalition was installed, the state government has taken up many outreach programmes with an aim to bring peace and harmony.



sii Dikho of the Naga People's Front (NPF), and Nemcha Kipgen of the BJP, had called on Shah at his residence in New Delhi on Sunday afternoon. This is the first time Khemchand met the Union Home Minister after he took over as the state's Chief Minister on February 4 last.

The Union Home Minister discussed with the Manipuri leaders about the

Shah further assured the chief minister that all necessary help will be provided by the Centre for the overall development and progress of Manipur.

He directed the chief minister to give utmost importance to the rehabilitation of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and assured all possible help in this task.

Under-Construction Bridge on NH-27 Collapses in Assam's Dima Hasao One Injured

Dima Hasao, Feb 23: An under-construction bridge on National Highway 27 collapsed in Assam's hill district of Dima Hasao on Sunday, February 22, raising fresh concerns over infrastructure safety and project monitoring in the Northeast. The incident occurred at Dolai Chunga under Harangajao police station and left one person with minor injuries. The bridge was part of the ongoing construction work on the Nrimbanglo-Harangajao stretch of NH-27, a crucial connectivity corridor in the region. The project is being executed by DRA, the company contracted for the stretch. Officials confirmed that the structure was still under construction at the time of the collapse. According to preliminary information, a portion of the bridge suddenly gave way, bringing down concrete slabs and construction materials. A worker present at the site sustained minor injuries and received treatment locally. No fatalities were reported.

Personnel from the district administration and local police rushed to the site soon after the incident. Authorities have initiated a preliminary assessment to determine the cause of the structural failure. A detailed technical probe is expected to follow. The Nrimbanglo-Harangajao stretch of NH-27 holds strategic importance for Dima Hasao, a district that has historically faced connectivity challenges due to its rugged and hilly terrain. The highway upgrade forms part of broader efforts to strengthen road infrastructure in Assam's hill areas and improve transport links with the rest of the state. Further details are awaited as the administration continues its investigation into the collapse.

CM Khemchand calls on Rajnath Singh in Delhi

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NFR expands ‘Eat Right Station’ initiative Nagaland, Assam, and West Bengal

Dimapur, Feb 23: Nagaland’s Dimapur Railway Station under the Lumding Division of Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has been awarded the prestigious “Eat Right Station” certification by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI).

The certification, valid from October 24, 2025, to October 23, 2027, recognises the station’s adherence to food safety, hygiene, and healthy food practices for passengers. The recognition follows a comprehensive audit of food stalls, catering units, and food handlers at the station, ensuring compliance with strict standards for hygienic food preparation, safe storage, proper waste management, and availability of nutritious food options. In a related development, four other stations under the Alipurduar Division of NFR have also received the certification. These include Alipurduar and New Mal Junction in West Bengal, along with Kokrajhar and Golakganj in Assam. Railway officials, health inspectors, catering units, authorised vendors, and station management teams were credited for their coor-



minated efforts in maintaining high standards of cleanliness and food safety. The “Eat Right Station” initiative is part of FSSAI’s nation-

wide “Eat Right India” campaign, aimed at promoting safe, healthy, and sustainable food practices. Northeast Frontier Railway said it

remains committed to continuously improving passenger amenities and providing safe and hygienic food across its stations.

First border pillar between Assam, Arunachal erected

Itanagar, Feb 23: The first border pillar between Assam and Arunachal Pradesh was erected at Seijosa on Sunday, in a significant step towards implementing the Namsai Declaration, aimed at resolving the inter-state boundary dispute, officials said. The installation of the border pillar was closely monitored by officials from both states, they said. Among those present were Deputy Commissioners of Arunachal’s Pakke Kessang and Assam’s Biswanath district, senior police officers, community leaders and village heads. The Namsai Declaration was signed in July 2022, laying the foundation for resolving the long-pending boundary dispute. Subsequently, regional committees, comprising ministers and officials from both sides, conducted joint field visits, examined historical records and interacted with local communities to arrive at mutually acceptable solutions. Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu described the installation of the pillar as a historic milestone in the boundary resolution process. “A historic milestone has been achieved in the Arunachal Pradesh-Assam boundary resolution process with the successful installation of the first official border pillar at Seijosa in Pakke Kessang district,” he said in a post on X. Khandu said the step reflects the spirit of the Namsai Declaration and marks a tran-



sition from decades of uncertainty towards peaceful coexistence, clarity and stability for communities living along the border.

“The Seijosa pillar sets the blueprint for the remaining demarcation process, strengthening cooperation between the two sister states and paving the way for lasting harmony, development and confidence among the people residing in the border regions,” he added. Khandu also lauded Health Minister Biyuram Wahge, who chairs the Regional Committee for Pakke Kessang, besides the district administration and local representatives. Wahge said it was a concrete step towards resolving the long-standing dispute in keeping with the spirit of the Namsai Declaration. He thanked state Home Minister Mama Natung and Assam minister Pijush Hazarika, the chairman of the Regional Committee for Biswanath district, for their contributions to the process.

AR seize meth tablets worth Rs 11.85 cr in Mizoram



Dimapur, Feb 23: Assam Rifles have seized banned methamphetamine tablets worth around Rs 11.85 crore in Mizoram’s Lawngtlai district and apprehended four people, including three Myanmar nationals, a defence statement said on Sunday.

The arrests and seizures were made on Friday after the four persons entered India with the contraband items by crossing the Koladyne

River on a boat. Acting on a tip-off, a check-post was set up at Kakichhuha village and the four persons, including three Myanmar and one Indian, were apprehended. Around 80,000 methamphetamine tablets weighing 3.9 kg were seized from their possession, the statement said. The seized meth tablets and the apprehended individuals were handed over to the Mizoram Police for further legal action, it added.

Assam: Partially built bridge collapses on NH-27 in Dima Hasao; one injured

Dimapur, Feb 23: A partially constructed bridge on National Highway 27 in Assam’s Dima Hasao district collapsed on Sunday, February 22, injuring one worker. The accident took place at Dolai Chunga in the Harangajao area. The bridge was part of ongoing work on the Nrimbanglo–Harangajao stretch, a vital route connecting remote parts of the district. The project was contracted to DRA, and authorities confirmed the structure was incomplete when the section gave way. Reports suggest a portion of the bridge suddenly fell, along with concrete slabs and construction materials. The injured worker received immediate medical attention at a local facility, and no fatalities were reported. District officials and police teams rushed to the site to examine the situation. A thorough investigation has been launched to determine the cause of the collapse.

The Nrimbanglo–Harangajao section is crucial for improving connectivity in Dima Hasao, a district with challenging terrain that has long affected transportation. The bridge is part of broader plans to upgrade road infrastructure in Assam’s hill dis-



tricts and enhance links with other areas of the state. Authorities have confirmed that a detailed

inquiry is underway. Updates on the incident will be shared once the investigation is complete.

Meghalaya ST list committee to submit findings soon, says CM Conrad Sangma

Shillong, Feb 23: Meghalaya government awaits findings of a special committee reviewing updates to the state’s Scheduled Tribes (ST) list under the 1950 Constitution Order.

During the ongoing Meghalaya Legislative Assembly session, Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma informed legislators that the government set up this committee through a notification issued on December 13, 2024. The panel’s task is to carefully assess the current ST list and suggest any updates, such as adding or removing communities or other necessary changes. The committee is led by a designated chairperson, assisted by a member secretary, and supported by eight other members. Its work involves examining historical documents, legal provisions, population data, and socio-cultural factors relevant to tribal recognition in Meghalaya. Sangma stated that the committee is currently reviewing all relevant information before preparing its report. Once completed, the recommendations will be forwarded to the



state government and may require approval at the national level, as any modification to the Presidential Order must pass through Parliament.

Efforts to update Meghalaya’s ST list have been ongoing for several

years. The current schedule, largely inherited from Assam at the time Meghalaya became a separate state in 1972, has not undergone a comprehensive review in decades. Concerns have been raised that some communities on the list may not

meet the criteria for indigenous status, while others that qualify might be excluded. The committee’s final report is expected to have a significant impact on tribal identity, resource distribution, affirmative action, and the protection of indigenous rights in Meghalaya.

The matter gained attention in 2019 when the Synjuk Ki Nongsynshar Shnong Ka Nongthymmai Pylun (SNSNP), along with village councils and traditional bodies, formally requested the government to coordinate with the Centre to revise the list. They sought to remove ineligible entries and ensure that the ST schedule reflects the state’s original tribal population accurately. Responding to continued appeals from traditional leaders, civil society groups, and political stakeholders, the government established the committee in December 2024. Since then, the panel has held multiple meetings, examining demographic trends, historical records, and relevant legal guidelines.

Centre’s bid to impose Devanagarion NE tribal tongues slammed

Guwahati, Feb 23: The Communist Party of India (Marxist) has criticised the Centre’s attempt to impose Devanagari on Northeast Indian tribal languages that are spoken without scripts, The Hindu report stated. The CPI(M)’s Tripura State secretary Jitendra Chaudhury, who is also the Leader of the Opposition in the 60-member Assembly, condemned Home Minister Amit Shah’s call to the speakers of tribal tongues to adopt the Devanagari script. He told journalists in the State’s capital, Agartala, on Saturday (February 21, 2026) that any attempt to enforce a single-language script would threaten the region’s cultural diversity. Addressing the Northern Regional Rajbhasha Sammelan in Agartala on Friday, Shah said the ‘Nagari Lipi’ would help protect linguistic identities in the North East, where many dialects and languages have no script. He also urged all stakeholders in the region not to politicise languages or create controversies over scripts. “The promotion of Hindi through the Official Language Department is acceptable, but any attempt to force communities in the Northeast to adopt Devanagari script for their native tongues is not,” Chaudhury said, expressing concern over Shah’s suggestion that some languages spoken in the region should switch to the script used for Hindi, Sanskrit, and other mainstream languages. CPI(M) leader also said that the Centre’s push for linking the adoption of Devanagari with regional development “undermines our linguistic variety and cultural heritage”. Stressing that the speakers of each language must have the freedom to choose their script, he said the Centre’s “cultural hegemony” was aligned with the ideology of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).

Chaudhury is a Tripuri, one of 19 recognised tribes of Tripura. Kokborok is the common language of at least eight of these tribes, including the Tripuri.

The Bengali script has been used for Kokborok since 1897, but many tribal leaders and scholars favour the Roman script, which they



claim is more phonetically suited to the tribal tongue that unifies many communities.

Kokborok speakers have been agitating for years to change the script from Bengali to Roman, but the BJP-led State government, dominated by Bengali speakers, insists on any “Indian script” rather than a “foreign” one. There is also a conspiracy theory that Christian missionaries are behind the push for Roman script, as a sizeable tribal population in Tripura converted to Christianity.

A few days ago, chief minister Manik Saha said that his government “will never allow Roman script for Kokborok because it threatens indigenous traditional and cultural values”. He advised tribal intellectuals and language experts to develop a suitable indigenous script, stick to the Bengali script, or adopt other Indian-origin scripts like Devanagari. His assertion did not go down well with the Tipra Motha Party, an ally of the BJP in the State, which backs the Roman script. It also sparked protests from student groups, including the United Movement for Kokborok, which formed human chains to demand the Roman script.

Three NE ladies are racialized in New Delhi; a formal complaint has been filed

Shillong, Feb 23: Three women from Arunachal Pradesh were allegedly subjected to racial slurs, humiliation and intimidation by their neighbours, who called them “dhandhewali”, following a dispute over some repair work at their rented flat in south Delhi’s Malviya Nagar.

The police said an FIR under BNS sections pertaining to outraging a woman’s modesty and promoting enmity on grounds of religion, race, etc. has been registered against two people — Harsh Singh and his wife Ruby Jain. On February 20, the women had called an electrician at their fourth-floor flat around 3.30 pm for getting an air conditioner installed. A senior police officer said during the process, dust and debris from the drilling work fell to the floor below, prompting objections from their neighbours, Harsh Singh and his wife. What began as a disagreement over falling debris soon turned ugly, with the women alleging that

the couple hurled abuses and made derogatory and racial remarks targeting them and the northeastern community. A purported video of the incident also has been making rounds on social media. In the video, the accused woman was allegedly heard calling the northeastern women “momo” and saying, “Rs 500 mei massage parlour mei kaam karne waali dhandhewali (You work at massage parlours as sex workers for Rs 500).” “Are you sitting here to do business? Have you opened a massage parlour at home?” the accused woman said. The Arunachali women further alleged that they were subjected to racist abuse. The accused duo, in the video, can be heard calling the victims “gutter-chaap” and telling them to “go and sell momos” and saying “northeast people are shit”. At one point, the accused woman, in a perceived attempt to assert social and economic superiority, also says, “Teri aukaat nahi hai... custom officer ka beta hai woh

Scientific assessment reveals thriving population of endangered fishing cats in Kaziranga

Guwahati, Feb 23: Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve (KNPTR) has unveiled the first scientific assessment of the Fishing Cat (*Prionailurus viverrinus*), confirming the globally vulnerable species, protected under Schedule I of India's Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, thriving across its wetlands.

KNPTR officials said that a study conducted by the Tiger Cell of Kaziranga in collaboration with Tiasa Adhya, scientist associated with the Fishing Cat Project, assessed the camera-trap images available from past All India Tiger Estimation data with two main objectives – determining if Fishing Cats are rare or common in Kaziranga, and estimating minimum individuals present. Altogether 57 unique individuals across over 450 sq km were identified, indicating a healthy, reproducing population widely distributed throughout the Tiger Reserve. “The study, which largely relied on by-catch data arrived at this number which is likely to be an undercount, as the data is based on camera trap grid size placed



for tigers. However, it also provides a good methodology for setting up baseline studies for lesser-known species other than the Big Five,” Sonali Ghosh, field director, Kaziranga Tiger Reserve, informed. The Fishing Cat, one of few felids adapted for

aquatic hunting, faces threats from habitat loss and hunting, with disappearances noted in Vietnam and Java. South Asia holds its global core population, tied to lowland river basin wetlands. “Our findings position Kaziranga as a vital ‘Ark’ for this wetland specialist in the Brahmaputra floodplains,” Ghosh said. Optimal habitats include wet alluvial grasslands, shallow beels, wet meadows, and woodland refugia that aid flood survival. “The study establishes a baseline for monitoring floodplain dynamics, where flood changes could alter beels and marshes and the presence of Fishing Cat in large numbers indicate it to be an ecological sentinel for Kaziranga,” said Tiasa Adhya of Fishing Cat project.

The report was launched during the Fishing Cat Day on Sunday.

