

In Brief

AJP Demands Fast Track Court For Zubeen

Guwahati: Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP) has alleged that the judicial process in the case related to the death of Zubeen Garg is being deliberately delayed and has demanded the immediate formation of a fast-track court to ensure speedy justice. In a press statement issued on Friday, party president Lurinjiyoti Gogoi and general secretary Jagadish Bhuyan expressed deep concern over what they described as unusual delays in the trial, as well as the government's indifferent and negligent attitude toward delivering justice. They stated that the government has failed to take timely and effective steps needed to maintain public confidence in the justice process.

HUL Hosts “Tea Next 2.0” in Golaghat

Golaghat: Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL), through its Tea Next initiative, organised Tea Next 2.0, a focused capacity-building programme for Bought Leaf Factory (BLF) representatives and Small Tea Growers (STGs) in Golaghat, Assam. The event brought together around 256 small tea growers and BLF management representatives from across the region, aiming to strengthen sustainability, productivity, and regulatory compliance in the smallholder tea sector, which has become an increasingly important part of India's tea value chain. Tea Next 2.0 focused on improving green leaf quality, addressing Maximum Residue Limit (MRL) challenges, and promoting regenerative agriculture practices.

Consumer awareness event organised in Guwahati

Guwahati: The Consumer Awareness Bharat Yatra Programme was successfully organised at the North Eastern Handicrafts and Handlooms Development Corporation Limited (NEHHDC), Guwahati on Thursday. The programme was held as part of the nationwide Consumer Awareness Bharat Yatra, an initiative aimed at promoting quality consciousness, standardisation and consumer protection across the country. The initiative is being organised by the Consumer Confederation of India (CCI) with support from the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) during the period from December 24, 2025 to March 15. The objective of the Yatra is to generate widespread awareness regarding quality control, standardization mechanisms, consumer rights, and the role and functions of BIS in safeguarding public interest.

PM to launch projects worth over Rs 5,450 cr

Guwahati: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Assam on Saturday. At around 10:30 am, the Prime Minister will land at the Emergency Landing Facility (ELF) on Moran Bypass in Dibrugarh, where he will witness an aerial display of fighter jets, transport aircraft and helicopters. At around 1 pm, Modi will inaugurate the Kumar Bhaskar Varma Setu across the Brahmaputra in Guwahati. Thereafter, at around 1:30 pm, the Prime Minister will inaugurate and flag off various projects worth more than Rs 5,450 crore at Lachit Ghat, Guwahati.

AJP Demands Fast Track Court For Zubeen

Guwahati, Feb 13: Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP) has alleged that the judicial process in the case related to the death of Zubeen Garg is being deliberately delayed and has demanded the immediate formation of a fast-track court to ensure speedy justice. In a press statement issued on Friday, party president Lurinjiyoti Gogoi and general secretary Jagadish Bhuyan expressed deep concern over what they described as unusual delays in the trial, as well as the government's indifferent and negligent attitude toward delivering justice. They stated that the government has failed to take timely and effective steps needed to maintain public confidence in the justice process. Lawyers, family members, and supporters have long demanded that the case be transferred to a fast-track court for swift disposal, yet the state government has not acted on this legitimate demand, which, according to them, shows a lack of sincerity in ensuring justice. Following Friday's hearing, the government counsel reportedly admitted that if the case continues at the current slow

Arunachal CM Pema Khandu inaugurates new administrative block at Sera Jey Monastery

Tawang ,Feb 13: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Friday inaugurated the new Administrative Block of Sera Jey Jamyang Choekhorling Monastery in Tawang. The event was attended by Venerable Geshe Lobsang Norbu, Chief Administrator of Sera Jey Monastery, Karnataka, and His Eminence Dolhe Rinpoche Tenzin Kunkhyen, Abbot of the monastery. The new infrastructure will enhance administrative and residential facilities for monks and students. A school bus was also donated by the State Bank of India, Tawang Branch, to benefit local children. CM Khandu also received blessings from Abbot Venerable Phara Damey Tulku Rinpoche during his visit to the monastery. Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu inaugurated the newly constructed administrative block of the Sera Jey Jamyang Choekhorling Monastery in Tawang district on Friday. The event was marked by traditional rituals, prayers, and the presence of senior monks, dignitaries, and local residents. The inauguration was part of a larger consecration ceremony, underscoring the monastery's role as a spiritual, cultural, and educational hub in the region. Speaking at the ceremony, CM Khandu



Described monasteries as “living centres of culture, learning, and compassion.” He emphasized

That monasteries are not only places of worship but also institutions that preserve centuries-old

traditions, foster education, and nurture values of peace and harmony. He urged the community to collectively support monasteries, noting that their contributions extend beyond religion into areas such as social welfare, education, and cultural preservation. “Monasteries are the heartbeat of our society. They guide us spiritually, culturally, and morally,” Khandu remarked. The newly inaugurated administrative block is expected to streamline the monastery's functioning, providing better facilities for monks, administrators, and visitors. The block includes offices, meeting halls, and spaces for coordination of religious and cultural activities. According to monastery officials, the infrastructure will enhance efficiency in managing educational programmes, outreach initiatives, and cultural events. It will also serve as a hub for coordinating with other monasteries across India, particularly the parent institution of Sera Jey Monastery in Karnataka. The inauguration was attended by Venerable Geshe Lobsang Norbu, chief administrator of Sera Jey Monastery in Karnataka, along with senior monks from Tawang and surrounding areas.

SC seeks CBI status report on Manipur violence cases

New Delhi, Feb 13: The Supreme Court on February 13 directed the Central Bureau of Investigation to file a status report within two weeks on its probe into 11 FIRs related to the 2023 ethnic violence in Manipur. A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi also asked the Centre and the Manipur government to ensure implementation of the recommendations made by the committee headed by Justice Gita Mittal on rehabilitation and welfare of victims of the violence. The apex court observed that instead of it monitoring the trials, the jurisdictional Manipur High Court, the Gauhati High Court, or both could oversee the proceedings and related developments. It asked counsel to seek instructions on the issue and report back within two weeks. The court-appointed committee, headed by Justice Mittal and comprising former judges Justices Shalini P. Joshi and Asha Menon, has submitted several reports on relief and rehabilitation measures. During the hearing, senior advocate Vrinda Grover, appearing for a woman victim who recently passed away, alleged that the CBI failed to inform her about the filing of a chargesheet in her rape case. She said the victim, a Kuki woman, died last month due to an illness allegedly linked to the trauma of gang rape. Grover claimed that the main accused were not appearing before the trial court and that the CBI was also not present, describing the situation as “shocking”.