Adani Group to set up MRO facility for aircraft in Guwahati

Guwahati, Feb 23: Adani Group will set up an MRO (Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul) facility for aircraft and a training centre for aviation manpower in Guwahati. Thanking the Adani Group and its chairman Gautam Adani for making big-ticket investments in Assam, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said that while a commitment of Rs. 50,000 crore had been made during Advantage Assam 2.0, the group is now moving toward investments worth about Rs. 1 lakh crore. He said that an aero hub on the lines of Delhi's Aerocity is planned around the Guwahati airport, where the Adani Group will set up an MRO facility and a training centre for aviation manpower. Land acquisition work is underway to develop spaces for large concerts and modern entertainment facilities in the area. The proposed MRO facility will service both narrow-body and wide-body commercial aircraft. This move aims to make Guwahati a key aviation hub, boost regional connectivity, create skilled jobs, and strengthen Assam's growing

aviation ecosystem. Stressing the importance of industrialisation, he said that large investments are essential to create employment opportunities within the state and bring back youth working outside Assam. The Chief Minister said the new terminal of LGBI Airport, which commenced operations yesterday, is not the end of the state's aspirations. Two five-star hotels by the Taj and Vivanta groups will be built near the terminal, giving a new identity to Assam's service sector, said Sarma. He also informed that the new terminal will be able to handle about 13 million passengers annually, compared to seven million handled by the old terminal last year. In view of the growing traffic, plans are being made to begin construction of another terminal within the next two years. Describing the present period as a golden era of Assam's development, the Chief Minister referred to recent infrastructure initiatives, including the inauguration of a bridge over the Brahmaputra connecting Guwahati and North Guwahati.

1st NER Fish Festival inaugurated in Guwahati

Guwahati, Feb 23: The 1st NER Fish Festival–Assam 2026 organised by North Eastern Regional Agricultural Marketing Corporation Ltd. (NERAMAC) was inaugurated on the NERAMAC premises at Six Mile in Guwahati today.

The two-day festival, which will conclude on February 24, aims to serve as a vibrant platform to promote fisheries development, strengthen market linkages and celebrate the rich aquatic biodiversity of the North Eastern Region.



The festival that celebrates the taste and tradition of Northeast fisheries is being organised by NERAMAC in collaboration with the National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB) under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY).

Congress conducts SSA campaign across Thoubal

Imphal, Feb 23: As part of the Congress party's re-organisation drive and the appointment of new District Congress Committee presidents, the All India Congress Committee (AICC) has launched a nationwide campaign titled “Sangathan Srijan Abhiyan.” The campaign was conducted in three locations of Thoubal district — Lilong, Wangkhem, and Thoubal. The programme was organised separately at the offices of the Lilong Block Congress Committee, Wangkhem Block Congress Committee, and Thoubal Block Congress Committee. AICC Observer Ajoy Kumar Laloo attended the events as part of the campaign. At the programme held at the Wangkhem Block Congress Committee office, CLP Leader K. Meghachandra, former MLA of Kakching constituency Y. Surchandra Singh, MPCC Minority Cell Chairperson Md. Sakir Ahmed, Sports Department Chairperson W. Rojit, and WBCC President Alhaj Keramat Ali attended as presidium members. Speaking at the occasion, AICC Observer Ajoy Kumar Laloo stated that the Sangathan Srijan Abhiyan is being carried out under the leadership of Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge and senior leader Rahul Gandhi. He said the objective of the campaign is to strengthen and reorganize the party structure at every district across the country. He further mentioned that the newly appointed district pres-



idents, working in coordination with the national leadership, will address public grievances and ensure that the concerns of the people are effectively conveyed to the higher authorities.

As part of the programme, Ajoy Kumar Laloo also received opinions and suggestions from party members regarding the appointment of the district president.

WBCC felicitates CLP leader Meghachandra

Imphal, Feb 23: Following the appointment of Wangkhem Constituency MLA and former Manipur Pradesh Congress Committee (MPCC) President Keisham Meghachandra Singh as the Congress Legislature Party (CLP) leader of the Indian National Congress in Manipur, the Wangkhem Block Congress Committee (WBCC) organised a grand felicitation ceremony. The felicitation programme was held at the WBCC office located at Yairipok Bishnunaha under the theme, “Strengthening Organisation, Serving the People – Upholding Democratic Values.” The event was attended by several prominent Congress leaders including former Kakching MLA Yengkhom Surchandra Singh, WBCC President Alhaj Keramat Ali, PCC Observer and MPCC Minority Cell Chairperson Md. Sakir Ahmed, MPCC Sports De-



partment Chairperson and intending candidate of Kshetrigao Constituency W. Rojit, Wangkhem Block Mahila Congress Commit-

tee President K. Kunjamani Devi, former Wangkhem Zilla Parishad Member W. Leimaton Devi, along with party leaders and workers.

Speaking at the function, WBCC Vice President Loitam Rajen stated that during his tenure of three years and ten months as MPCC President, Meghachandra made significant contributions towards strengthening the party.

Recognising his dedication and leadership, the All India Congress Committee (AICC) has entrusted him with the responsibility of leading the party as CLP Leader in the state, he said. Rajen further expressed confidence that under Meghachandra's leadership, the party would be further strengthened and reorganised effectively in the coming days. Other speakers at the programme also lauded the contributions made by MLA Meghachandra for the party and expressed optimism that his appointment as CLP Leader would greatly benefit both the party organisation and the people of the constituency.

National Integration Tour delegation reaches Dimapur

Imphal, Feb 23: The ongoing National Integration Tour (NIT) organised by Assam Rifles under its Civic Action Programme for Civil Society Organisation representatives from Tengenoupal, Chandel and Kakching districts in its Northeast phase reached Dimapur. The delegation of 23 members, accompanied by 68 officials and troops, is undertaking a 15-day journey aimed at fostering national unity, strengthening civil-military cooperation and broadening perspectives on governance and development. On February 21, the group interacted with the General Officer Commanding (GOC), 3 Corps, in Dimapur. The discussions highlighted the importance of civil-military synergy and the constructive role played by CSOs in community development, conflict resolution and nation-building. The participants were given first-hand insights into the responsibilities of the Indian Army and Assam Rifles in safeguarding national security and promoting peace and progress in the Northeastern region, conveyed IGAR(S) in a press release.



The interaction provided a valuable platform for open dialogue, enabling the exchange of ideas on regional issues, security dynamics and developmental initiatives. It reinforced trust between the armed forces and civil society, underlining the shared responsibility of all stakeholders in sustaining peace and stability. Following the engagement, the delegation proceeded to Kohima by bus to continue the next phase of the National Integration Tour, which remains a significant initiative in strengthening people-centric engagement and harmonious relations across the region, it said.

Bhupen Bora's First Visit to Bihpuria After Joining BJP Marked by Absence of Party Leaders

Guwahati, Feb 23: After joining the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Bhupen Bora made his first visit to his home constituency Bihpuria. However, his arrival was marked by the noticeable absence of BJP leaders and workers, as none came forward to formally receive him.

Political circles have been abuzz with speculation that Bora may be fielded as the BJP's candidate for Bihpuria in the upcoming elections. In this context, the lack of visible support from local BJP leaders and grassroots workers has drawn attention.

Bora reached his residence at Bhogpur in Bihpuria on Sunday night. Reacting to the situation, he said party workers from Hawajan had expressed interest in welcoming him, but he cancelled the programme himself to avoid any possible clash between Congress and BJP supporters. He added that he returned home quietly without informing anyone to prevent tension.

On Monday morning as well, his residence reportedly remained calm with no major political activity. Bora stated that he would work as an ordinary party worker in the BJP. He said that the Chief Minister and the state party president had asked him to interact with grassroots BJP workers in Bihpuria. He also expressed that he would always retain humane feelings towards Congress workers.

Responding to criticism, Bora said that Congress had earlier labelled him as a BJP agent. He mentioned that he had joined Congress after serving at Rajiv Bhavan and recalled that Hiteswar Saikia had once described him as the Congress party's “APS.” “I am not a constable,” he remarked. He also commented that by burning his effigy, Ram Bhuyan had to prove his loyalty before Gaurav Gogoi.

Rs 97 cr sanctioned to upgrade sairang rail station: Mizoram CM

Aizawl, Feb 23: Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma informed the State Assembly on Monday that a sum of Rs 97 crore has been sanctioned to upgrade the Sairang Rail Station to ‘world class’ standard, and that the Railway Ministry has already floated the tender in this regard.

Replying to a question regarding the General Administrative Department (GAD) from Champhai North MLA H. Ginzalala, the Chief Minister and GAD in-charge, Lalduhoma, stated that “brothers and sisters from Manipur” have been permitted to stay in Mizoram Houses in certain cities across India. Regarding the expansion of the Guwahati Six Mile Mizoram House and the construction of a new one in Bangalore, the Chief Minister stated that owing to financial constraints, discussions were held with BSNL, and initiatives are underway across various cities in India to construct



shared buildings on existing BSNL land. He also reiterated to the House that Rs 97 crore has been sanctioned to upgrade Sairang Rail Station to a ‘World Class’ standard and the Railway Ministry has already floated

the tender. Further, replying to Champhai North MLA H. Ginzalala, the Chief Minister informed the House that the land vacated by the Assam Rifles is intended to be utilized to alleviate traffic congestion in Aiza-

wl. He stated that there are plans to widen the road from Bazar Bungkawn to Treasury Square, and a bypass road is being planned from the Saron Veng BCM Church emerging at the Aizawl Head Post Office.

Lalduhoma also mentioned that plans are being made to construct vehicle parking spaces. The sanctioning of ₹97 crore for Sairang Railway Station marks a significant step in enhancing Mizoram's transport

infrastructure. Once completed, the project is expected to transform the station into a modern gateway for the state, strengthening its economic and social integration with the rest of the country.

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The Digital Divide and Social Equity

Digital technology has transformed communication, commerce, and education. However, unequal access to digital infrastructure creates disparities known as the digital divide. This gap affects rural communities, economically disadvantaged groups, and elderly populations disproportionately. Access to high-speed internet determines participation in online education and remote employment. Without connectivity, opportunities remain limited. Digital literacy further influences utilisation of available tools. Bridging the digital divide requires infrastructure expansion and affordability measures. Public Wi-Fi initiatives and subsidised devices can enhance accessibility. Training programmes promote effective usage. Educational institutions must integrate digital skills into curriculum. Online governance platforms should remain user-friendly to encourage participation. Private sector collaboration accelerates expansion but must align with public interest objectives. Transparent regulation ensures fair pricing. Digital inclusion strengthens economic mobility and democratic participation. It reduces geographic inequality and fosters innovation. Technology should empower rather than exclude. Addressing the digital divide remains essential for equitable development.

Prioritizing clean air is essential

We are alarmed by reports that Savar’s Air Quality Index (AQI) soared to 537 on Sunday, surpassing the “hazardous” threshold of 500 and ranking it among the most polluted places in the world.

On the same day, Dhaka’s AQI stood at 220, in the “very unhealthy” category. With safe air quality generally measured between 0 and 100, these figures underscore the severity of the crisis unfolding in and around the capital.

Savar, located some 20 kilometres from Dhaka, has been a significant source of pollution affecting the capital.

Last year, the government declared the area a “degraded airshed” and restricted the operation of brick kilns. Considering that brick kilns account for nearly 58 percent of the region’s air pollution, the move appeared sensible; however, weak enforcement and non-compliance by kiln owners have rendered the decision largely tokenistic. Additionally, northwesterly and northeasterly winds during the dry season carry polluted air from Savar into Dhaka, further deteriorating the capital’s already unhealthy air. According to 2024



data from the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA), over 25,000 older vehicles are running in Dhaka, emitting toxic gases. Emissions of airborne lead particles from battery rickshaws are putting a significant number of children at risk of irreversible neurological damage. Furthermore, chemical fumes from fog machines—used to spray medicines to prevent mosquito breeding—are hazardous for humans when inhaled. Other sources of PM2.5 in the country include solid waste burning, dust from construction sites, and transboundary

pollution, etc.

The consequences of persistent air pollution are deadly. According to a study by the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA), some 48 percent of those who die due to air pollution in Bangladesh are residents of Dhaka and Chattogram. The study—conducted on data from 2022 to 2024—found that controlling the presence of PM2.5 in the air could prevent over one lakh deaths in the country. Furthermore, air pollution increases the overall healthcare costs in Bangladesh, reducing the overall

quality of life.

The persistence of such toxic air and its repercussions on citizens reflects years of weak enforcement and political complacency. Therefore, the elected government must treat air pollution as a public health emergency and move beyond just simple declarations. This requires strict implementation of existing laws, transparent monitoring, and holding polluters accountable. Without sustained political will and regulatory integrity, hazardous air will remain a recurring crisis rather than a solvable one.

“Modern-day slavery” poses a threat to our female migrants

The recent return of a 32-year-old Bangladeshi domestic worker from Saudi Arabia—six months pregnant after alleged rape, torture, and imprisonment—is not an isolated tragedy. It is a stark reflection of the structural vulnerabilities that many Bangladeshi women face when they migrate to the Middle East for domestic work. From Bangladesh’s perspective, this is not only a human rights issue abroad but also a question of national responsibility which should begin at home and extend across borders.

Bangladesh sends hundreds of thousands of workers overseas each year. According to Brac Migration Programme data from 2025, more than 470,000 Bangladeshi migrant workers had returned home over the previous six years after facing abuse, exploitation or hardship, including at least 67,199 women who reported physical or sexual violence. Many returned injured, traumatised, or psychologically distressed, struggling to reintegrate into society due to stigma and a lack of support. Remittances from migrant workers act as a lifeline for Bangladesh’s economy, contributing over \$31 billion last year, and a large portion of this came from Gulf countries such as Saudi Arabia. However, behind these figures are Bangladeshi women who migrate there with limited education, minimal bargaining power, and deep economic or social vulnerabilities.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates there are over 11 million migrant domestic workers worldwide, many concentrated in the Middle East. ILO research with the Walk Free Foundation also estimates that nearly 50 million people globally live in conditions of modern slavery, including forced labour. Domestic work in private households is consistently identified as a high-risk sector due to isolation and lack of labour oversight. For Bangladeshi women, the journey often begins with promises of secure jobs, fixed hours, and decent salaries arranged through recruiters or local brokers. But in reality, many end up placed in private homes under the kafala (or “sponsorship”) system, which ties their legal status to a single employer. Although some Gulf



states have introduced limited reforms, domestic workers remain largely excluded from meaningful protection and full labour law coverage. Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have documented patterns that mirror many testimonies from Bangladeshi migrant workers: employers routinely confiscate passports, withhold wages, confine workers to homes, and demand excessive hours without rest. Despite laws against passport confiscation in some Gulf states, the practice remains widespread. Without their passports, workers cannot leave the country, change employers or even safely approach authorities.

Many Bangladeshi domestic workers also report having their mobile phones taken away or being denied access to contact with family members. Isolation inside private households in a foreign country means having no co-workers, no visible workplace, and often no independent witnesses. Abuse can continue for months without detection. Between 2020 and 2024, an estimated 63 percent of returning female domestic workers reported experiencing at least one form of abuse, with 30 percent reporting sexual violence and 15 percent returning pregnant from assault.

International law outlines clear standards for what constitutes decent working conditions. The ILO Convention No. 189 on Domestic Workers, for instance, calls for equal labour protections, weekly rest, fair wages, and protection from violence. The Forced Labour Convention and

its protocol prohibit coercion and exploitative conditions, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) obliges states to protect women from gender-based violence. However, ratification gaps, limited labour law coverage for domestic workers, and weak enforcement mean that these protections are often theoretical rather than practical. From the workers’ perspective, the consequences do not end at the homecoming stage as many return traumatised, injured, or even pregnant due to sexual assault. Some face social stigma in conservative communities. Others return without savings or with unpaid wages. Returnee women report high levels of physical abuse, psychological trauma, and restricted access to necessities abroad. Several studies by the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU) and the Ovivashi Karmi Unnayan Program (OKUP) also found that returning women experienced conditions such as denied medical care, excessive work hours, and severe abuse.

Without structured reintegration programmes, survivors often struggle to find work or receive proper medical and psychological care. Mental health support is limited and legal redress against abusive employers abroad is rare, especially when cases are quietly resolved through repatriation without prosecution. With crimes going unpunished, the impunity of abusive and exploitative employers is reinforced. Bangladesh must confront its own responsibilities when it comes to protecting its citizens working abroad. For one, recruitment practices need tighter regulation as sub-agents operating informally at village or neighbourhood levels often escape scrutiny. Transparent contracts in Bangladesh, verified job descriptions, and clear complaint channels should be made mandatory. Recruitment agencies involved in deception or trafficking should also face criminal consequences.

Pre-departure training should be strengthened not only to provide practical skills but also to inform workers about their rights, embassy contacts, and emergency procedures. Additionally, digital registration systems could track contracts and reduce substitution fraud. Bangladesh’s hotlines must be responsive and accessible from abroad.

At the same time, the Bangladesh government must take a more assertive diplomatic stance when it comes to ensuring protection for workers abroad. Embassies in destination countries need to be equipped with adequate resources to operate safe houses, provide legal assistance, and actively pursue complaints with host authorities. Simply issuing travel documents for return without seeking investigation undermines deterrence. Bilateral agreements with Gulf states should include enforceable labour protection, joint monitoring, and mechanisms to blacklist abusive employers. Destination countries must also realise their respon-

sibility and carry out structural reforms accordingly. Reforms to the kafala system must be meaningful and practically implemented. Domestic workers should be fully covered under labour laws. Passport confiscation and other coercive tactics should be prosecuted. Independent complaint mechanisms must be accessible to workers without threats of retaliation..

The experiences of workers from Nepal, the Philippines, Ethiopia, and Sri Lanka show that this is a regional problem affecting migrant women from many developing countries. Some governments have imposed temporary bans on sending domestic workers to certain Gulf states following high-profile abuse cases. While such bans may offer short-term political signals, they neither satisfy the underlying demand for migrant domestic labour nor lessen the systemic vulnerabilities that enable exploitation.

Ultimately, this is about redefining how we value migrant labour. Bangladeshi women who travel abroad as domestic workers are not disposable labour units. They are citizens whose dignity and rights must be protected across borders. Remittances should not come at the cost of their bodily integrity and basic freedom. Calling these patterns modern-day slavery is not rhetorical excess. When deception, coercion, confinement, violence and exploitation intersect, the elements of forced labour are present. When women are isolated, abused and denied autonomy, fundamental human rights are violated.

If Bangladesh is to continue sending workers abroad, it must ensure that migration is safe, informed, and rights-based. Protection must follow the worker to her place of employment and extend throughout her return and reintegration. Each abused migrant worker represents a systemic failure. Accountability must involve recruiters, employers, and officials where negligence or complicity exists.

For Bangladesh, the challenge is clear: protect the women who sustain the nation’s economy through their labour abroad, or continue being complicit in a system that trades vulnerability for remittance.

Will the real poor get the benefits of the family card

The social safety net or social protection programme enables the government to advance the well-being and security of citizens by protecting them from vulnerability and deprivation so they can pursue a better life. The purpose of the family card, proposed by the new government, seems to be the same. Prime Minister Tarique Rahman, during an inter-ministerial meeting held on February 19, instructed the launch of the programme. On the same day, a 15-member cabinet committee led by Finance Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury was formed. The high-powered committee includes ministers, advisers and secretaries who will finalise the beneficiary selection process and eligibility criteria, and propose a rollout mechanism of the initiative. The committee will identify marginalised and low-income families in one upazila per division for the pilot phase to test the programme starting this Ramadan before rolling it out across the country. The family card programme reportedly has an ambitious target of reaching five crore families eventually and would offer more than double the benefits currently provided under the existing social safety net schemes. At the planning stage, several factors need to be considered. If the weaknesses of the existing social safety net programmes are not taken into consideration during design, implementation and monitoring, the family card may end up like the older programmes. The social safety net programmes in Bangladesh, with provisions for cash, food and assets, are expected to reduce and ultimately alleviate poverty and food insecurity. As per Article 15 (d) of Bangladesh’s constitution, it shall be a fundamental responsibility of the state to attain a constant increase of productive forces and a steady improvement in the material and cultural standard of life of the people through planned economic growth, with a view to securing its citizens’ right to social protection, that is to say, to public assistance in cases of underserved want arising from unemployment, illness or disablement, or suffered by widows or orphans or in old age, in other such cases. Bangladesh has a fairly long history of social safety net programmes (SSNPs), the first undertaken immediately after independence in 1971. Since then, the number of total schemes implemented is over 120. The country spent about 16 percent of the national budget on SSNPs in recent years, which is 2.5-3 percent of the GDP, covering about 35 percent of citizens. However, a vital question is whether the benefits of the SSNPs reach the targeted beneficiaries—poor households and the vulnerable population? According to Bangladesh’s 8th Five-Year Plan, there are high exclusion and inclusion errors in the existing SSNPs. However, there is no recent data to estimate the errors, which is necessary to assess beneficiary selection or targeting efficiently. The current process of beneficiary selection often relies on individual knowledge rather than the collection and evaluation of standardised data. Details about people’s income and how much land they own are not checked for accuracy. Due to poor monitoring, it is not possible to have accurate information on the weaknesses of the SSNPs in Bangladesh. However, it is apparent to those who know the programmes that they have very high exclusion and inclusion errors. Besides, there is no robust, standardised, and operational grievance system for the safety net programmes. Also, regular monitoring and “cleaning” of

the beneficiary registry is not done to remove people who are no longer eligible for various reasons, such as death, to make way for eligible, genuine new applicants to the programmes. Bangladesh adopted the National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) in 2015. The strategy is scheduled to end in 2026. It is a commitment to address the triple problems of poverty, vulnerability, and marginalisation, and it provides a roadmap for establishing a lifecycle-based social protection system covering people’s needs over their entire lifetime. It adopted a lifecycle approach developed by William Beveridge, which involves long-term planning of programmes directed at different stages of life, such as childhood, school age, youth, working age and old age. Over the years, these systems have evolved globally through trial and error and incremental innovations. Taking into consideration risk factors such as natural disasters, climate change and food price shocks, policymakers aimed to create social safety nets, usually in the form of cash, food and other kinds of support, to improve the socioeconomic conditions of people living in poverty. The adoption of NSSS coincides with the beginning of the new era of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which set out a global commitment to reduce poverty following the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Since the duration of the current strategy is due to end this year, a new strategy needs to be formulated and adopted, which requires a lot of attention by the government and all relevant stakeholders. Any large-scale SSNPs are ideally required to follow a life-cycle approach covering all the stages of life. There are many factors which can cause or exacerbate poverty and can occur at any point in a person’s life. The NSSS brought together all SSNPs under five broad themes to align with the lifecycle approach. The needs are different at different stages of life, and families require different support depending on the age of the family members, and vulnerability conditions such as disability, sickness, poverty level, etc. Therefore, no single social SSNP can replace all the existing programmes. A single programme—family card—will not be able to cover all, as programmes are age-specific, implemented by different ministries and departments, and do not necessarily use cash as the only support tool. For example, the objectives of the mother and child benefit programme are to ensure nutrition and good health of women and newborns up to 1,000 days through a combination of cash payment, training of pregnant women and lactating mothers of poor families on parenting, and taking good care of their babies, and ensuring vaccination. Ultimately, the success of the government’s ambitious family card programme will depend entirely on its execution. If it inherits the systemic flaws of past social safety net schemes—such as unverified data, poor targeting, and weak monitoring—it risks becoming just another inefficient programme. Moreover, as the current NSSS concludes this year, it is crucial to recognise that a single card cannot address all human vulnerabilities. The upcoming strategy must seamlessly integrate the family card with the proven lifecycle approach, ensuring that specific needs like child nutrition, maternal health, and elderly care are not sidelined. A transparent, data-driven, and comprehensive social protection system is the only way forward to sustainably uplift the nation’s poor and marginalised.

HCL Tech, Infosys, TCS, LTIM Jefferies cuts targets for Indian IT stocks by up to 33%



New Delhi: Jefferies has cut its target prices by up to 33 per cent on Indian IT stocks, saying the artificial intelligence may structurally change IT business mix towards consulting and implementation while shrinking managed services. This, it said, would not only increase cyclicality but also require a change in talent and operating model, thus adding risks. The foreign brokerage said despite 16 per cent drop, IT stocks still offer higher downside than upside. It lowered its earnings per share estimates for IT names by 1-4 per cent, downgrading Infosys Ltd, HCL Technologies Ltd and Mphasis Ltd to ‘Hold’ and LTIMindtree (LTIM), Tata Consultancy Services Ltd (TCS) and Hexaware Technologies Ltd to ‘Underperform’. Jefferies said Coforge, Sagility and IKS remained its preferred picks. “The extent and timing of this deflation are likely to exacerbate as AI tools become better. Moreover, rising share of advisory and implementation engagements would not only increase

the cyclicality in revenue growth, but will also demand an overhaul of talent strategy and operating models. Such changes in operating models are not easy to execute and investors must factor in this risk in PE multiples,” it said. Jefferies noted that Nifty IT has fallen 14 per cent and underperformed Nifty50 by 12 percentage points in 2026 so far. While the December quarter results led to earnings upgrades for nearly all IT firms, recent developments in AI have raised concerns on the medium- to long-term growth outlook for IT firms, it said. “Hexaware Technologies. Following the development, Hexaware Technologies tanked 3.45 per cent to Rs 503.50. Mphasis dropped 2.57 per cent to Rs 2,312.50. Infosys While IT firms should remain relevant, the nature of their client engagements is likely to structurally shift towards advisory and implementation with application managed services (22-45 per cent of revenues) seeing sharp revenue deflation, Jefferies said.

Morepen Labs, CIE Auto surge up to 14%; IDFC First Bank, UPL dive up to 20% Sensex, Nifty jump in early trade

New Delhi: Indian equity benchmarks staged a decent recovery in Monday’s trade following a sharp drop in the previous session. At last check, the 30-share BSE Sensex pack was up 615.84 points or 0.74 per cent at 83,430.55, while the NSE Nifty50 index climbed 180.80 points or 0.71 per cent to 25,752.05. Top gainers included Morepen Laboratories Ltd, CIE Automotive India Ltd, Kitex Garments Ltd, KRN Heat Exchanger And Refrigeration Ltd and LT Foods Ltd, rising up to 14.25 per cent. On the flip side, IDFC First Bank Ltd, UPL Ltd, Godfrey Phillips India Ltd, AU Small Finance Bank Ltd and Newgen Software Technologies Ltd plunged up to 20 per cent.

The rebound extended beyond the frontline indices. The Nifty Midcap 100 edged up 0.09 per cent, while the Nifty Smallcap 100 rose 0.94 per cent, reflecting improving risk appetite in the broader markets.

VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Investments, said, “The Trump tariff tale has become murkier after the US Supreme Court declared the tariffs illegal. The SC judgement is, indeed, a landmark decision which will seriously impact Trump’s tariff weaponisation strategy. Even the new 15 % global tariff imposed under section 122 will be challenged in courts and the probability of this decision getting annulled is high since section 122 allows the US president to impose tariffs to tackle a serious Balance of Payments crisis, and the US doesn’t have a Balance of Payments crisis now.” He added, “India has already delayed the visit of its trade negotiating team to the US in light of the changed scenario. This is a welcome move. From the market per-



spective, the US SC decision is indeed positive, but this is not sufficient to trigger a sustained rally in the market. The market will see only a relief rally, which is unlikely to sustain. The market will respond only to the fundamentals, which are fortunately improving.” Aakash Shah, Technical Research Analyst at Choice Equity Broking, said, “Given persistent global uncertainties and elevated market volatility, traders are advised to remain disciplined and selective, focusing on fundamentally strong stocks during corrective

phases. Fresh long positions should ideally be considered only after a sustained breakout of the Nifty above 26,000, which would signal a more reliable improvement in overall market sentiment and confirm a stronger bullish structure.” On the institutional flows front, foreign institutional investors (FIIs) continued their selling, offloading equities worth Rs 934 crore on February 20. In contrast, domestic institutional investors (DIIs) provided strong support by purchasing equities worth Rs 2,637 crore.

No country signalled exit from US tariff deals SC ruling: US trade representative Jamieson Greer

New Delhi: United States Trade Representative Jamieson Greer confirmed that no countries have signalled their intention to withdraw from tariff agreements with the US, following recent developments surrounding President Donald Trump’s tariffs. Greer, speaking publicly on CBS’s “Face the Nation,” disclosed that active conversations with partner nations remain constructive, despite the recent Supreme Court ruling that has reignited international attention on US trade policy. The assurance from the US trade chief comes amid speculation regarding the future of key international tariff deals and their implications for global trade flows. Greer highlighted ongoing engagement with global counterparts, including a recent exchange with his European Union equivalent, to reinforce the US commitment to existing arrangements. The Supreme Court’s decision has not prompted any immediate reactions from trade partners, according to Greer. The trade representative emphasised the importance of maintaining open lines of communication to foster stability in international trade relations.

During his appearance, Greer said, “I haven’t heard anyone yet come to me and say the deal is off,” directly addressing concerns about potential disruptions in established agreements. This statement pro-



vided reassurance to both domestic and international stakeholders monitoring the outcome of the ruling. The absence of any withdrawal signals has been interpreted as an indication of continued commitment by US trade partners to honour current tariff

frameworks. While the Supreme Court ruling attracted widespread attention, Greer’s remarks suggest that participating nations view the agreements as resilient to legal and political shifts within the United States. Greer stated that dialogue with the Europe-

an Union has already taken place and that similar discussions with officials from other countries are scheduled. This proactive outreach is part of the US strategy to reinforce bilateral and multilateral trust, particularly as international observers assess the durability of US trade commitments under shifting domestic conditions. No further details have been disclosed regarding any prospective amendments or renegotiations to existing deals. Greer’s insistence that no counterpart has indicated withdrawal from agreements is aimed at tempering uncertainty and ensuring ongoing cooperation between the US and its trade allies. Industry analysts note that Greer’s comments reflect an effort to maintain the status quo within the global trading system. His communication underscores that, to date, there has been no reported move by any nation to reconsider or terminate a tariff arrangement with the US as a direct result of the Supreme Court’s decision. The current approach by the US Trade Representative aligns with previous efforts to prioritise engagement and transparency in dealings with trade partners. Maintaining dialogue with the European Union and other key stakeholders remains central, especially as nations monitor the evolving landscape of US trade policy.