Assam mulls use of gyrocopters for services like air ambulance, disaster response and VIP movement

Guwahati, Feb 13: The Assam government is considering use of gyrocopters for public services such as air ambulance, disaster response, and VIP movement. A gyrocopter -- also known as gyroplane -- is an aircraft similar to a small helicopter. It requires a very short take-off distance (around 50 meters) and a near-vertical landing with a short run (about 10 meters). Assam Chief Secretary Dr Ravi Kota today reviewed a proposal for potential deployment of gyrocopter-based aerial platforms for select priority public service applications in a meeting with the representatives of Gyrox Aviation. “During the discussion, I emphasised the possible utilisation of such platforms for air ambulance services, disaster response and management, and secure VIP movement, particularly in remote, difficult and time-sensitive situations,” Dr Kota said. “I sought specific clarifications regarding operational ceiling, performance across varying elevations, and the aircraft's capability to function under adverse and critical weather conditions. The company informed the Chief Secretary that the proposed ARGON GTL gyroplane has an indicative operational ceiling of approximately 10,000–12,000 feet above mean sea level, with optimal performance at lower and medium altitudes, and is designed to operate in strong wind and turbulent conditions, subject to mission profile, pilot proficiency and regulatory approvals. Dr Kota also examined safety margins, autorotation-based emergency landing capability, system redundancy, and reliability in medical evacuation and disaster-response scenarios. He underlined that final decision for deployment would be contingent upon validated performance



data under local terrain and climatic conditions. The company mentioned that the platform is a certified aircraft designed for short take-off and landing operations with contemporary avionics, and that efforts are being made towards indigenous assembly and manufacturing in alignment with the “Make in India” and “Atmanirbhar Bharat” initiatives.

HUL Hosts “Tea Next 2.0” in Golaghat, Engages 256 Small Tea Growers and BLFs on Sustainability and Compliance

Golaghat, Feb 13: Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL), through its Tea Next initiative, organised Tea Next 2.0, a focused capacity-building programme for Bought Leaf Factory (BLF) representatives and Small Tea Growers (STGs) in Golaghat, Assam. The event brought together around 256 small tea growers and BLF management representatives from across the region, aiming to strengthen sustainability, productivity, and regulatory compliance in the smallholder tea sector, which has become an increasingly important part of India's tea value chain. Tea Next 2.0 focused on improving green leaf quality, addressing Maximum Residue Limit (MRL) challenges, and promoting regenerative agriculture practices. Participants received practical training on pruning cycles, plucking standards, and the adoption of Good Agricultural Practices to enhance the consistency and quality of green leaf production. Expert-led sessions also covered the Plant Protection Code, compliance with the guidelines of the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), and adherence to Pre-Harvest Intervals, along with demonstrations on Integrated Pest Management that highlighted non-chemical pest and disease control methods. Discussions further emphasised soil health management and strengthening the climate resilience of tea bushes through regenerative agriculture to ensure long-term farm sustainability. The programme was organised in collaboration with the North Eastern Tea Association (NETA) and the Trustea Sustainable Tea Foundation, with Trustea supporting the design and



delivery of technical training and field activities. Speaking at the event, Ishpreet Singh, Vice President – Beverages, HUL, said small tea growers are vital to shaping the future of India's tea industry and that the initiative aims to help farmers and BLFs meet evolving quality, sustainability, and regulatory expectations while improving productivity and resilience at the farm level, reflecting HUL's long-term commitment to responsible sourcing and inclusive growth. Addressing the gathering, DM Kakoti, Deputy Director of the Tea Board of India, highlighted the Tea Board's commitment to promoting sustainable tea production through better green leaf quality, mitigation of MRL challenges, and adoption of regenerative agriculture practices. He also appreciated HUL for supporting the holistic development of small tea growers and BLF representatives. Tea planter and NETA Adviser Bidyananda Barkakoty said small tea growers and Bought Leaf Factories form the backbone of Assam's tea sector and that initiatives like Tea Next 2.0 help strengthen awareness around quality standards, compliance, and sustainable practices, enhancing long-term

sustainability and competitiveness of the smallholder tea ecosystem in the Northeast. Rajesh Bhuyan, Director of Trustea Sustainable Tea Foundation, said the programme is designed as a practical, field-oriented platform that equips smallholders with the knowledge and tools needed to sustain livelihoods and strengthen the integrity of the tea value chain. Among others who spoke on the occasion were Rajib Gohain, Board Member of the Tea Board of India, Diganta Phukan, President of the Confederation of Northeast Small Tea Growers Association, and Manoranjan Saikia, Golaghat District President of the All Assam Tea Growers Association. During the event, HUL felicitated thirty progressive tea growers for their outstanding production of premium-quality green leaf. Tea Next 2.0 builds on earlier engagements with smallholder communities, including a programme held in Dibrugarh in March 2025, and reinforces a collaborative approach involving industry, sustainability institutions, and growers to address systemic challenges in the tea sector while promoting responsible and sustainable growth.

Mizoram households to get piped natural gas by 2028

Aizawl, Feb 13: Households in Mizoram are set to have access to piped natural gas (PNG) by the first half of 2028, with ground-work progressing steadily under the Centre's flagship energy expansion programme. The 119.5-km gas pipeline being laid by Indradhanush Gas Grid Limited (IGGL) under the North East Natural Gas Pipeline project has already achieved 45 per cent overall completion and is targeted for readiness by December 2027. The pipeline will connect Mizoram to the broader gas grid network, marking a major step in integrating the state into the national energy infrastructure. Officials informed that the state's capital, Aizawl, and the town of Mamit are expected to be the first beneficiaries once the distribution network becomes operational. Mizoram Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Minister B. Lalchhanzova said the pipeline up to Sihhmui in neighbouring Tripura is on track for completion by March 2027. “Once that segment is finished, Tripura Natural Gas Company Ltd (TNGCL) will begin developing the city gas distribution network to extend PNG supply to households in Aizawl and Mamit,” Lalchhanzova said while speaking at a sensitisation workshop on City Gas Distribution in Aizawl. Sources said that once the IGGL completes the pipeline installation up to Sihhmui by March 2027, TNGCL will initiate connections for domestic and commercial consumers. The Mizoram project is expected to become fully operational by early 2028. Lalchhanzova noted that Tripura has been using PNG for over three decades and currently serves more than 60,000 consumers, including hotels and restaurants. He recently inspected gas infrastructure in Agartala to study its operational model.

Nagaland University study provides benchmark data on land use change, river flow in NE Himalayas

Dimapur, Feb 13: Researchers from Nagaland University have completed a GIS-based hydrological study examining how geo-ecological conditions and human activities influence runoff and river flow in the North Eastern Himalayan hill region, an area marked by limited scientific data and ongoing debate. The study addresses the hydrological impact of land use change on river discharge, floods and environmental degradation. It proposes a four-zone runoff classification—low, moderate, high and very high—to support water resource planning, flood mitigation and integrated watershed management.Vice-Chancellor Prof. Jagadish K. Patnaik congratulated the research team, stating that the study provides benchmark data on land use change and river flow, strengthens understanding of runoff patterns and flood risks, and supports informed policy and planning for environmental security in fragile hill ecosystems.Titled ‘GIS Modeling to investigate geo-ecological and anthropogenic impacts on runoff and river flow in the North Eastern hilly region of India’, the study was conducted by Dr. K. Belho and Prof. M. S. Rawat of Nagaland University, along with Dr. Pradeep Kumar Rawat of Asian International University, Imphal. It was funded through a Non-NET Fellowship of Nagaland University with support from the Ministry of Tribal Affairs. The findings were published in the International Journal of Geographic Information System Research and Development.Prof. M. S. Rawat said the study focused on four experimentally monitored watersheds in Kohima district, combining geospatial techniques with field-based hydrological measurements. Continuous stream discharge data were generated across dense forests, open forests, agricultural and urban landscapes.Dr. K. Belho noted that

Akoijam, a Congress MP, wants tough action



Imphal, Feb 13: Manipur Lok Sabha MP Angomcha Bimol Akoijam on Thursday said those involved in armed attacks and unrest in the state must be dealt with strictly under the law, amidst incidents of violence in Ukhrul district. Speaking at a public meeting in Keishamthong, the Congress MP Angomcha Bimol Akoijam stressed the need for dialogue while cautioning against normalising the display of weapons.“We need dialogue and must identify those who are against talks. Everyone has political grievances. The act of roaming with arms openly should not be normalised and legal action must be taken,” Akoijam said.His remarks came in the wake of incidents of firing and arson in violence-hit Litan village in Ukhrul district after a lull of 24 hours on Thursday morning.“Few rounds of gunfire have been heard in the area. Gunshots were fired from both

BLFs key to boosting tea sector productivity

Itanagar, Feb 13: Experts have underscored the importance of capacity building for small tea growers and Bought Leaf Factories (BLFs) to ensure sustained productivity, improved quality and long-term sustainability in the tea sector.Speaking at an event in Guwahati, industry leaders highlighted that improving green leaf quality, mitigating maximum residue limits (MRL) challenges and adopting regenerative agricultural practices are critical to making the plantation sector more resilient. Around 256 small tea growers and management representatives of BLFs participated in the second edition of The Tea Next initiative of Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL) in Assam’s Golaghat district, according to a release issued here on February 13. The programme aims to strengthen sustainability, productivity and regulatory compliance among smallholders and BLFs in an increasingly stringent global trade environment.During the event, Tea

Board India’s Deputy Director D.M. Kakoti said the government remains committed to promoting sustainable production practices, addressing concerns over green leaf quality, and tackling MRL-related challenges through regenerative farming practices.“Small tea growers are vital to shaping the future of India’s tea industry. Through Tea Next 2.0, our focus is on enabling farmers and bought leaf factories to meet evolving quality, sustainability and regulatory expectations, while improving productivity and resilience at the farm level,” said Ishpreet Singh, Vice President (Beverages), Hindustan Unilever Limited.North Eastern Tea Association (NETA) advisor and tea planter Bidhangri Barkakoty described small tea growers and BLFs as the backbone of Assam’s tea sector. He stressed that initiatives like Tea field-oriented platform to equip smallholders with the knowledge and tools needed to sustain livelihoods and enhance the quality of tea produced.

In Litan and Ukhrul, new arson happens despite a heavy security presence

Guwahati, Feb 13: Fresh incidents of arson and gunfire were reported in Manipur’s conflict-hit Litan area of Ukhrul district on Thursday, a day after violence had appeared to subside following a 24-hour lull.According to reports, at least four structures, including three abandoned houses, were set ablaze around 9.40 am. Sounds of gunfire were also heard in the area.Litan has been tense since February 7, when a violent clash between two neighbouring villages belonging to the Tangkhul and Kuki communities broke out following a brawl involving individuals from both sides. More than 70 houses and structures have been reduced to ashes so far.Although the situation had relatively calmed on Wednesday, the fourth day of the conflict, fresh arson incidents were reported despite heavy deployment of police and security forces and the imposition of curfew restricting movement of villagers.The latest arson was followed by several rounds of gunfire. Villagers alleged that the firing originated from a newly constructed girls’ hostel at Maokot village, a Kuki village located along the Imphal-Ukhrul road. The abandoned houses were reportedly torched when displaced Tangkhul villagers attempted to return to inspect the remains of their homes. Security forces allegedly stopped them, leading to a brief scuffle. Tear gas shells were fired as some villagers tried to force their way into the village.Protesters accused security forces, particularly the Assam Rifles, of acting in collusion with suspected attackers and failing to respond despite alleged continuous firing from nearby hill slopes. The continued incidents of



arson despite the heavy presence of CRPF, BSF, Bihar Regiment, Assam Rifles, Manipur Police, Manipur Rifles and VDF personnel have fueled public anger and suspicion.Amid concerns over a possible spillover of the violence to neighbouring Senapati and Kangpokpi districts, the Assam Rifles convened a security coordination

meeting with Naga and Kuki civil society organisations at Kangpokpi district headquarters on Wednesday. In a social media post, the Assam Rifles stated that the meeting aimed to prevent escalation of the situation and maintain peace and harmony in the region.

Mizoram set to get piped natural gas by 2028 as northeast gas grid nears completion

Aizawl, Feb 13: The 119.5-km gas pipeline being laid by Indradhanush Gas Grid Limited (IGGL) under the North East Natural Gas Pipeline project has already achieved 45 per cent overall completion and is targeted for readiness by December 2027. The pipeline will connect Mizoram to the broader gas grid network, marking a major step in integrating the state into the national energy infrastructure.Speaking at a sensitisation workshop on City Gas Distribution in Aizawl, Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Minister B. Lalchhanzova said the pipeline up to Sihhmui in neighbouring Tripura is on track for completion by March 2027. Once that segment is finished, Tripura Natural Gas Company Ltd (TNGCL) will begin developing the city gas distribution network to extend PNG supply to households in Aizawl and Mamit. Officials confirmed that after IGGL completes the pipeline installation up to Sihhmui by March 2027,



TNGCL will initiate connections for domestic and commercial consumers. The Mizoram project is expected to become fully operational by early 2028.The workshop, jointly organised by TNGCL and the state’s Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Department, focused on the technical and economic dimensions of PNG implementation. Lalchhanzova noted that Tripura has been using PNG

for over three decades and currently serves more than 60,000 consumers, including hotels and restaurants. He recently inspected gas infrastructure in Agartala to study its operational model. According to TNGCL Managing Director Pralay Patra, the expansion of natural gas infrastructure aligns with the Centre’s target of increasing the share of natural gas in India’s energy mix to 15 per

cent by 2030. He described natural gas as a cleaner alternative to conventional fossil fuels and a crucial component of the country’s energy transition strategy.The gas supply to Mizoram will originate from the ONGC terminal in Tripura and traverse through Kanhmun, Zawlnuam, Kawrtah, Tuidam and Darlawn before reaching Mamit. It will then extend towards Lengpui and terminate at the proposed Sihhmui receiving terminal, approximately 21 km from Aizawl. The pipeline will connect to Silchar in Assam, strengthening inter-state energy connectivity in the Northeast. IGGL officials stated that welding work has been completed up to 52 per cent, while pipe-lowering operations stand at 40 per cent, reflecting steady physical progress on the ground. The rollout of PNG in Mizoram is expected to significantly improve energy accessibility, reduce dependence on traditional fuels and support cleaner urban growth in the state.