Jewar airport asked to clear telecom row

New Delhi: The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has informed Yamuna International Airport Private Limited (YIAPL), operator of the upcoming Noida International Airport at Jewar, that it qualifies as a “public entity” under the Telecommunications Act, 2023, and must process Right of Way (RoW) applications from telecom service providers in accordance with the law. In a letter dated February 19, which FE has seen a copy of, the DoT said the Telecommunications Act, 2023, read with the Telecommunications (Right of Way) Rules, 2024, provides a statutory framework for granting RoW permissions to licensed telecom operators and other facility providers for the establishment, operation and maintenance of telecom networks. The communication also clarifies that the obligations prescribed for public entities under the Act apply to the Jewar airport operator, including fair, transparent and non-discriminatory processing of RoW applications within prescribed timelines. What does the govt letter state? “Deployment of telecom networks at Noida International Airport will not take long; telecom operators will need 10-15 days to deploy their in-building solutions (IBS) networks across the airport,” a senior executive from the airport told FE. “In view of the above, you are requested to ensure compliance with the provisions of the Telecommunications Act, 2023 and the Telecommunications (Right of Way) Rules, 2024 while processing applications for grant of RoW permissions within your premises, and to take necessary action to facilitate establishment of telecom infrastructure in accordance with the statutory framework,” the letter signed by AS Negi, undersecretary to the Government of India read. The missive was addressed to the chief executive officer, Yamuna International Airport Private Limited and a copy was marked to the secretary at the ministry of civil aviation.

Clean Max Enviro Energy Solutions IPO opens today: Should you subscribe to it

New Delhi: The initial public offering (IPO) of Clean Max Enviro Energy Solutions (Clean Max) opens for bidding today, that is, on Monday, February, 23. The company is offering its shares in the range of Rs 1,000-1,053 apiece, which can be applied for a minimum of 14 equity shares and its multiples thereafter. The issue will close for bidding on Wednesday, February 25. Clean Max is looking to raise a total of Rs 3,100 crore via IPO, which includes a fresh share sale of Rs 1,200 crore and offer-for-sale (OFS) of up to 1,80,43,684 equity shares worth Rs 1,900 crore. The net proceeds from the issue shall be utilized towards repayment of debt and general corporate purposes. Bengaluru-based Clean Max Enviro is India’s leading commercial and industrial (C&I) renewable energy provider. Its key offerings include supplying renewable power, providing energy services, and offering carbon credit solutions. It has 2.54 GW of operational, owned, and managed capacity and an additional 2.53 GW of contracted capacity under execution. Ahead of its IPO, Clean Max raised Rs 921 crore from anchor including as it allocated 87,46,437 equity shares at Rs 1,053 apiece. Anchor book included names like Temasek Holdings, Nomura Asset Management, Eastspring, SBI Life, Tata Investment Corp, HDFC Mutual Fund, ADIA, Franklin Templeton Mutual Fund, SBI General, Premji Invest, 360 One Mutual Fund and others. For the period ended on September 30, 2025, CleanMax reported net profit at Rs 19 crore with a revenue of Rs 969.35 crore, while the company clocked a net profit at Rs 19.43 crore, with a revenue of Rs 1,610.34 crore for the financial year 2024-25. At the current valuations, the company is commanding a market capitalization of Rs 12,325 crore. Shares worth Rs 30 crore have been set aside for employees, who will receive a Rs 100 per share discount on the IPO price. Half of the net issue is allocated to qualified institutional buyers (QIBs), 15 per cent to non-institutional investors (NIIs) and 35 per cent to retail bidders. Last heard, it was commanding a grey market premium of Rs 3-5 apiece, suggesting flat listing for investors. Axis Capital JP Morgan India, BNP Paribas, HSBC Securities and Capital Markets (India), IIFL Capital Services, Nomura Financial Advisory, BoB Capital Markets and SBI Capital are the book running lead manager of Clean Max IPO and MUFG Intime India is the registrar of the issue. Here’s what a host of brokerage firms say about the



IPO of Clean Max Enviro Energy Solutions: Anand Rathi Share & Stock Brokers Rating: Subscribe for long-term Clean Max Enviro offers a comprehensive and customer-centric suite of renewable energy solutions tailored specifically to the needs of C&I clients, which has enabled it to achieve market leadership and build strong, long-term customer relationships. It possesses robust capabilities across project development, execution and end-to-end management, said Anand Rathi Share & Stock Brokers. It follows a disciplined approach to capital allocation supported by prudent risk management practices to optimize returns, safeguard financial stability and drive sustainable long-term growth. Its integrated operating model, combined with deep sector expertise and a diversified project portfolio, enhances execution visibility and cash flow stability,” it said with a ‘subscribe for long-term’ rating.

Power Grid, Granules India, Gujarat Ambuja Exports

New Delhi: Indian benchmark indices settled modestly higher on Friday amid value buying in the select largecap counters as the sentiments improved over trade-deal clarity. The BSE Sensex surged 316.57 points, or 0.38 per cent, to close at 82,814.71, while NSE’s Nifty50 jumped 116.90 points, or 0.46 per cent, to end at 25,571.25. Select buzzing stocks including Power Grid Corporation of India Ltd, Granules India and Gujarat Ambuja Exports Ltd are likely to remain under the spotlight of traders for the session today. Here is what a couple of brokerage firms have to say on them ahead of Monday’s trading session:

Power Grid has shown a meaningful improvement in its technical structure on the weekly chart. It has convincingly broken above a falling trendline that had been acting as a stiff resistance zone for several months. This level earlier witnessed repeated supply, but the recent breakout indicates that selling pressure has been absorbed and buyers are gradually taking control. Importantly, the breakout has been supported by a visible pickup in volumes, which adds credibility to the move and suggests fresh participation rather than short covering alone. Prices are trading comfortably above all key moving averages, including the 21-week, 50-week, 100-week and 200-week EMAs, reflecting improving momentum across timeframes. It has started forming a pattern of higher highs, indicating a shift from a corrective phase to a potential uptrend. We rec-

ommend partial buying at current level Rs 298 and rest on fall close to Rs 280. Granules India Ltd is exhibiting a constructive consolidation within a rising structure after a sharp corrective phase on the daily chart. The stock has formed higher lows and is attempting to push above the immediate resistance zone near Rs 595-600, indicating accumulation at lower levels. Price continues to hold above the rising trend line and the long-term moving average, which keeps the broader bias positive. In the last session rising price with sudden spike in volume activity as well also supports the next up move and indicates a long build up into the stock. Therefore, one can accumulate a stock in range of Rs 590-600 levels for the expected upside of Rs 675-680 levels with stop loss below Rs 555 levels. Gujarat Ambuja is showing a constructive breakout from a prolonged base formation on the weekly charts, with price now trading above the key horizontal resistance zone of Rs 140. The stock has reclaimed its long-term moving average, indicating strengthening medium-term momentum. RSI is trending higher in bullish territory, while MACD shows a positive crossover, reinforcing the improving bias. If the breakout sustains above the Rs 145-148 zone, the stock could witness further upside toward the Rs 160-170 levels in the coming weeks on back of follow up buying. Therefore, one can accumulate a stock in range of Rs 144-147 levels with the expected upside of 167-170 levels with stop loss below Rs 130 levels.

‘The anxieties just lift why domestic abuse



London: One of the main challenges in maintaining the 64 homes for domestic abuse survivors run by Refuge is the reliance on a male-dominated workforce of electricians, plumbers and decorators.“

The presence of men can be distressing and could trigger past traumas for our survivors,” said Lisa Cantwell-Hope, the head of property services at the charity. “Male contractors need an escort to make our survivors feel more comfortable, and we always put a notice out to all our residents saying there will be a male presence in the building today. So it can be challenging and takes up more time.”Data from the Office for National Statistics shows there were 48,000 tradeswomen in the UK in 2021, a growth of 41% from 2006, but it is thought this is still only about 4% of the total trades workforce, and construction is consistently ranked as the most male-dominated industry in the country.Regionally, the West Midlands has the highest number of tradeswomen (who make up 4.4% of all tradespeople, above London (2.98%) and the south-west (2.24%). In the East Midlands, north-east, Northern Ireland, Scotland, south-east and Wales, they make up less than 1% of tradespeople, according to 2023 data from My Local Toolbox.But there are clear signs that things are shifting and women are increasingly moving into the sector – the number of women taking construction and engineering apprenticeships rose by 73% between 2019 and 2022.This is welcome news for domestic abuse charities such as Refuge, which are slowly starting to shift from handymen to handywomen.“If we could just use female contractors, I’d be a happy woman, but there isn’t enough currently,” said Cantwell-Hope. “But having them makes our jobs a lot easier, and it makes it easier to get people in the refuges, because there’s that common understanding of the sensitivity. They say they feel much more relaxed having a female in the property

“We’ve got to remember our refuges are people’s homes, and as much as we need to maintain the building, we also have to make it therapeutically pleasing and comfortable.” The charity is working with TaskHer, an online directory of tradeswoman, to source female workers. The service was set up by Anna Moynihan and her husband in 2021, due to the difficulty in finding tradeswomen when renovating their home.“I found that every time a tradesperson came to our house, they were a man and they would always speak to my husband and not me,” said Moynihan. “It was really frustrating.”After doing some research, they found there was huge unmet demand from consumers for tradeswomen – particularly from single women living alone, the LGBT community and women who for religious reasons did not want men in their home.They then started getting inquiries from domestic abuse charities. “We realised that they were having essentially the same issues that we had from a personal perspective, but on a larger scale,” said Moynihan. “It wasn’t necessarily about convenience, it was about creating an environment that the women who are living in their refuges would still feel safe in.”They’re now working with Refuge, and other domestic abuse charities, to supply female workers in London, with an aim to expanding outside the capital in the near future.Erin, a 26-year-old electrician in London, has been working with Refuge for the past few months doing everything from odd jobs to replacing consumer units in their safe houses.She said taking on the job was a no-brainer as it is rewarding to be able to put her skills to good use in a scenario where a tradesman might cause some apprehension.“If you can make anyone feel more comfortable in a situation, why wouldn’t you want to do that anyway?” she said. “You can feel it in the air, the anxieties just lift slightly when you go in and they can see who you are.”She said she’s met very few fellow tradeswomen in her work, although numbers have started to increase in recent years. “I was the only girl

on my course at the time and I don’t think they had another one for at least a couple years after that,” she said. “Every day on the job and going around different sites, I never encountered any tradeswomen, never mind an electrician.”She also said there’s still a degree of sexism she encounters when doing jobs. “You get the older gents watching over and making sure you’re doing it right. I’ve got a baby face and I’m only five foot two so that doesn’t help things,” she said. “But it does feel like things are starting to change. I know a fair few female gas engineers now as well as plumbers, and painters and decorators. Garmany: A South Korean court has sentenced the former president Yoon Suk Yeol to life imprisonment with labour over his failed martial law declaration in December 2024, finding him guilty of leading an insurrection and making him the first elected head of state in the country’s democratic era to receive the maximum custodial sentence.The Seoul central district court found that Yoon’s declaration of martial law on 3 December 2024 constituted insurrection, carried out with the intent to disrupt the constitutional order.Judge Jee Kui-youn said the purpose was “to send troops to the national assembly to blockade the assembly hall and arrest key figures, including the assembly speaker and party leaders, thereby preventing lawmakers from gathering to deliberate or vote”.In sentencing Yoon on Thursday, the court pointed to his lack of apology throughout the proceedings, his unjustified refusal to attend hearings, and the massive social costs his actions inflicted on South Korean society.The court said the martial law greatly damaged the political neutrality of the military and police and caused South Korea’s political standing and credibility in the international community to decline, leaving society “politically divided and experiencing extreme confrontation”.

The court opted for life imprisonment over the death penalty, noting that while the crime was grave, Yoon’s planning did not appear meticulous, he had attempted to limit the use of physical force, and most of his plans ultimately failed.In a historical digression, the judge traced the history of insurrection law and cited the 1649 execution of England’s Charles I, who led troops into parliament, to establish that even heads of state can commit insurrection by attacking the legislature.The verdict was broadcast live on national television, capturing Yoon briefly smiling on arrival and later displaying no visible reaction as the sentence was delivered.Under South Korean law, the charge of leading an insurrection carries three possible penalties: death, life imprisonment with labour, or life imprisonment without labour.Prosecutors had sought the death penalty, arguing that Yoon committed “a grave destruction of constitutional order” by mobilising troops to surround parliament and attempting to arrest political oppoThe verdict came 14 months after events that marked the most serious threat to South Korea’s democracy in decades. The charges stem from events on the night of 3 December 2024, when prosecutors said Yoon attempted to use military force to paralyse the legislature, arrest political opponents and seize control of the national election commission. Yoon claimed he was rooting out “anti-state forces” and alleged election fraud without providing evidence. Within hours of the declaration, 190 lawmakers broke through military and police cordons to pass an emergency resolution lifting martial law. Parliament impeached Yoon within 11 days, and the constitutional court removed him from office four months Outside the courthouse, hundreds of Yoon supporters – waving South Korean and US flags and chanting “Yoon again” – in a 1979 coup and subsequent massacre in Gwangju. The sentences were later reduced on appeal, and both men were eventually pardoned.Every South Korean president who has served a prison sentence has ultimately been pardoned.

BBC presenting duties to be shared for World Cup – but who will host the final

London: When the BBC split the task of presenting Match of the Day between three prominent broadcasters, executives were clear – there were to be “no favourites” among the new hosts Kelly Cates, Gabby Logan and Mark Chapman.That mantra is now being underlined as the corporation prepares its coverage for this summer’s World Cup. It is understood producers are ensuring that the trio have an equal number of programmes to present once the tournament kicks off in Mexico City.There is, however, one big unresolved question as the epic task of planning the coverage takes shape – no decision has yet been taken on who will host the final.

Cates, Logan and Chapman took over Match of the Day presenting duties at the start of the current Premier League season, replacing Gary Lineker after his 26-year association with the programme.Lineker had initially agreed a deal to present the World Cup for the BBC, which takes place across Canada, Mexico and the US. However, he ended his BBC presenting career early last year, after he apologised for amplifying online material with antisemitic connotations.It means the three hosts will share the presenter’s chair, with producers working hard to ensure they receive a fair share of the top games. Even insiders are in the dark about who will be given the task of fronting the World Cup final coverage.The three will be part of an increasingly crowded field of World Cup content, which will include Lineker himself. His The Rest Is Football video podcast, part of the Goalhanger stable of podcasts that he co-founded, has struck a deal with Netflix to present a daily edition from New York. Chapman, Cates and Logan also have podcast commitments during the tournament, while BBC pundits Micah Richards and Alan Shearer will appear on Lineker’s podcast. The BBC has made clear it will not use licence fee payers’ money



to help cover their expenses for the work they do for rival podcasts.