Glimpses of Northeast’s rise in Nagaland’s Hornbill festival

Dimapur, Feb 13: As the year draws to a close, reflection comes as a duty, a ledger of triumphs tallied against the unyielding march of time. My recent immersion in Nagaland, surrounded by the energy of the 26th Hornbill Festival, crystallised the truth I have carried since assuming charge: The blueprint for Viksit Bharat blooms defiantly in the emerald folds of the country’s frontiers, where Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi’s vision of the Northeast as Bharat’s Ashtalakshmi states becomes real. The region’s wealth of natural reserves, spiritual heritage, sports, skills, ecotourism, food and agriculture, and cultural vibrancy is not rhetoric, rather it is lived every day. If the Northeast is my second home, Nagaland is the warm seat by the fire. It is a connection forged through the raw, unfiltered kinship I feel with its people with their guardianship of 17 vibrant tribes’ legacies, their unbowed resilience amid historical tempests, and their fierce embrace of progress. Touching down in Kohima, I was enveloped by a spectacle that felt scripted by the gods themselves: The hills ablaze in the fleeting pink of wild cherry blossoms, a rare December bloom against an unyielding azure sky, as if the land itself had unfurled a crimson carpet for the Hornbill’s grand unveiling. My journey began at the Kohima War Cemetery, perched on the very terraces where, in

1944, 10,000 Allied troops (1,420 of whom rest eternally here) halted the Japanese advance in one of World War II’s fiercest sieges. The Battle of Kohima was the forge where our Naga community stood shoulder-to-shoulder with the Indian jawans. The epitaph pierced me anew: “When you go home, tell them of us and say, ‘For your tomorrow, we gave our today.’” I also felt history close like a circle: The very Chindits who turned the tide here in 1944 had trained and been headquartered in my ancestral land of Gwalior, at the Grand Hotel built by my great-grandfather Maharaja Madho Rao Scindia, their Sunderland flying boats resting on our lake en route to battle. Alongside these brave Allied commandos, Naga scouts bled the Japanese dry on every ridge; together they saved Kohima, halted the invasion that could have reached Calcutta, and bound my ancestral legacy forever to these sacred hills. The region’s wealth of natural reserves, spiritual heritage, sports, skills, ecotourism, food, and cultural vibrancy isn’t rhetoric but lived every day Later that evening, from the vantage of Garrison Hill Centre & Café, nursing a steaming mug of Naga arabica, I gazed over the timeless sky. This coffee — from Nagaland’s 20,000-plus hectares under cultivation, yielding 15,000 tonnes annually and bearing the prestigious GI tag as Naga Coffee.

‘Punched me, then drove away laughing’: Northeastern man faces racist assault in Bengaluru’s HSR

Agartala, Feb 13: A Reddit post detailing an alleged racist assault in Bengaluru’s HSR Layout has ignited widespread outrage on social media about discrimination faced by people from India’s North East in metropolitan cities.The user, who recently moved to Bengaluru in August, claimed that he was attacked by two men in public simply because of his ethnic background. Titled “Got Assaulted for being Northeastern/an outsider in HSR”, the post quickly gained traction online, drawing hundreds of comments and sparking debate on racial prejudice in

Bengaluru. According to the post, the incident occurred in HSR Layout Sector 1, near a cafe named Shelby & Co. The man said he was walking home from campus when two men on a white scooter, without helmets, began circling him and staring repeatedly. “They stopped right next to me. The one driving the scooter asked me, “Where are you from?”, to which I replied by asking why he wanted to know. Then he asked, “Are you from the North?”, the user wrote. “When I told him I was from the North East, he said, “Oh that china area.” And then he punched

me in broad daylight in public, and then quickly drove away laughing,” he added.He said the blow itself was minor but what hurt more was the message behind it, that he did not belong. “This punch felt more backed by thoughts of, “You are not welcomed here”, “You are different” and “You are inferior”. Left a horrible taste in my mouth,” he wrote, describing the experience as deeply unsettling. The user added that while he did reach out to the police, the response he received felt dismissive, as officers appeared to treat the incident as trivial.

PM to launch projects worth over Rs 5,450 cr during Assam visit tomorrow

Guwahati, Feb 13: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Assam on Saturday. At around 10:30 am, the Prime Minister will land at the Emergency Landing Facility (ELF) on Moran Bypass in Dibrugarh, where he will witness an aerial display of fighter jets, transport aircraft and helicopters. At around 1 pm, Modi will inaugurate the Kumar Bhaskar Varma Setu across the Brahmaputra in Guwahati. Thereafter, at around 1:30 pm, the Prime Minister will inaugurate and flag off various projects worth more than Rs 5,450 crore at Lachit Ghat, Guwahati. The Emergency Landing Facility (ELF) at Moran is the first of its kind in Northeast India. It has been specially designed and constructed in coordination with the Indian Air Force to support landing and take-off of military and civil aircraft during emergencies. It will serve as a critical asset for emergency response, enabling quick deployment of rescue and relief operations during natural disasters or strategic requirements in the Northeast. Envisioned as dual-use infrastructure, the ELF is capable of handling fighter aircraft up to 40 tonnes and transport aircraft up to 74 tonnes maximum take-off weight. PM Modi will inaugurate several key projects aimed at accelerating connectivity, strengthening digital infrastructure, promoting higher education, and enhancing public transport, thereby giving a significant boost to development in the Northeastern region. The Kumar Bhaskar Varma Setu across the Brahmaputra river is built at a cost of around Rs 3,030 crore. The 6-lane extradosed Prestressed

Concrete (PSC) bridge connects Guwahati with North Guwahati and is the first extradosed bridge in Northeast India. It will cut travel time between Guwahati-North Guwahati to 7 minutes. Considering the high seismicity of the region, the bridge incorporates base isolation technology using friction pendulum bearings. High-performance stay cables have been used to ensure durability and long-term structural performance. A Bridge Health Monitoring System (BHMS) has also been incorporated for real-time condition monitoring, early damage detection and improved safety and service life of the extradosed bridge. Modi will also inaugurate the National Data Centre for North Eastern Region at Amingaon in Kamrup district of Assam. The state-of-the-art Data Centre, with a total sanctioned load of 8.5 MW and an average rack capacity of 10 kW per rack, will host mission-critical applications of various government departments and also function as a Disaster Recovery centre for other National Data Centres. This will enable governments in the Northeast to digitally facilitate delivery of essential citizen-centric services. Aligned with the vision of Digital India, National Data Centre for North Eastern Region has been envisaged as a strategic intervention to strengthen the region's ICT backbone and ensure robust, secure and always-available digital infrastructure. Prime Minister will also inaugurate IIM Guwahati, which will give a major fillip to higher education and management education in the Northeastern region.

Rubber production can play key role in Assam's socio-economic upliftment: Executive Director of Rubber Board

Guwahati, Feb 13: Executive Director of Rubber Board M Vasanthagasan has said that rubber production can play a key role in the socio-economic upliftment of Assam.

During a discussion with a visiting delegation of media persons from Assam at the headquarters of the Rubber Board at Kottayam, Kerala, Vasanthagasan spoke about Assam's important contribution to India's rubber sector.

The Executive Director noted that Assam is the third largest producer of natural rubber in the country and traced the history and expansion of rubber cultivation in the state. He highlighted the immense potential for further growth of rubber production in the region, given favourable agro-climatic conditions

and expanding market demand.

Other senior officials of the Rubber Board, including B Sreekumar, Deputy Director (Publicity & Public Relations), were also present during the interaction.

Addressing the media delegation, Vasanthagasan highlighted the strategic importance of natural rubber in India's industrial ecosystem. He informed that over 65 per cent of the country's domestic natural rubber consumption is utilised by the tyre industry, while the remaining 35 per cent caters to non-tyre sectors such as medical devices, footwear, consumer goods and various industrial products. He emphasised that the Rubber Board plays a crucial role in strengthening the entire value chain,

encompassing cultivation, processing, marketing and skill development.

The Executive Director also elaborated on recent technological innovations being promoted by the Rubber Board to enhance productivity and sustainability. These include the adoption of drone-based spray technology for efficient plantation management and the use of nano-oil applications aimed at improving yield and resource efficiency.

Sharing production trends, he stated that natural rubber production in the country has shown a steady upward trajectory, reaching approximately 8.75 lakh tonnes during 2024-25. However, domestic consumption remains significantly higher at over 14.1 lakh tonnes, driven by ro-



bust demand from the tyre and allied industries.

As part of the visit, the media delegation was also shown the rubber tapping process through a practical demonstration, providing them with a better understanding of plantation-level operations. The visit provided the journalists from Assam with valuable insights into the natural rubber industry, technological advancements and the role of the Rubber Board in promoting sustainable growth across rubber-producing regions of the country.

Consumer awareness event organised in Guwahati

Guwahati, Feb 13: The Consumer Awareness Bharat Yatra Programme was successfully organised at the North Eastern Handicrafts and Handlooms Development Corporation Limited (NEHHDC), Guwahati on Thursday. The programme was held as part of the nationwide Consumer Awareness Bharat Yatra, an initiative aimed at promoting quality consciousness, standardisation and consumer protection across the country. The initiative is being organised by the Consumer Confederation of India (CCI) with support from the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) during the period from December 24, 2025 to March 15. The objective of the Yatra is to generate widespread awareness regarding quality control, stan-



dardization mechanisms, consumer rights, and the role and functions of BIS in safeguarding public interest. The programme was graced by Isaac Ginfaldin, Scientist and Joint Director, BIS, who highlighted the importance of adhering to Indian Standards and the need to enhance public awareness about certification marks such as the ISI Mark and Hallmark. He emphasised that

standardisation is crucial for ensuring product safety, reliability and building consumer confidence.

Dr. Anant Sharma, National Chairman of CCI, stressed the importance of active consumer participation in strengthening market accountability and enabling informed decision-making. M. Selvaraj, National Working President, CCI, elaborated on the objectives of the

Consumer Awareness Bharat Yatra and its extensive outreach across various states. Kailash Kumawat, National Director, CCI, and Sanjay Khandelwal, Secretary, CCI, also addressed the gathering, highlighting the need for collaborative efforts among regulatory bodies, consumer organisations and the public to foster a strong culture of quality. J Daniel and other members of the CCI delegation were also present and participated in the deliberations. The programme witnessed active participation from officials, consumer organisations, and other stakeholders. Interactive sessions were held to sensitise participants on consumer rights, grievance redressal mechanisms, and the importance of purchasing certified products.

Tension intensifies in Nagaland after violent clashes erupt in Maova village community

Medziphema, Feb 13:ension gripped the Medziphema sub-division of Nagaland after violent clashes were reported on Friday in Maova village under Chumoukedima district, leading to the deployment of security forces to prevent further escalation. The unrest, reportedly involving members of the Chakroma Public Organisation, resulted in incidents of violence and arson, although the exact cause of the clash has not yet been officially confirmed. Authorities said the situation remains tense but is currently under control. IGP (CID) Vikram Khalate stated that security personnel have been deployed

in the affected areas to maintain law and order. He added that normal traffic movement, which was briefly disrupted, has now been restored. Officials are assessing the extent of the damage caused during the clashes. While some injuries have been reported, the number of injured and the seriousness of their condition have not yet been confirmed. Meanwhile, Deputy Chief Minister Yanthungo Patton expressed deep concern over the incident. In a post on X, he said that acts of violence and arson that disturb peace and endanger lives and property are a serious matter. He urged everyone involved to remain

calm, exercise restraint, and allow lawful and constructive processes to address any grievances. Appealing for calm, IGP Khalate urged the public, especially residents of the Betsema area, not to take the law into their own hands and warned against spreading rumours, particularly on social media. He said it would be premature to comment on the cause of the clash and assured that a detailed press note would be issued after a full assessment. He also said clarification would be provided regarding reports of an alleged exchange of firing in the official statement later in the day.

Former CM Md Alimuddin memorial lecture held

Imphal, Feb 13: A memorial lecture in honour of former Chief Minister Md. Alimuddin was held on Thursday under the aegis of the Alimuddin Memorial Foundation at Lilong Haoreibi Turel Ahnbi Maning. The event was presided over by Abdul Hashim, Chief Adviser of the Alimuddin Memorial Foundation, while former UNLF Chairman RK Meghen (Sanayaima) attended the programme as Special Guest. Alhaj Md. Alauddin, former Minister and eldest son of late Md. Alimuddin, R.K. Nimai, ret'd IAS, Columnist and public intellectual and Alhaj Moulana Muheyiuddin Manjiri, president, UMPC and advisor, Md. Alimuddin memorial foundation were present as guests of honours. Speaking as Chief Guest, veteran politician and former Minister Okram Joy stated that even today, if one searches for a leader who truly deserves the position of Chief Minister through integrity and merit, Md. Alimuddin stands out as the most deserving. He recalled that after Manipur attained full state in 1972, Md. Alimuddin, a representative from Lilong Assembly Constituency, became the first Chief Minister of the state. Okram Joy, who was well acquainted with late Alimuddin, continued that when Alimuddin assumed office as Chief Minister, he came with a clear vision to build and