The BBC’s plans come as insiders are pointing to evidence that its controversial modernisation of the Match of the Day brand is beginning to bear fruit

Insiders said a fall of about 10% in the combined linear TV and iPlayer views of Saturday and Sunday Match of the Day shows this season – about 770,000 viewers – was “more than offset” by a new rights agreement allowing viewers to access highlights at 8pm, alongside the traditional programmes.The number of digital BBC accounts accessing Match of the Day content in an average game week is up 21% year on year. The figure includes viewing of the Saturday and Sunday programmes on iPlayer, the new 8pm highlights on iPlayer, and

highlight clips on the BBC Sport website and app.“It’s wonderful to see Kelly Cates, Mark Chapman and Gabby Logan (alphabetical order, there are no favourites!) continuing the fine work of Gary Lineker, Des Lynam, Jimmy Hill and others in the famous chair,” said Alex Kay-Jelski, the director of BBC Sport, in an online post.“We will keep trying new things and trying to make as much of the football-loving audience as entertained and informed as we can. And we will keep learning from everyone doing great things out there, from content creators to Sky to clubs.” Much of the BBC’s early World Cup presenting duties will take place from its Salford base, as the corporation – along with all broadcasters covering the tournament – grapples with the logistics and costs

of covering an event spanning three huge countries.The tournament has also expanded from 32 teams to a new 48-team format, leading to a significant increase in the number of games, from 64 to 104 by the time the winners lift the trophy.

With the licence fee already under considerable pressure, BBC insiders have been battling to manage the costs of covering the tournament. It is understood some TV commentators and pundits are likely to be asked to cover some lower-demand games from Salford.The costs associated with having commentary teams in a stadium, even without the associated accommodation and flight expenses, are understood to be significant. Major games, including all of those played by the home nations, will be covered by commentary teams at the stadiums.

Reform would create ICE-style agency end leave to remain, Zia Yusuf to say

London: Reform UK would create an ICE-style agency dedicated to deporting hundreds of thousands of people, as well as terminating the status of those with indefinite leave to remain (ILR), the party will say.It would also ban the conversion of churches into mosques and fund a radical expansion of stop and search, the party’s new home affairs spokesperson, Zia Yusuf, will also say in a speech on Monday. The deradicalisation programme Prevent would also have its mandate redrawn to focus on Islamist extremism. Labour said the plans were divisive and showed that Reform was planning “to deport people who have followed the rules, worked hard and built their lives here – our friends, neighbours and colleagues”. And thirdly, his organisational abilities. Yusuf is credited with building much of the infrastructure up to now that Reform is attempting to assemble at lightning speed, to turn them from an insurgency into general election winners in just a handful of years. And now he is gone. The party has soared during his tenure, but it is also true that the now former chairman put rather a lot of noses out of joint within Reform.

The Labour party’s chair, Anna Turley, said the policies were “a direct attack on settled families and fundamentally un-British”. She added: “Britain is a proud, tolerant and diverse nation, which stands in opposition to the kind of divisive politics stoked by Reform.”Yusuf will say in a speech that Reform would leave the European convention on human rights (ECHR) and put a legal duty on the home secretary to remove illegal migrants.He will promise to create a new agency – UK Deportation Command – with the capacity to detain 24,000 migrants at a time and deport up to 288,000 annually on five flights a day. Experts have previously said the costs of such an expansion would be considerable – as of April 2024 there were approximately 2,500 detention spaces.“For decades, the Tories and Labour have turned the other way while the very fabric of our society has been under assault,” Yusuf will say. “The social contract has not merely been broken; it’s been shattered. Under a Reform government, His Majesty’s parliament will be sovereign once again.”We will secure our borders, leave the ECHR, and deport those here illegally. My message to the British people is simple: I will secure our borders and make you feel safe.”

In the speech, Yusuf will explicitly blame the former prime minister Boris Johnson for the increase in net migration, saying the Conservative leader “threw open our borders” and that granting ILR would mean “a lifetime of living off the British taxpayer” because of new access to benefits. The resignation of Zia Yusuf as Reform UK’s chairman matters because he was a central character in the stand out trend in



British politics since the general election – the rise and rise of Nigel Farage’s party.After 11 months in the role, Yusuf said on Thursday that working to get the party elected was no longer “a good use of my time”, without expanding further.Farage described Yusuf as a huge factor in Reform’s success in last month’s elections, but added that he believed he had “had enough” of politics.It comes after Yusuf said it was “dumb” for Reform’s newest MP to call for a ban for the burka - a veil worn by some Muslim women that covers the face and body.I first met this thirty-something Muslim son of Sri Lankan immigrants, a former Conservative, when he was unveiled by Reform almost exactly a year ago, as a donor who had just handed the party £200,000.Yusuf is a self-made multi-millionaire after setting up and then selling Velocity Black, a luxury concierge service.Not long after his donation to Reform, he was offered and accepted the job of party

ILR holders make up only about 2.7% of all universal credit claimants, with at least a third of those in employment.ILR would be scrapped under Re-

form and replaced with a renewable five-year work visa with a high salary threshold, Yusuf will say, meaning tens of thousands currently with settled status could lose their right to be in the UK. Labour has also proposed changing ILR, with new conditions. The home secretary, Shabana Mahmood, has said the party plans to increase the period of eligibility from five years to 10 years.Yusuf will also propose a new approach to knife crime and policing, saying he would end any diversity initiatives in police forces and expand stop and search powers.“I will take a zero-tolerance approach to Islamist extremism,” Yusuf will say, promising to overhaul Prevent and proscribe the Muslim Brotherhood organisation.“We will protect British culture, because a nation without a culture is not a nation at all. It is just an economic zone. We will preserve Britain’s Christian heritage and end the incendiary practice of converting churches into mosques or any other place of worship.” Nigel Farage’s party plans to deport up to 288,000 people a year on five flights a day and expand stop and search.

Exploring the Silk Roads: 10 stunning sites in 10 countries from Turkey to China

Whether or not the term Silk Roads is a myth or a handy catch-all for a dauntingly wide geographical network spanning mountain chains, deserts, cities and seas, the idea of it still entices travellers. There are countless extraordinary places to explore along its various strands from Asia to Europe, and these 10 choices represent only a handful of highlights. There were as many Silk Road threads passing through war-torn lands centuries ago as there are today. Some of these destinations are currently off the traveller's map for ethical or safety reasons, but given their historical importance it would be wrong to leave them off the list.

Old City of Damascus, Syria
Damascus is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world, a place of living antiquity that has drawn invaders – among them the Greeks, the Abbasids and the Seljuk Turks – and curious travellers for centuries. The city's craft industry was famed for its decorated swords and lace, and while Damask silk originated in China it takes its name from the trading city of Damascus. One of the most arresting sights is the Umayyad mosque (pictured), also known as the Great Mosque of Damascus, a gem of the early Islamic world dating to the period when the Umayyads established their capital in Damascus in 661. After the start of the Syrian civil war the ancient city of Damascus was added to Unesco's list of world heritage in danger in 2013.

İshak Pasha Palace, Turkey
Set on a lonely rock, close to the town of Doğubayazıt in eastern Turkey, is the strikingly photogenic İshak Pasha Palace, with its dramatic stone-domed mosque and minaret boasting Ottoman, Persian and Seljuk influences. Commissioned by the family of İshak Pasha, who was vizier of the area, it was completed after the Silk Roads era in 1784, though its lofty position was strategic, overlooking the entire valley, which is crisscrossed with old Silk Roads pathways leading to Georgia and Iran and the caravan route from Tabriz to the Black Sea ports. The road to the palace also passes the ancient Bayazıt Castle, a fortress in the shadows of Mount Ararat, where merchants travelling the Silk Roads would stop and store their goods.

Selim Caravanserai, Armenia
Sometimes called Orbelian's Caravanserai, after the noble family who built it, this is an ancient inn or hostel for merchants completed in 1332 and located by the remote Selim Pass in southern Armenia. It is a long, low-slung and dimly lit building, with just one entrance (a useful barrier against thieves and bitter winters) and it doesn't take too much imagination, as you enter through a doorway decorated with a bull and a lion, to picture merchants of old gathered in one arched section, their animals in another with their basalt feeding troughs. The caravanserai sits on an ancient international trade passage connecting to bordering Iran, though for modern-day travellers it is handily on one of the Trans-Caucasian Trail walking routes. You can drive up to it, too.

Uplistsikhe, Georgia
To see this once-thriving trading town, one of the oldest known settlements in the Caucasus, head east from the Georgian city of Gori, the birthplace of Stalin, to honeycomb-coloured Uplistsikhe where strands of the Silk Roads once ran close by. From the sixth century BC, Uplistsikhe, built high on the rocky bank of the Mtkvari River, developed into a religious centre and metropolis that was slowly hewn from solid stone. What is left today are the remains of the inner city, where once 20,000 people lived with a market, temples, palaces, winery, bakery and sewers. Given the foundations that remain, it is surprisingly easy to imagine the daily life of its citizens. The rest of ancient Uplistsikhe was flattened by the Mongols in the 13th century.

Tabriz, Iran
A network of interconnected bazaars stretching over at least 100 hectares (250 acres), the Unesco-listed Tabriz Historic Bazaar Complex is set in handsome domed halls and under fine brick vaulting with sections selling leather, silver, copper, spices and, of course, rugs. With its origins dating to the 10th century, it was one of the most important commercial centres on the Silk Roads thanks to its strategic location and policies of tax exemptions, though it was also known as a place of social gatherings and education. Today, it remains a living example of Silk Roads culture where craftspeople, artists, tobacconists, tailors, calligraphers and bookbinders from different cultures mix and trade in its laneways.

Merv, Turkmenistan
With its fortifications, mosques and mausoleums, the ancient city of Merv, in Turkmenistan's Mary region, has been home to human settlements since the bronze age; some historians have suggested that by the 10th century it was the third largest city in the world. But that isn't all. It was also once one of the most important cities in the Islamic world, attracting traders, scholars and travellers from distant regions, and today it is considered one of the oldest and best-preserved of the oasis-cities on central Asia's Silk Roads. A particularly eye-catching sight is the recently restored 12th-century Sultan Sanjar Mausoleum, a rare example of Seljuk commemorative architecture. The Mary regional museum, with its Seljuk bronze-ware and Mongol ceramics, is also recommended.

Termez, Uzbekistan
Close to Afghanistan, Termez is the southernmost city of Uzbekistan, set on the ancient Amu Darya (Oxus) River. It became an important commercial centre under the ancient Kushan Empire, stretching from northern India to Afghanistan and parts of central Asia, which promoted trade not only of goods but, in classic Silk Roads style, also craftsmanship, ideas and religious renaissance. Today Termez attracts small numbers of Silk Roads enthusiasts who arrive for the ancient Buddhist sites on the outskirts of town. Fayoz-Tepe is the most visited, a Buddhist monastery complex, that appears a little like a Star Wars film set, with its sand-coloured dome the size and shape of an igloo. Surrounding the platform lay fragmented foundations of former meditation halls, kitchens, sleeping cells and ancient water pipes that drew from the nearby river. The city also has a good museum for context.

Taxila, Pakistan
Easily reachable by car from Islamabad (though Alexander the Great took the long road to get here), Taxila is a Unesco world heritage site and a true archaeological wonder. Situated at a Silk Roads crossroads, the "City of Cut Stone" was one of the ancient capitals of Gandhara, a territory stretching between the Oxus and Indus rivers. Among the vast site today is a Mesolithic cave and, most crucially, Buddhist monuments and the remains of monasteries dotted through the Taxila valley, evidence of how it was once a religious heartland and a destination for pilgrims and monks who had travelled from China and central Asia. The city's museum, close to the excavations, is home to at least 2,000 priceless objects.

Issyk-Kul, Kyrgyzstan
Ringed by mountains, sea buckthorn bushes and Soviet-era sanatoriums once popular with commissars and cosmonauts, Lake Issyk-Kul is where Kazakhs, Russians and Kyrgyz go to sunbathe and swim in the summer. A branch of the Silk Roads once ran from the lake, known as the "pearl of Kyrgyzstan", across the border to Kashgar in Xinjiang, China, homeland of the Muslim Uyghurs. For more than 2,000 years Kashgar was a hub of regional trade and cultural exchange, full of teahouses, mosques and marketplaces. Today, much of old Kashgar, as with other Uyghur towns and cities, has been demolished or irreversibly altered by Beijing as the brutal crackdown against the Uyghur people continues.

Dunhuang, China
Dunhuang is an oasis city and pilgrimage site in north-west China that is home to the magnificent Mogao grottoes. One of the most important collections of Buddhist art in the world, housed in cells and sanctuaries lining a cliff face above the Dachuan River, the wall paintings tell an illustrated story of the Silk Roads from the fourth to the 14th centuries. Almost 500 caves have been preserved, housing countless murals and more than 2,000 painted sculptures. Cave 302 from the



Sui dynasty period contains a particularly classic Silk Roads scene: a two-humped Bactrian camel pulling a wagon with a merchant inside.



ENTERTAINMENT

The size of Ranveer Allahbadia’s home astounds Farah Khan

Mumbai: Every week, choreographer and filmmaker Farah Khan makes sure to keep her followers entertained with her food vlogs. This time, the videographer went to the Mumbai home of YouTuber Ranveer Allahbadia. She jokingly said that if she became a podcaster, she could purchase Antilia after being astounded by his enormous house.Farah went over to Ranveer’s residence in her most recent vlog. She was astounded by the opulent interiors as soon as she stepped inside. She said, “podcast karke hi aisa ghar banta hai Dilip (You only get a house like this by doing podcasts, Dilip).” A quick tour of the YouTuber’s house was then provided in the video, showcasing a large living room that led to a balcony. The space included an eye-catching blue-and-white sofa set across from a TV, and the décor



was warmly adorned with indoor plants and creative paintings.The large balcony had been converted into a sitting space with lovely wall hangings, wooden floors, and red and white sofas. From the sophisticated white dining table to the blue walls, the house’s color scheme was consistent throughout, creating a feeling of lightness and spaciousness. ”Inka pehle cooking channel tha, toh tabhi unka chota Ghar tha,” Farah continued. Abhi unhone podcast khola hai

toh ab bada ghar ban gaya. Toh humlogon ka thoda bada ghar hai, toh abhi socha hum logon ka cookery channel hai. They used to have a cookery channel, and their house was little at the time. Podcast kholenge toh kya hi hojaayega, Antilia le lenge hum log. They have expanded their home since they began a podcast. Imagine that our house is a little bit larger and that we have a cooking channel. We might be able to purchase Antilia if we launch a podcast as well. In addi-

tion to a walk-in wardrobe with a selection of shades that friends are welcome to borrow, Ranveer’s home has a modular kitchen. He has no television and just a study table in his completely white bedroom. The YouTuber referred to it as his “lucky house,” saying that he would never be able to leave it and that it has greatly aided in the development of his career. Additionally, he disclosed that his residence shares a building with Hrithik Roshan’s.