strengthen Manipur. He described Alimuddin not only as a political leader but as a true political warrior and one of the key architects in shaping modern Manipur. Joy further observed that the present political culture is vastly different from that of Alimuddin's time. Today's politics, he said, is often driven by violence, narrow interests and personal gain. In contrast, Alimuddin upheld discipline, patience and democratic values. He maintained that the rule of law, which appears weakened today, was respected during Alimuddin's tenure. He also stated that Alimuddin worked tirelessly for the unity and development of Manipur, raising the state's voice on democratic platforms and ensuring that Manipur maintained its distinct identity within the Indian Union. Joy remarked that in the present crisis faced by Manipur, leaders with the courage, integrity and commitment of Alimuddin are greatly needed. He emphasized the importance of nurturing new ideas, new perspectives and a renewed collective vision for rebuilding Manipur. Speaking at the occasion, former UNLF Chairman RK Meghen recalled that the Pan Manipur Youth League, formed in 1968, began observing Patriots' Day on August 13, 1969. He noted that Md. Alimuddin had



attended the observance as Chief Guest at a time when the programme was not widely recognized. On that day itself, August 13 was officially declared as Patriots' Day to honour the martyrs of the Anglo Manipuri War of 1891, Meghen reminded. Meghen further stated that the contributions made by Alimuddin for the welfare of the state remain well acknowledged. He highlighted the significant role played by the Meitei Pangal community in the development of Manipur and stressed the need for committed leaders from all communities, including figures like

Yangmaso Shaiza from the Naga community, to work collectively for peace and progress. As part of the programme, the Chief Guest also inaugurated a record exhibition showcasing the life and works of Md. Alimuddin. During the memorial lecture, Assistant Professor Naorem Sanatomba of the Department of Manipuri, Manipur University, and Associate Professor Dr. Syed Ahmed of Dhanamanjuri University (DMU) presented scholarly papers highlighting various aspects of Md. Alimuddin's life, political ideology and contributions to Manipur.

Assam's Riyan Parag to be named as Rajasthan Royals captain

Guwahati, Feb 13: All-rounder Riyan Parag from Assam is all set to be crowned as the new captain of the Rajasthan Royals (RR) franchise.

According to a source, the RR management has decided to handover the captaincy to Riyan and a formal announcement will be made this evening.

Ritan, who captains the Assam cricket team, will take over from Sanju Samson for the 2026 season of the Indian Premier League.

The change in captaincy comes in the backdrop of the Jaipur-based team opting to trade Sanju Samson to the Chennai Super Kings.

While other options included Yashasvi Jaiswal, Dhruv Jurel and even the experienced Ravindra Jadeja, the

Riyan Parag from Assam is set to be the new captain of the Rajasthan Royals (RR) for the 2026 Indian Premier League season, taking over from Sanju Samson. This decision follows RR's choice to trade Samson to the Chennai Super Kings.

think tank favoured Riyan who has been with the franchise since making his IPL debut in 2019. The RR unit has consistently backed the youngster and even retained him for Rs 14 crore ahead of the 2025 edition of the cash-rich league. He was always groomed for bigger roles in the franchise and the big hint came last season when he served as the stand-in captain in the absence of the injured Sanju Samson.

Assam Cricket Association clarifies regarding 'fake' APL circular issue

Guwahati, Feb 13: Assam Cricket Association (ACA) has clarified that a fake circular related to the Assam Premier League is currently being circulated on social media and other platforms. The said circular falsely uses the name, logo, stadium details, images, and references to players associated with ACA, thereby creating confusion and misinformation among the public and stakeholders," a statement issued by the ACA said on Friday. "ACA would like to categorically clarify that this circular is not issued by the Assam Cricket Association. ACA has no association whatsoever with the contents of the said fake circular," it said. The cricket association further urged all players, officials, stakeholders, media personnel, and members of the public to disregard such false

and misleading information and to refrain from sharing or acting upon the same. Assam Cricket Association reiterates that all official communications, circulars, and announcements are released exclusively through ACA's official website, its verified social media platforms and through media release," it clarified. "It is also categorically stated that till date ACA has not announced the conduct of Assam Premier League, which is in the process of finalisation, and, once the final structure of Assam Premier League is released, the same will be announced through proper media release," it informed. ACA is also contemplating to initiate appropriate criminal process for the mischief, done by the culprit about the news in circulation under reference. The Assam Cricket Association

(ACA) has issued a strong clarification regarding a circular that recently circulated on social media, purportedly linked to the upcoming Assam Premier League (APL). The association categorically stated that the document was fake and not issued by any authorized body of the ACA. Earlier this week, a circular claiming to announce new rules and player guidelines for the APL began circulating online. The document bore the ACA's logo and appeared official, sparking confusion among players, franchises, and cricket enthusiasts across the state. Several local clubs reportedly reached out to the ACA seeking confirmation. In its official response, the ACA clarified that no such circular had been issued and warned stakeholders against relying on unverified documents.

The association emphasized that all official communications are released exclusively through its official website and verified media channels. The ACA further noted that the spread of misinformation could harm the credibility of the league and mislead players preparing for the tournament. It urged the public to remain cautious and verify information before sharing. The ACA has initiated an internal inquiry to trace the source of the fake circular. Officials indicated that legal action may be taken against individuals responsible for creating or circulating the document. Meanwhile, preparations for the APL continue as scheduled, with the ACA reaffirming its commitment to transparency and fair play. Updates will be communicated promptly through official channels.

Kaziranga teams up with African initiative to promote conservation through sports

Guwahati, Feb 13: in a unique collaboration underscoring sports as a bridge to sustainable conservation, Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve (KNPTR) in collaboration with Africa's Bola Bola Sports for All Wildlife Forever, organised a "conservation-focussed" football tournament at Golia Football Ground in Biswanath Wildlife Division of Assam. on February 11 and 12, 2026. The tournament featured eight men's teams, four women's teams, and two under-17 teams enthusiastically. Champions were celebrated amid a showcase of teamwork and sportsmanship: Team Biswanath Town Club emerged as the Men's Winner while Team Uddipta Chowra, Bedi bagged the women's title. The Men's Runners-Up title went to Team Golia F.C. while the Women's Runners-Up

title was bagged by Team Sakhomata Tea Estate. Team JNV Sonitpur were crown the under-17 champions while Team Golia Junior FC bagged the runners-up title in the category. The event engaged local youth in structured football among Kaziranga's fringe communities. Bola Bola Sports for All Wildlife Forever is a sports-focused initiative that leverages football to drive community engagement, youth development, and wildlife conservation. Keeping Kaziranga in vision, their work centres on organising coaching clinics, referee training, and tournaments in protected areas like their prior effort in Zambia's Kafue National Park in 2024; to unite fringe communities around sports while promoting biodiversity protection and sustainable livelihoods. Bola Bola Sports collabo-

rates with parks, NGOs and local groups to foster enthusiasm among boys and girls, blending athletic skill-building with environmental awareness for long-term impact. The Assam Sports and Youth Welfare Department, Biswanath Sports Association, Biswanath Football Association, and Golia Village Development Committee supported the tournament.