In 2024, Farah began posting food vlogs, which soon became well-known due to her humorous banter with her cook, Dilip. In her vlogs, the filmmaker shows followers around the homes of celebrities while simultaneously learning a new cuisine trick. She has acknowledged in the past that her earnings from YouTube have surpassed her earnings from filmmaking.

Kriti Sanon and her rumored boyfriend Kabir Bahia stroll hand in hand through the streets of London



Mumbai: A video of Kriti Sanon strolling around the streets of London went viral on social media, sparking another round of online discussion about her personal life. The actress is seen spending time with her rumored boyfriend, Kabir Bahia, in the now-viral video, which has sparked new rumors about their relationship.The widely

shared video shows Kriti and Kabir strolling hand in hand through what looks to be a laid-back London outing. As they walk through the city, the two appear comfortable in each other’s company. Kriti chooses a straightforward yet fashionable style, while Kabir stays cozy in a blue hoodie and matching co-ord pants. She is seen

sporting loose blue denim pants, black boots, and a brown puffer jacket over a fitting brown T-shirt.Kabir seems to become aware that they are being filmed at one point. The two walk and talk without seeming to mind the camera, even if they are aware of it. Despite the fact that the video has gone viral on social media, it is still

unclear when it was taken because no official statement has been made as to whether it was taken recently or during a previous trip. When the actress turned 34 months ago, rumors regarding Kriti and Kabir’s romance began to circulate.

Their purported affair has been in the news a lot ever since.Additionally, Kabir attended the wedding of Kriti’s sister Nupur Sanon and Stebin Ben. He even posted a number of pictures from the festivities on Instagram, several of which included Kriti.

Kabir Bahia is thought to be a businessman from the United Kingdom who attended an English boarding school. He hails from a prominent business family and founded Worldwide Aviation and Tourism Limited. Southall Travel, a well-known travel firm in the UK, is owned by his father, Kuljinder Bahia.

Rajpal Yadav starts filming Welcome to the Jungle

Mumbai: Days after being released from Tihar jail, actor Rajpal Yadav is starting filming again. On February 16, the actor was given temporary bail in relation to a case involving a debt of ₹9 crore and many bounced checks. A number of Bollywood celebs allegedly came forward to assist the actor in paying his debts while he was incarcerated. The actor started filming as soon as he arrived in Mumbai, according to Rajpal Yadav’s team. On February 28, he is also expected to hold a press conference in the city. Rajpal was spotted discussing his arrest and expressing thankfulness after being freed from Tihar. With attorneys all about him, he took a moment to say that he would appreciate all of the help. “I will celebrate my 30 years in Bollywood in Mumbai in 2027,” he remarked. I have the support of people from all over the nation, including kids, adults, and young people. I am will-

ing to respond to any accusations made against me because of how much Bollywood and the rest of the globe have loved me. “Thank you, High Court.” In a ten-year-old case involving the non-repayment of a loan totaling ₹9 crore, the actor was imprisoned. For his directing project Ata Pata Laapata, Rajpal borrowed ₹5 crore from Delhi-based Murali Pvt Ltd in 2010. He couldn’t pay back the debt after the movie didn’t do well at the box office. Following the actor’s seven checks being returned, legal action was taken. Rajpal was sentenced to six months of simple jail in 2018 after a magistrate’s court found him and his wife, Radha, guilty under Section 138 of the Negotiable Instruments Act. The court postponed his term in 2024 and ordered him to take “sincere and genuine steps” to pay the ₹9 crore in unpaid debt. After Rajpal told the Delhi High judge that he lacked the funds to



pay the debt back, the judge ordered his surrender on February 2, 2026. After that, he turned himself up and was taken to Tihar Jail.Sonu Sood encouraged others in the industry to lend support during his incarceration by openly offering financial aid and signing Rajpal for a future project in exchange for token compensation. Salman Khan, Ajay Devgn, Varun Dhawan, and others stepped up to assist him, Rajpal’s manager later disclosed.

The Kerala Story 2 is referred to as “a propaganda movie” by Anurag Kashyap

Mumbai: The Kerala Story 2: Goes Beyond has been criticized by filmmaker Anurag Kashyap, who claims that it is a propaganda movie that aims to sow discord and hatred.Kashyap, who was in Kochi for an event, was questioned about his opinions about

the movie in a video that is currently doing the rounds online.It’s a terrible propaganda film. The movie aims to sow discord and hatred. The video shows the avaricious creator saying, “Aise to log khichdi bhi nahi khilate jaisa movie mein beef khila rahe hai.” Audience

reactions to the movie were not entirely positive once the trailer was published. Pinarayi Vijayan, the chief minister of Kerala, has previously criticized the movie on X. The filmmaker of The Kerala Story 2 responded to his comments. Producer Vipul Amrutlal Shah has now responded to the purported dispute.

He declared, “Kerala is not our target. We want the evil in Kerala to be eliminated as quickly as possible because it is God’s own country.”Some people criticized the first film, claiming the 32,000 figure was false,” he continued. We created a YouTube vid-

eo about this figure that is accessible right now. We have displayed the figures and added names. Since the movie’s premiere, we’ve never heard of any strict action being taken, even though the government must have even more figures than we do.”The Kerala Story 2 would be released without any problems, according to Vipul Amrutlal Shah. On February 27, 2026, the movie is scheduled to open in theaters.

The previous installment, which was helmed by Sudipto Sen, brought in over Rs 300 crore at the box office.



Boong creates history by winning the Best Children’s & Family Film BAFTA award

Mumbai: On February 22, 2026, Boong, supported by Farhan Akhtar’s Excel Entertainment, won the Best Children’s & Family Film award at London’s Royal Festival Hall, marking a proud moment for Indian cinema at the 79th BAFTA Awards.In a challenging international lineup that includes Disney’s Lilo & Stitch, Arco, and Zootropolis 2, The Manipuri coming-of-age story stood out. The award was given by the adored fictional character Paddington Bear, and producers Ritesh Sidhwani and Farhan Akhtar joined director LakshmiPriya Devi in accepting the accolade. Akhtar and his spouse, Shibani Dandekar, were present at the event. During the ceremony, LakshmiPriya Devi gave a heartfelt reflection on the path that brought the movie to international acclaim.”Greetings to all of you. The last few steps to the top of a mountain we had no idea we were ascending in the first place felt like the walk up to this point,” she remarked. Speaking about the continuous turmoil in Manipur, she continued:We just wanted to take this chance to express our prayers for peace to return to Manipur. We hope for the happiness, innocence, and dreams of all internally displaced chil-



dren, including the young actors in the movie. We hope that no quarrel will ever be strong enough to overcome forgiveness, the one superpower that all people possess.Her remarks helped to refocus attention on the area that influenced the narrative and the challenges that its young cast still faces. Boong, which means “little boy” in Manipuri and is directed by rookie LakshmiPriya Devi, centers on a young youngster (Gugun Kipgen) who embarks on a sincere quest to bring his mother Mandakini (Bala Hijam) and his separated father back together. The movie follows the youngster and his friend Raju (Angom Sanamatum) as they go from Moreh into Myanmar against the backdrop of social and political instability in Manipur, where they discover surprising facts.

Through the eyes of a youngster negotiating con-

flict, the film tackles themes of family, forgiveness, and resilience while fusing emotional depth with innocence. Boong, which was co-produced by Suitable Pictures, Chalkboard Entertainment, and Excel Entertainment, made its global premiere at the 2024 Toronto International Film Festival. Prior to its September 2025 theatrical debut, it subsequently screened at the International Film Festival of India and the MAMI Mumbai Film Festival.Farhan Akhtar, who has collaborated with Devi for two decades, supported the project because he believes in the filmmaker and the value of presenting stories from overlooked areas of India.Boong’s BAFTA victory represents a major international debut for Northeast Indian film, demonstrating that heartfelt and truthfully conveyed, intensely local tales can have an impact on audiences everywhere.

Vijay Deverakonda and Rashmika Mandanna Arrive at Udaipur Airport



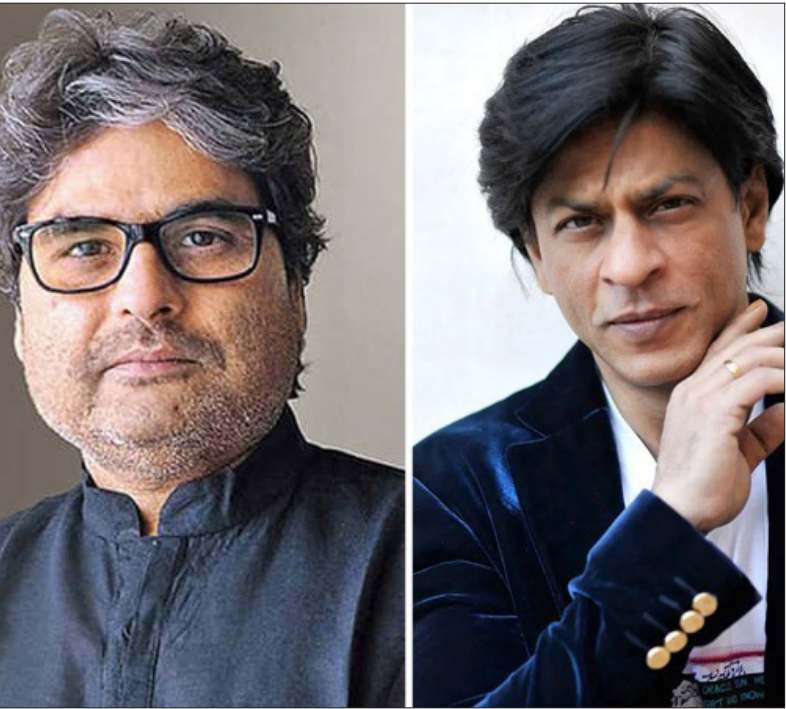
Mumbai:Days before their small-scale, three-day wedding in Rajasthan’s city of lakes, celebrity couple Rashmika Mandanna and Vijay Deverakonda touched down at the Udaipur airport on Monday morning.

The actors, who have worked together in movies like Dear Comrade and Geetha Govindam, will get married on February 26 at Mementos by ITC Hotels. According to sources, the wedding will be a private

event attended by film directors and a few Telangana politicians. It is not anticipated that any well-known movie stars will attend the wedding.With a small entourage of perhaps fifty people, Rashmika Mandanna and Vijay Deverakonda touched down at the Udaipur Airport. Rumor mills have been churning for months about the wedding, with an estimated 100 attendees in total. In an Instagram post on Sunday,

the couple finally acknowledged their relationship after years of rumors, and they also thanked their followers for helping them along the way.Our most cherished affections, You were there before we planned anything or made any decisions for ourselves. You gave us a name with such affection. They issued a joint statement over their portmanteau, saying, “You called us ‘VIROSH’.”Therefore, we humbly name this gathering in your honor today. ‘The Wedding of VIROSH’ is what we want to call it. We are grateful for your unwavering affection. You are always a part of us. Hugs and love in abundance!” On October 3, 2025, Vijay Deverakonda and Rashmika Mandanna were engaged in a secret ceremony at the latter’s Hyderabad home.

Vishal Bhardwaj makes reference to working with Shah Rukh Khan



Mumbai: Speculation about Shah Rukh Khan’s next major project is already growing as he prepares for the premiere of his next action entertainer, King. There may finally be a chance for SRK and Vishal Bhardwaj to collaborate.The celebrated director, who is renowned for his poetic yet realistic narrative, has helmed some of the most iconic performances in Hindi cinema, including Haider

(2014), Kaminey (2009), and Maqbool (2003). Though both feel optimistic that this will soon change, a Vishal Bhardwaj-Shah Rukh Khan collaboration has never come to fruition despite years of respect between the two titans. Vishal recently expressed his long-standing desire to collaborate with the celebrity in an interview.Collaboration, in my opinion, must take place. The main reason

Samantha applauds Alia Bhatt following her speech in Hindi

Mumbai: Bollywood actress Alia Bhatt presented awards at the BAFTA ceremony for the first time. By starting her address in Hindi, the performer offered the 79th British Academy Film Awards a desi edge. In addition to garnering admiration on the internet, Samantha Ruth Prabhu also praised the gesture. Samantha posted a video of Alia’s speech at the 2026 BAFTA Awards on Instagram on Monday. She tagged Alia and dropped a white heart emoji alongside the video to show her how much she cared. Samantha has previously shown her support for Alia. At the BAFTA Awards, Alia looked stunning in a silver sequined dress with a white fur stole. Marilyn Monroe served as the inspiration for the style.

“Namaskar!” Alia said as she stepped onto the stage to present the award. The next prize is for a non-English film. Agla award ek aisi film ke liye hai, jo angrezi mein nahi hai. “Avoid reaching for the subtitles just yet,” she added. I was merely stating in Hindi that a non-English film would receive the following prize. We constantly celebrate the language of cinema, even though there are many voices in films. And we can all speak that one with ease. And these are the amazing nominees. Samantha will next be seen in the Raj Nidimoru-backed and Nandini Reddy-directed movie Maa Inti Bangaaram. Samantha is shown in the teaser as a housewife battling gangsters while attempting to win over her in-laws. On May 15, the movie is expected to be released in theaters.

Additionally, she is working on Raj & DK’s Rakti Brahmam. However, Alia’s next appearance will be in Alpha, YRF’s spy world movie.

The film, which will be released in theaters this year and is directed by Shiv Rawail, also has Bobby Deol and Sharvari in key parts. Alongside Vicky Kaushal and Ranbir Kapoor, she is also working on Sanjay Leela Bhansali’s Love & War.



is that Shah Rukh tells me stories on a regular basis throughout the year, therefore I chat to him about a lot of things. He is a kind individual who constantly answers my messages. “He is our nation’s greatest charmer,” Vishal remarked.

The director also disclosed that he has just presented SRK with a plot idea. Who is not a fan of Shah Rukh Khan? That’s how I would phrase it. He is adored by all. Additionally, he must have a very lovely personality that makes him Shah Rukh Khan. “Yaar ek film toh honi chayie jo hum dono ko saath mein karni chayie,” goes the line, “Yaar ek film toh honi chayie jo hum dono ko saath mein karni chayie,” but there must undoubtedly be one movie starring Shah Rukh and me. “It’s a miracle, inshallah,” he continued. After working with Shahid Kapoor on Kaminey, Haider, and Rangoon, Vishal returned to the big screen with O’Romeo on February 13, 2026. Triptii Dimri, Disha Patani, Vikrant Massey, Farida Jalal, Nana Patekar, and Tamannaah Bhatia are also featured in the movie.Without a project taking shape, Bhardwaj and Khan have been exchanging ideas and admiration for years.

However, the filmmaker seemed optimistic that their long-discussed partnership may eventually materialize.

Stuttgart Point Is Captured by Deniz Undav at Lowly Heidenheim

New Delhi: In the Bundesliga on Sunday, Stuttgart drew 3-3 with last-place Heidenheim thanks to a goal from Deniz Undav with two minutes left.