International coaches Stefan Perkins from England and Alberto Marco Lozano from Spain kickstarted the training since February 7 at Agoroli Football Ground, Eastern Assam Wildlife Division, KNPTR which followed by sessions in Biswanath Wildlife Division. Speaking on the occasion, Perkins praised the enthusiasm, and collaborative spirit that launched the football-conservation project on a strong note, expressing

excitement for future efforts.

Lozano highlighted the extraordinary hospitality, professional organisation by the Kaziranga team, high energy from sponsors and participants besides top-tier disciplined play and eagerness to continue. Divisional Forest Officer, Biswanath Wildlife Division, Ritu Paban Borah noted the innovative blend of sports and conservation, calling for its sustained expansion in the park. Forest Range Officer, Nayan Jyoti Gogoi Biswanath Ghat emphasised how football unites people across language, religion, gender, age and background toward a shared goal of protecting Kaziranga's wildlife and habitat. The programme was also supported by Chuk Chuk, WWF-India, Aaranyak, NextGen Coaching, and Pathkind Labs Biswanath.

EDITORIAL

North East Chronicle

FEBRUARY 14 2026 VOL 01 NO. 343



The Expanding Gap Between Ambition and Contentment

Ambition drives progress, innovation, and achievement. However, when ambition expands without balance, contentment diminishes. The modern pursuit of constant advancement often leaves individuals dissatisfied despite accomplishments. Economic competition and social comparison intensify ambition. Success is measured against peers, not personal goals. As standards continuously rise, satisfaction becomes temporary. This imbalance affects mental health. Continuous striving without appreciation of progress fosters anxiety and burnout. Contentment is misinterpreted as complacency, discouraging gratitude. Professional environments often reward upward mobility while neglecting well-being. Individuals hesitate to acknowledge satisfaction, fearing stagnation. Balancing ambition with contentment requires internal clarity. Setting realistic goals and recognising achievements cultivate emotional stability. Societies that equate value solely with upward progression risk collective exhaustion. Sustainable growth integrates ambition with reflection. Contentment does not limit progress; it anchors it. A balanced approach fosters resilience and long-term fulfillment.

The care system in Britain encourages modern slavery. It would be changed by a truly humane government

Billionaires and politicians fan the flames of hate, but without migrant workers, Britain would grind to a halt. That’s especially true when it comes to health and social care: more than a fifth of the NHS workforce is made up of migrant staff. The same proportion of care workers nationally are migrants, rising to half in London.

Yet these workers, many of whom are members of Unison, have increasingly become a punchbag for politicians. In particular, they have become a scapegoat for this Labour government, which has sunk to a new low with its proposals on earned settlement. These changes could see low-paid public sector workers, including carers, forced to wait 15 years before being granted indefinite leave to remain, instead of the five years they were promised before they made the decision to come here. These changes would entrench and worsen the environment of fear and exploitation that defines the current system.

This is nothing less than a full-frontal attack on migrant workers and a wrecking ball for public services from a government that should be standing up for both. We already have a visa system that ties care workers to their employers, leaving them vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. Months

without pay. Working without days off for weeks on end. Grafting for 16 hours and only getting paid for two of them.

As Unison general secretary, I have been speaking to my migrant members in the care sector, and what I hear is harrowing. “Every conversation with the managers feels threatening, and often ends with the word ‘visa’,” a domiciliary care worker from India said. Another member put it starkly: “We cannot continue to work under these kinds of pressures. It is emotionally draining and mentally exhausting. You lose yourself. Fear becomes your shadow.” When Unison raises these issues with politicians, we are often told it’s just a few “bad apple” employers. But insecure work, zero-hour contracts, illegally low pay and exploitative practices more widely are endemic throughout the social care sector. Our members are silenced as the threat of deportation is punitively held over them. I don’t say it lightly, but the sponsorship system has effectively made modern slavery a structural feature of our care system. A genuinely humane government would do away with this heartless system. But despite the urging of Unison – in a national campaign led by our migrant members – this Labour government is



proposing to extend it. For many of our members who had only months left before being freed from the terrifying vulnerability of sponsorship, the Home Office is proposing to lock them into exploitation for another decade and more. These proposals are not just an attack on the migrant care workers who work beyond breaking point to look after us. They are also an attack on the most basic values of the Labour party, in offering rapid routes to settlement for those earning lower-paid workers wait and continue to suffer. Such a hierarchy is based on the notion that care workers are “low-skilled” because they are low-paid. The logic could not be more perverse. Care work is

highly skilled work, and it is only paid so poorly because of the failure of successive governments to value it properly. The Home Office describing those who run our health and social care system as low contributors and making this a metric of human worth, having failed to ensure they are paid fairly, is an attack on the working class.

Care in England is already creaking, and without urgent action it risks outright collapse. The demand our migrant members are dealing with is gargantuan. Age UK estimates that 2 million older people have unmet care needs, while up to 1.5 million working-age disabled people may be missing out on support they are entitled to. At the same time, the workforce is

haemorrhaging staff, with vacancy rates among the highest of any sector and nearly a quarter of workers leaving each year. The root cause is no mystery – it’s low pay. Four in five jobs in the wider economy pay better than the care sector. Such depressed wages push workers into poverty and food insecurity. Sadly, the government seems determined to make the environment for migrant workers in this country more hostile than ever. But Unison will always stand up for our members, regardless of where they were born. Indeed, in leading our Fair Visa Campaign, migrant members are standing up for themselves: late last year, they organised one of the biggest parliamentary lobbies in modern history, with 700 migrant workers travelling to meet their MPs. This week, more than 70 parliamentarians joined us in opposing the unfair indefinite leave to remain changes. Labour MPs vying to replace the prime minister must take the fight to the far right instead of imitating it, stand up for migrant workers by dropping the earned settlement proposals, and represent the whole working class. This is the stuff of basic principles. Unison will use its unparalleled size and resources without hesitation to challenge any politician who fails to live up to them.

Reevaluating the solar irrigation plan for Assam

The core mission of the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goal -2 is to end hunger, achieve food security, improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture. A growing population triggering higher food demand and escalating impacts of climate change have posed tougher hurdles in achieving this goal. Sustainable agriculture is central to long-term food security for growing population of Assam, but in rain-fed areas of the state it remains a hard row to hoe. Ironically, less than 23% of the gross cropped area of the state is under irrigation, and the remaining 77% of the cropped area is rain-fed. The drastic change in rainfall pattern due to climate change impact has also adversely affected cropping activities and increased sustainability challenges. While measures like the distribution of climate-resilient varieties and crop insurance coverage have been taken to help farmers absorb climate- and disaster-induced shocks, increasing irrigation coverage remains the pragmatic solution for the long-term sustainability of agriculture in these areas. Without reducing rain dependency, increasing farm production to meet the rising food demand of the state will be like chasing a mirage. The Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan (PM-KUSUM) scheme for solarising agricultural pumps has a dual advantage: it creates irrigation



potential with renewable energy and replaces diesel with renewable energy, making it a sustainable solution for irrigation needs in rain-fed areas. Yet, the implementation of PM-KUSUM has been sluggish in the state, reflecting gaps at both administrative and policy levels. Official data highlights that so far only 685 standalone solar pumps have been installed in the state against 4,000 solar pumps sanctioned by the central government. The central government’s ex-

planation about the varied pace of implementation of PM-KUSUM is that the scheme being demand-driven, the capacities are allocated based on demand received and progress shown by the states. The harsh realities of the scheme implementation put the spotlight on the policy approach of the central and state governments to the scheme. The solarisation of irrigation pumps lies at the intersection of renewable energy generation and agriculture, but its primary objective

is to de-dieselise the farm sector, provide assured daytime solar power and provide energy security to farmers. Targeted beneficiaries, on the other hand, are farmers or groups of farmers, including farmer producer organizations whose primary engagement is to grow crops for livelihood and have nothing to do with generating renewable energy. At the national level, the Ministry of New & Renewable Energy (MNRE) is the nodal ministry for PM-KUSUM, while in Assam the