Heidenheim had a 3-2 lead and was headed for a crucial victory until Undav scored while unmarked in the box. Heidenheim is still six points from safety at the bottom of the standings, while Stuttgart is now in fourth place, two points ahead of RB Leipzig. After defeating Celtic 4-1 in the Europa League on Thursday, Stuttgart were lethargic, but Heidenheim gave them the lead with a pass to Chris Fuehrich that was cut home with five minutes remaining. With twenty minutes remaining, Eren Dinkci gave the home team a response. When he scored, Ermedin Demirovic appeared to have put Stuttgart back ahead, but VAR awarded Heidenheim a penalty kick, which Arijon Ibrahimovic converted after finding Dinkci had committed a foul at the other end of the field. Maximilian Mittelstaedt's own penalty kick at halftime gave Stuttgart the lead.

Demirovic scored once again in the middle of the second half, but his attempt was disallowed for a close offside. With 82 minutes remaining, Sirlord Conteh of Heidenheim scored a rebound, but Undav had the last word, scoring late to give Stuttgart a piece of the action. Earlier on Sunday, Freiburg defeated an unimpressive Borussia Moenchengladbach 2-1 at home thanks to goals from Matthias Ginter and Igor Matanovic. Haris Tabakovic gave the visitors a late consolation goal after Matanovic tapped in a rebound halfway through the second period and former Gladbach defender Ginter scored from a corner before halftime.

Although Freiburg's victory moves them up to seventh position, Eintracht Frankfurt is still six points ahead of the Black Forest team, which advances to the Europa League's round of sixteen. Free-falling Gladbach are now only two points above the relegation playoff spot after St Pauli defeated Werder Bremen 2-1. With goals from Joel Chima Fujita and Hauke Wahl, Pauli's victory lifted them above Bremen and out of the automatic relegation zone.

Bremen has now lost 13 straight games, which is a club record. Since joining the team in 2018, captain Marco Friedl has stated: "It hurts really severely. We should have accomplished this weeks ago, but we need a breakthrough."

To protect the quality of Prasadam, Tirumala will implement “E-Nose” and “E-Tongue” technology

New Delhi, Feb 23: A state-of-the-art food laboratory will soon be opened by the Andhra Pradesh government in Tirumala to guarantee the safety and purity of the food and prasadam provided to devotees. The Rs 25-crore lab is being set up with cutting-edge equipment to test the quality of approximately 60 raw materials required in the preparation of prasadam, according to State Health Minister and BJP MLA Y Satya Kumar Yadav.

These consist of cardamom, sugar, ghee, cashew nuts, raisins, almonds, gram, turmeric, and chilli powder. The facility's unique selling point will be the Rs 3.5 crore purchase of “E-Tongue” and “E-Nose” devices from France. These devices are able to identify even the smallest variations in ghee quality. “Even the slightest drop in quality can be identified by these machines,” stated Satya Kumar. According to the minister, the lab is 90% finished, and activities should start next month. The equipment should be installed by May. On October 8, 2024, the state Health Department and the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) in New Delhi



inked an agreement that led to the establishment of the lab. The project has been approved for Rs 23 crore by the FSSAI. The lab is being created in a two-story, 12,000 square foot facility in Tirumala that has been restored. The lab, which has 50 state-of-the-art tools, will perform chemical, microbiological, and sensory analysis studies. In food products and water samples, it can identify up to 200 different

“One Voter List” Will Be Promoted by the Election Commission at a Crucial National Meeting



New Delhi, Feb 23: On Tuesday, the Election Commission will host the first National Round Table Conference of State Election Commissioners in 27 years at Bharat Mandapam. In order to improve coordination on election procedures and logistics within their individual legal frameworks, the conference brings together election officials from every state and Union Territory. The day-long discussions, which will be chaired by Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar, will center on improving the efficiency and integrity of elections. Of special importance will be the idea of a unified or “one voter list” to increase uniformity in

the administration of electoral rolls across jurisdictions. Disparities in voter data have garnered a lot of attention in Uttar Pradesh. 12.7 crore voters are listed on the State Election Commission's voter list, compared to 12.5 crore on the draft roster created by the Election Commission during the Special Intensive Revision (SIR). Opposition parties have asked the polling organization for an explanation of the disparity, which has sparked concerns about differences in voter turnout within the same state. The Samajwadi Party chairman, Akhilesh Yadav, reaffirmed claims of widespread irregularities in the SIR procedure. He stated that party leaders would

send a memo to the Election Commission asking it to consider the party's grievances. Key technical and operational efforts, such as the ECINET digital platform designed to streamline electoral services, will be presented by senior poll body officials. The reliability, openness, and security of electronic voting machines will also be discussed, as well as comparing procedures for voter eligibility under the 1950 Representation of the People Act.

The State Election Commissions, established in accordance with constitutional provisions, are in charge of creating electoral rolls for Panchayats and Urban Local Bodies and overseeing their elections, while the Election Commission of India is in charge of elections to the Lok Sabha, Vidhan Sabha, the President, and the Vice President. 36 State Election Commissioners and Chief Electoral Officers will be present at this conference, which aims to promote cooperative federalism in election management and allow the exchange of best practices.

The world praised India's potential wholeheartedly, PM Modi about the AI Impact Summit

New Delhi, Feb 23: At the recently finished AI Impact Summit, Prime Minister Narendra Modi stated on Monday that the entire world applauded India's potential, indicating that the country's young technological talent will greatly benefit humanity. The New Delhi Declaration on AI Impact, which was adopted at the conclusion of the AI Impact Summit 2026 in New Delhi last week, represents a major turning point in international collaboration on artificial intelligence (AI). “India's potential was lauded by the entire globe during the landmark AI Summit in Delhi. This proves that our youthful technological genius will have a mindset that will greatly help all of humanity,” Modi wrote in Hindi on X. With the support of 89 nations and international organizations, the New Delhi Declaration reflects a wide global consensus on using AI to promote social progress and economic success. The summit was attended by world leaders, including French President Emmanuel Macron, Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, Swiss President Guy Parmelin, UN Secretary-General Antonio

Guterres, and CEOs from top technology businesses worldwide.

Attendees included President Anura Kumara Dissanayaka of Sri Lanka, Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay of Bhutan, Prime Minister Navinchandra Ramgoolam of Mauritius, Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic of Croatia, President Aleksandar Vucic of Serbia, Vice President Sebastian Pillay of the Seychelles, President Aral Karis of Estonia, and Prime Minister Petteri Orpo of Finland. With the motto “Sarvajana Hitay, Sarvajana Sukhay” (Welfare for all, happiness of all), the summit sought to establish India as a leader in artificial intelligence, envisioning a future where AI protects the environment, promotes inclusive progress, and advances mankind. More than 500 world-wide leaders in AI were present, including CEOs and CXOs, about 100 CEOs and founders, 150 academics and researchers, and 400 CTOs, VPs, and philanthropists. Additionally, it involved about 60 ministers and deputy ministers, as well as approximately 100 government representatives.

Carlos Alcaraz defeats Arthur Fils to win the Qatar Open championship

New Delhi: Carlos Alcaraz defeated Arthur Fils 6-2, 6-1 on Saturday to win the Qatar Open title, displaying his devastating best play. It took the seven-time Grand Slam champion just over fifty minutes to defeat his French opponent and win his 26th career title. After winning the Australian Open earlier this month, which allowed him to complete his career Grand Slam at the young age of 22, Alcaraz supported it by winning the Doha tournament in his first competition back since Melbourne and extending his winning streak to 12 games. “I came this year hungry for more,” Alcaraz remarked. We simply need to set new objectives after each event, in my opinion. I simply feel incredibly content

and proud of all that I have accomplished with my squad, both on and off the court. The year has gotten off to a great start. It wasn't simple. I needed to have mental toughness to work with my team. I'm having a terrific time playing tennis, and this week has made me really happy. This prize holds great significance for me. After a great week in which he defeated top-10 seeds Jiri Lehecka and Jakub Mensik, the Spanish world number one was a step too much for 40th-ranked Fils, who was making a slow comeback to play after a protracted injury layoff. Oves adhuith. Satum suastra, omne nonte inte hoca vical vid publium huit adhuctus; C. Maris sa

NATIONAL & SPORTS

The unemployed wife's labor is undeniable : Delhi High Court



New Delhi, Feb 23: The Delhi High Court dispelled the “myth” of the “idle wife” by ruling that it was “unjust” to exclude the homemaker's contributions while determining maintenance because her labor allows the working husband to function efficiently. According to Justice Swarna Kanta Sharma, “a wife's unemployment cannot be equated with idleness or deliberate dependence, and when determining maintenance, the law must recognize not only financial earnings but also the economic value of her contributions to the home and domestic relationship during the subsistence of marriage.” A misperception about domestic contributions is reflected in the belief that a spouse who does not earn a living is “idle.” In its ruling on February 16, the court stated, “It is easy to characterize unemployment as idleness; it is far more difficult to recognize the labor involved in sustaining a household.” “A homemaker works to support the earning

spouse's productivity; she doesn't just sit around doing nothing. It would be impractical and unfair to ignore this contribution when deciding maintenance claims. Therefore, this court cannot support any argument that links a wife's lack of employment to laziness or willful reliance on her husband,” the statement read. The observations were made by the court in relation to the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act provision of maintenance to an estranged wife. The woman was able-bodied and well-educated, but she had decided not to look for work, thus a magistrate court had denied her temporary maintenance. The appeal court did not award the wife any redress. The husband allegedly abandoned the woman and their young boy in 2020 after they were married in 2012. The husband argued before the top court that he was paying for his minor child's schooling and that the wife could not sit “idle” and demand maintenance when she was able to

earn a living. The court ruled that real wages and earning potential were two different ideas and that, in accordance with established law, the ability to earn was not a reason to refuse maintenance. The court stated that while it is important to support women who are able and willing to work, it was a mistake to refuse maintenance on the grounds that the woman is capable of earning money and shouldn't continue to be dependent on her husband. “Even though they are unpaid and frequently go unrecognized, managing a household, raising children, providing for the family, and rearranging one's life to accommodate the earning spouse's job and transfers are all sorts of employment. Although these obligations don't show up on bank records or produce taxable revenue, the court pointed out that they serve as the unseen framework for many families. It further stated that although it was still expected of women in Indian society to quit their jobs after marriage, husbands regularly took the opposite stance in matrimonial disputes, refusing to pay maintenance to their “well-qualified” wives by claiming that they were purposefully choosing to be unemployed. According to the court, such a stance cannot be supported, and the law must make sure that the spouse who spent years,

years, and a lot of time creating the family is not left without a means of support. It also recognized that it is unrealistic to expect a woman to return to work at the same level, pay, or professional status after taking a leave of absence due to marriage or family obligations. The wife was given Rs 50,000 in proceedings under the statute against domestic abuse after the court determined that there was no evidence in the case to support her employment or income in the past or present.

The court expressed concern that maintenance trials frequently devolved into “intensely adversarial” disputes, stating that neither party's or their minor children's long-term interests were consistently served. It claimed that mediation, as opposed to ongoing litigation, gave a more positive way to resolve marital conflicts because it created a more conducive environment for meaningful communication, a realistic evaluation of the husband and wife's needs and abilities, and solutions that both parties could agree upon. In these contentious cases, the wife may inflate her monthly expenses while the husband frequently understates his income or claims financial incapacity, the court observed, making it difficult to start a conversation between the parties.

For a river-road project in Gujarat destroyed 350 homes and shops

New Delhi, Feb 23: A approved town-planning road in the heavily populated Jangleshwar area and approximately 1,500 illegal residences and shops along the banks of the Aji river are being demolished by civic authorities as part of a large anti-encroachment operation in Rajkot, Gujarat. The Rajkot Municipal Corporation used 64 bulldozers and hundreds of laborers in seven operational zones designated for the removal, and by 10 a.m. on Monday, around 350 structures had already been demolished. In order to create space for a 15-meter town planning road and restore the Aji River's natural width and flow, which officials claim has long increased the city's risk of flooding, 1,489 encroachments, many of which have been there for four to fifty years, will be cleared out, according to Municipal Commissioner Tushar Sumera. In order to avert trouble, more than

1,200 police and civic officers have been sent in, supported by reinforcements from other districts. Prohibition orders are in effect, and meetings are limited until February 26. Residents had been asked to leave since Saturday, according to the authorities, and many were departing with their possessions as demolition crews arrived.

Officials have referred to the sweeping operation as Rajkot's largest-ever, which has caused distress among longtime inhabitants who would soon be displaced.

Many families claimed that after decades of being in Jangleshwar, they now had nowhere to go because their houses had been destroyed. Demolition will continue until all notified encroachments are removed, civic authorities say, adding that the measure is legally required and necessary for road expansion along the river corridor and flood control.

India was choked in the Super 8 match by South Africa's tactical move



New Delhi: India's domination in the 2017 T20 World Cup was supposed to be cemented by a blue wave on Sunday night, but the Narendra Modi Stadium was confronted by a clinical Proteas “green wall.” Not only did South Africa defeat India by 76 runs in the Super 8 match, but it was also a tactical masterpiece in reading situations and flexibility. The actual story was a bowling effort that turned the most threatening batting lineup in the world into sawdust, even though David Miller's 63 set the stage. If anyone personified the tactical genius of the Proteas, it was Lungi Ngidi. Even though his 4-0-15-0 stats lacked the spectacle of a five-wicket haul, they were the “slow poison” that gradually destroyed the Indian team. Early on, Ngidi realized that the black-soil pitch was holding the ball, so he stopped using his usual quick style and mostly used off-cutters and slower-ball bouncers, which were delivered with no change in arm speed. Indian hitters struggled not just to middle the ball but also to hit boundaries.

The Indian batters were compelled to alter their strategy and rely on their own strength to hit the ball after noticing that the scoreboard was stagnating. plan proved to be an absolute flop. Marco Jansen utilized his 6'8" stature to deadly effect, taking 4/22 with a bowling stroke that was “heavy length” and extracted uneven bounce, while Ngidi pushed India to function in first gear. Because of this

height advantage, his slower balls dropped from a higher trajectory than Indian batters were used to, making them even harder to judge. Very few opportunities were lost in the field because of the Proteas' incredibly accurate fielding. Even legendary Indian player Ravichandran Ashwin claimed that Suryakumar Yadav's team was ill-prepared for the match against South Africa. South Africa taught India a valuable lesson. Don't arrive at games unprepared, please. South Africa only bowled slower deliveries against our hitters, so we weren't ready.

Of the 22 deliveries that Suryakumar Yadav had to deal with, 17-18 were slower. Not a single delivery was back-of-a-length; they were all either full or delayed. Where credit is due, give it. With the ball, South Africa was outstanding. Under pressed, they were terrific with the bat. They are no longer “chokers” in South Africa. They've evolved,” he remarked. Within the first four overs, South Africa was struggling at 20/3, but David Miller and Dewald Brevis managed a well-thought-out counter-rebuild. They chose Varun Chakaravarthy and Washington Sundar as their main targets, attacking the latter in particular to break India's rhythm. The two “dropped the ego” and concentrated on hard running and gap-picking in the middle overs to keep the scoreboard moving, as Proteas skipper Aiden Markram subsequently disclosed following the match, before erupting in a 97-run stand.

Gavaskar insists overconfident India must shed ego
Adapt quickly to conditions for consistent success



Ahmedabad: India needed to take a cue from South Africa’s innings, shed their ego and adapt to the conditions instead of walking out with overconfidence and throwing their bats at everything in their T20 World Cup clash, feels batting legend Sunil Gavaskar. South Africa snapped India’s 12-match unbeaten streak at the T20 World Cup, handing the defending champions a heavy 76-run defeat. “Having seen how Brevis and Miller built their partnership, that was the approach needed from the Indian batters,” Gavaskar said on JioStar. The

Indian batters did not do that. They came out with overconfidence, threw their bat at everything and lost wickets. South Africa clearly outsmarted India and it was a well-deserved win for them.” After losing early wickets, Miller and Brevis stitched a match-winning 97-run partnership to take the Proteas to 187/7. India then produced a below-par batting effort, repeatedly losing wickets be bowled out for 111 in 18.5 overs. “India did not take notes from South Africa’s innings. They came out and threw their bat at every delivery hoping for a boundary. That is not how you

play T20 cricket. You have to learn from the opposition. If they have scored well on a tricky surface like this, you have to get rid of your ego, observe and adjust.” India lost their top three -- Ishan Kishan (0), Abhishek Sharma (15) and Tilak Varma (1) -- inside the power play to slip to 26/3. Tilak Varma has been a very street-smart batter. But I was disappointed with his approach in this game. Ishan Kishan lost his wicket in the first over. The required rate was around 9.5 runs per over, not 15. So, Tilak could have given himself more time. At the other end, Abhishek Sharma had back-to-back ducks. So, the responsibility was on Tilak to stick around, build a partnership, and get past the first six overs, but he failed to do that. You don’t always need to score 70 runs in the Powerplay. Even 55-60 runs would have been a good platform. But the reckless approach of the Indian batters led to their downfall in Ahmedabad.” India next take on Zimbabwe and Gavaskar said he would like to see Axar Patel return to the playing XI after missing the previous two games, with the team management opting for Washington Sundar. I would look at bringing Axar Patel back into the playing XI, keeping in mind the lack of too many left-handed batters in Zimbabwe’s lineup. You could possibly bring him in place of Arshdeep Singh.

Neymar hints at retirement after 2026 season

New Delhi: Neymar has hinted that the 2026 season could be his last, but the Brazilian superstar has made one thing clear — he wants one final shot at the FIFA World Cup with Brazil. Speaking to Caz TV, the 34-year-old admitted that retirement is a possibility at the end of next year. However, with the World Cup on the horizon, his immediate focus remains on returning to peak condition and fighting for a place in Brazil’s squad. “I don’t know what will happen from now on, I don’t know about next year... It may be that when December comes, I’ll want to retire. I’m living year to year now,” Neymar said. “This year is a very important year, not only for Santos, but also for the Brazilian national team, as it’s a World Cup year, and for me too,” he added. The comments come at a delicate phase of his career.

Judoka Rohit Majgul secures qualification, proudly earning his place for CWG and Asian Games 2026 competitions



Ahmedabad: Gujarat’s rising judoka, Rohit Majgul (66kg) has secured qualification for both the Commonwealth Games 2026 and the Asian Games 2026 after a stellar performance at the Judo selection Trials in New Delhi. In the best-of-three final at the national judo trials in New Delhi on Sunday, Majgul faced Haryana’s Garvit in a tense showdown. The decisive bout went into golden score, where Majgul

executed a brilliant O-goshi to score a wazari and clinch victory, according to a release. He hails from a small tribal village, Talala, in Gir Somnath district, Gujarat. Majgul’s dominance is no flash in the pan as he has also remained undefeated in the last two Senior Nationals, further proving his consistency and technical mastery. Under the guidance of dedicated coaches and support staff of Vi-

jayi Bharat Foundation (VBF), Rohit’s composure, finesse, and competitive spirit have shone through, reflecting both his individual excellence and the strength of the foundation’s training systems, the release said. 23rd CWG is scheduled to take place in July 2026 in Glasgow, Scotland, while the Asian Games 2026 is scheduled to take place in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan, from September 19th onwards. Guided by VBF’s dedicated coaching staff, Majgul’s success highlights the strength of the foundation’s training ecosystem. His achievement adds to Gujarat’s growing presence in Indian judo and marks a proud moment for the state’s sporting community. Post his victory, VBF Judoka Rohit Majgul said, “Qualifying for the Commonwealth Games and Asian Games is a dream come true for me. Every bout at the trials tested my limits, but I trusted my training and my coaches. This victory is not just mine—it’s a reflection of the hard work and support of the Vijayi Bharat Foundation.” Videos circulating on social media showed Patel in the team’s locker room Sunday, enthusiastically drinking beer, spraying drinks and even.

Indian Super League: Lalbiaknia cancels Sánchez strike as Bengaluru FC, NEUFC share points in 1-1

BFC shine at fortress after Delhi opener victory

Bengaluru: In a fiercely contested encounter at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium, Bengaluru FC (BFC) and NorthEast United FC (NEUFC) shared the spoils in a 1-1 draw, marking a competitive start to their campaigns this season. After coming off a convincing 2-0 win over Sporting Club Delhi in their opener, BFC started brightly in front of their fortress. The Blues took the lead in the 20th minute through a clinical finish from Braian Sánchez. The Argentine midfielder latched onto a well-constructed move, slotting home with composure to give his side the advantage. BFC’s Ryan Williams was a standout performer, showcasing his versatility by excelling across the pitch — from shoring up the defensive line to driving the attack as a midfielder. His powerful effort crashed against the crossbar, denying the hosts a dramatic finish. The away team, NEUFC, Juan Pedro Benali’s boys, showed resilience throughout the match. Despite trailing, the Highlanders grew into the game, particularly after halftime. It was because of ‘the wall of BFC’ that Gurpreet Singh Sandhu, who was called into action, notably denied a header from Asheer. The equaliser



Arrived in the 68th minute when substitute Lalrinzuala Lalbiaknia produced a moment of brilliance. His composed, high-quality strike levelled the scores. It marked Lalbiaknia’s first ISL goal, injecting belief into the visitors and capping a strong fightback. We knew BFC’s backline gets shaky when the ball comes into the box — they hesitate and lose clarity on their man marking. That’s exactly what we targeted: putting balls into those areas and pressing for fouls and set pieces. We spotted it in the first half and tweaked the plan in the dressing room at the break,” Benali said. However, in the absence of Rahul Bheke, due to his knee injury, BFC was clearly struggling at the back, with their defensive line looking unsettled for large parts of the game.

Players like Sunil Chhetri, Ryan Williams and BFC head coach Renedy Singh were visibly animated on the sidelines throughout the match. The coach said calmly, “I’m happy with the team’s performance.” Bernal scored from close range four minutes into the match at the Camp Nou Stadium. The 18-year-old Bernal had scored his first goal with the First team two rounds ago in a win over Mallorca. They had an early chance but my goal helped us settle and gain some confidence,” Bernal said. De Jong added to the lead from inside the area in the 32nd and López sealed the victory with a beautiful long-range shot in the 81st, with the ball ricocheting off the post before going into the net. Levante’s Australian goalkeeper Mathew Ryan

kept Barcelona from adding the fourth with a pair of outstanding saves in a row in the final minutes, first off a header by Raphinha and then off a point-blank strike from López on the rebound. In a quiet bar on Sunday, hours before Bengalureans start to file in and the weekend rush begins, Sunil Chhetri made a virtual appearance to surprise a small group of people gathered to listen to Kunaal Majgaonkar, the former head of content and social media at JSW sports — part of Bengaluru FC’s early days — reveal what went into making the team. Greeted by a surprised silence and then loud cheers, Chhetri said, “Good things happen when you have lots of good people, and when it happens consistently — you get magic. That’s what BFC is.” Majgaonkar took the audience to the beginnings of BFC in July 2013 when it was established by businessman Parth Jindal. With the season set to start in September, they had their work cut out for them. “By the time we had a football club, all the other 11 had signed the best players except Chhetri because he could afford to wait till the last hour to decide where he was going. The other players in the team had injury concerns.

India U20 women convincingly drub Swedish club Taby FK, securing emphatic friendly victory abroad

New Delhi: The Indian U20 women’s team registered a 4-0 win over the senior squad of Swedish club Taby FK in a friendly match at the Boson National Sports Centre in Lidingo, Sweden, on Sunday. It was the Young Tigresses’ first victory of their Sweden tour after suffering a defeat against Hammarby IF in the first encounter four days ago, as per the AIFF website. Head coach Joakim Alexandersson made nine changes to the starting line-up. India scored twice in each half -- Babita Kumari (10’) and Lhingdeikim (20’) netted early in the first period before Babita struck again in the 63rd minute and Neha wrapped up the scoring in the 80th. The Young Tigresses will play two more friendlies in the coming days -- against Enskede IK Dam on February 25, and Karlbergs BK on February 28 -- as part of their preparations for April’s AFC U20 Women’s Asian Cup in



Thailand. East Bengal FC registered a commanding 4-1 victory over Sporting Club Delhi in Gameweek 2 of the Indian Super League 2025-26 at the Vivekananda Yuba Bharati Krirangan (VYBK). The Red and Gold Brigade overturned an early deficit to secure their second consecutive win and move to the top of the table with six points, according to a release. Augustine Lalrochana handed Sporting Club Delhi the lead in the 4th minute on the counter. Edmund Lalrindika equalised three minutes

later from a set-piece situation. Youssef Ezzejari converted a 12th-minute penalty to put East Bengal ahead before adding his second in the 40th minute. Miguel Figueroa capped his Player of the Match performance with a stoppage-time goal. East Bengal FC head coach Oscar Bruzon made one change to his starting eleven, bringing in Edmund Lalrindika for Saul Crespo. Sporting Club Delhi head coach Tomasz Tchorz also made one change, introducing Joseph Sunny in place of Devendra

Dhaku. The contest began at a frantic pace. Miguel tested Vishal Yadav inside the opening minute, and Jay Gupta fired over soon after. However, it was Sporting Club Delhi who struck first. Mohammed Aimen led a swift break and found Lalrochana, who finished clinically from inside the box. East Bengal responded immediately. Lalrindika levelled matters with a powerful right-footed effort from distance following a set piece. Moments later, Clarence Fernandes conceded a penalty, and Ezzejari stepped up and calmly converted to give the host 2-1 advantage. The pressure continued. Jay went close with a header, while Ezzejari was denied by Yadav from close range. Five minutes before the half time, Miguel threaded a precise through ball for Ezzejari, who slipped his finish through the goalkeeper’s legs to make it 3-1. The Tribune assumes no responsibility.

Vaishnavi’s dream run ends as Vandewinkel clinches prestigious W100 championship

Bengaluru: Belgium’s rising force Hanne Vandewinkel delivered a masterclass as the World No. 124 cruised past wildcard Vaishnavi Adkar 6-0, 6-1 to clinch the KPB Trust ITF Women’s Open W100 in Bengaluru. Ranked No. 690, the 21-year-old, who has trained under former World No. 1 Rohan Bopanna, was playing the biggest match of her career. And it showed as she could not match Vandewinkel’s poise, precision, and relentless consistency. With the strong hold at the baseline shots and clear return, the Belgian dictated the tempo throughout the game. Adkar showed glimpses of promise in the third game of the second set, striking a couple of winners to hold serve for the first time. She then earned three break points in the fourth game as Vandewinkel briefly faltered. However, the Belgian



Adjusted with sharp tactical awareness, mixing up her returns and cleverly changing angles to throw Adkar off balance. Vandewinkel’s plan was to make Adkar work for every point as she would admit later. “It was a bit of an unknown coming into the match, but I knew she beat some really good players, so I was very aware of that. I didn’t want to make the mistake of not being fully there

In the match and letting her come into the match, because I saw in the last few matches she could play some really good tennis. So I think I was just there from the beginning,” Vandewinkel said after clinching the title. Adkar, meanwhile, said it was a learning experience for her. “Learned a lot of things, and especially after a tough year last year, a week like this is really going to be helpful,” she said.

Hockey Pro League: India’s Rourkela defeats reveal troubling lack of overall squad depth and resilience

Chandigarh: The Indian team’s performance at the recent Rourkela leg of the FIH Pro League was shocking. It started with a 3-1 defeat against Belgium, in which they conceded twice in the final quarter, but spiralled into a four-match run of one-sided losses. As the goals stacked up, 19 conceded in four games, the crowd’s reactions went from disbelief to indifference, while chief coach Craig Fulton’s emotions went from frustration to resignation. This is not the first time India have had a poor run in the Pro League under the South African. They ended last season with seven losses in eight games to finish second-last, but those seven defeats on the trot were forgotten after their Asia Cup victory earned India a berth in the World Cup. The latest run of losses has come at the beginning of an important season, with the Asian Games and World Cup lined Up in the second half of the year. With the team going through a transition, Fulton is trying out new players and different combinations. But even for an experimental team, the manner of the defeats is alarming. The 8-0 loss to Argentina was not only one of their heaviest in Recent times, it was confounding. The South American team with its relentlessness ripped to pieces



India’s Olympics medallist aura. Even the senior players could not recover from that annihilation. They were never at their best to start with, but their game became more forced with uncharacteristic errors creeping in. There were instances of Harmanpreet Singh, who is known for his ball control, letting opponent players make steals from under his nose. Hardik Singh, who at his deceptive best can tiptoe past two-three defenders, was repeatedly blocked out while trying to barge his way through. The upcoming leg of the tournament will feature India alongside Spain and hosts Australia, promising high-octane and competitive hockey action. Following the conclusion

of the Rourkela leg of the tournament, where the team squared up against Belgium and Argentina, the team now turns its attention to the upcoming Hobart leg. The 24-member Indian Men’s Hockey Team boasts a strong mix of experienced players and exciting young talent as the team looks to bounce back with improved performances. Experienced campaigner Hardik Singh, who is a two-time Olympic Bronze Medalist in Tokyo 2020 and Paris 2024, has been appointed as the captain of the side. The team will also feature a strong mix of talented youngsters, including Amandeep Lakra and Manmeet Singh, who made their debut appearances for

the senior team during the Rourkela leg. Meanwhile, Harmanpreet Singh will not be part of the squad due to personal reasons. The squad comprises Suraj Karkera and Mohith Honnenahalli Shashikumar sharing the goalkeeping responsibilities. Meanwhile, Amit Rohidas, Jarnanpreet Singh, Jugraj Singh, Sanjay, and Sumit add the experience to the defensive unit that also includes exciting youngsters such as Amandeep Lakra, Yashdeep Siwach, and Poo-vanna Chandura Boby. Captain Hardik Singh, Sanjay, Vivek Sagar Prasad and Raj Kumar Pal will anchor the midfield alongside Rajinder Singh, Manmeet Singh, Moirangthem Rabichandra Singh and Singh.