Assam Energy Development Agency (AEDA) is the implementing agency of the scheme. For both MNRE and AEDA, the primary mandate is to increase renewable energy generation and adoption and not to create irrigation potential or reach out to farmers for boosting agricultural productivity or food security. Without smooth field-level coordination with the irrigation department, which has the mandate to create and add irrigation potential, the implementation of the scheme remains disconnected from the primary needs of the farmers in rain-fed areas: assured water availability for irrigating their farmlands to cope with challenges like drought, drought-like situations, and erratic rainfall during the crop season. The key advantages of solar water pumps over diesel-run water pumps are that there is no recurring fuel cost and the maintenance cost is much less compared to diesel-run pumps. Reduced recurring and maintenance costs can increase farmers’ savings, while reduced rain dependency makes farming activities sustainable, boosts agricultural production and facilitates the adoption of multicropping and growing crops on a commercial scale to augment income from farmland. The expenditure of installation of the solar agricultural pumps under the scheme is shared by the central government, state government and farmers. The central government and state

government jointly share 85% of the unit cost of each pump set, while the beneficiary is required to share 15% of the cost. The scheme guidelines prepared by AEDA state that individual farmers/groups of farmers/water user associations having around two hectares of contiguous cultivable agricultural land with an existing working boring for assured irrigation will be supported to install standalone solar water pumps for replacement of existing diesel agriculture pumps/irrigation systems in off-grid areas, where grid supply is not available. The beneficiaries in the state need to pay around Rs 24,000, which is on the higher side for individual small and marginal farmers. Reaching out to a group of farmers who jointly possess 15 bighas of consecutive land is essential so that the farmers’ contribution for the installation of the pump is shared and the problem of smaller land holdings of individual small and marginal farmers is also addressed to meet the scheme eligibility condition. These are details of the strategy to be adopted to raise the demand for the installation of pumps under PM-KUSUM. Assam, however, needs to shift its approach from mere pump-centric solarisation to the creation of sustainable irrigation. Such a shift is an urgent necessity, as vast tracts of unirrigated land are poised to face even greater vulnerabilities in agricultural production.

Giving votes to 16-year-olds would be a win for Labour – and our country

Here it is as promised, a bill introduced to parliament on Thursday proposing to give the vote to 16- and 17-year-olds by the next general election. Good. The accusation from the Conservatives and Reform last year was that this was gerrymandering. “Rank hypocrisy” says the Sun. If polls had shown that the young traditionally swing to the right, would Labour have espoused this? I don’t know.

Nigel Farage’s claim that the young are turning to him is largely overblown, according to YouGov polling, with only 9% of 18 to 24-year-olds saying they would vote Reform – no better than what Ukip achieved in 2015. However there is a gender gap, says More in Common, with boys nearly twice as likely to support parties on the right. The Tories, who will lose out, search for reasons to oppose the bill and come up with some rum arguments. I particularly enjoyed Claire Coutinho’s concern that young people do not need

the “added pressure” of deciding whether to focus on their exams or “stay up to watch” political debates, as elections are often in the summer exam season.

In power, the Tories went to great lengths to stop young people voting: David Cameron’s government barred colleges and universities from registering students automatically. Meanwhile, parents were barred from registering young people at home, so students’ vote depended on their personal determination to register, at a time of turmoil in their lives – and frequent address changing. It worked, with young people the largest disenfranchised group.

The age when people become more likely to switch to the right reached 66 at the last election. The 16- and 17-year-olds who will actually vote in the next general election are now aged 12-13, so candidates had better get to work on them. Yet the reality is that in our corrupted and perverse electoral system, the votes of these teenag-

ers are highly unlikely to affect any seats: there are too few of them in any one seat to shift the dial even if they all voted for the same candidate, according to research by Christine Huebner at the University of Sheffield, which is a shame. But expect to see candidates hastening to canvass in schools, not just old people’s homes – with promises to the young, not just the old.

That’s why this matters. It should be a symbol and a signal of intent to focus policy on the young, who have lost out so badly in the austerity years – with education funding and Sure Start cut, and the education maintenance allowance for poorer sixth formers abolished. Meanwhile, during Covid, the young were sacrificed in school closures to save the old from dying. As the old revel in triple-locked pensions and freedom passes regardless of income, families with children are the poorest.

Much more should be done to ensure that the old who are poor claim their

pension credit, but it is uphill work persuading the old as a cohort how privileged we have been all our lives: born into an NHS created for us, staying on longer in comprehensive schools, vast expansion of (free) universities and colleges, a time of massive housebuilding and public investment in libraries, leisure centres and sports. I once gave a talk on a cruise ship explaining to my generation how lucky we were compared with the young – and I feared I’d get thrown overboard in their fury. Look at the young with their lattes and avocado toast, they said; those lazy moaners and snowflakes – “we never had mobile phones in our day”. Politically, shifting significant resources and power from the old (who vote) to young (who don’t much) is risky.

Why 16? David Runciman, a professor of politics at the University of Cambridge, suggests voting at age six, which I like. But it might be more politically saleable to give parents caring for children a double



vote on their behalf to tilt the electoral arithmetic in a rapidly ageing population: the fertility rate in England and Wales fell to a record low in 2024, to 1.44 children per woman, when it takes 2.1 just to maintain the population. Innovation, rebellion, new ideas, trends and fashions rarely come from the old: stagnation and decay beckon if nostalgia for a world 50 years ago dominates education policy. Even if there were every encouragement for parenthood – housing, free good nurseries, parenting

subsidies and, above all, a sense of welcoming children – we would need to rethink attitudes towards welcoming young migrants to keep our population renewed. Jim Ratcliffe’s decrepit complaint about a Britain “colonised by immigrants” let Labour thump back with resounding repudiations.

The young, of course, overwhelmingly back votes at 16, but they are remarkably humble: in August 2025, 46% said they felt informed enough about politics to vote in

a general election, while the same proportion said they did not feel informed enough (8% were unsure). They ought to know about the depths of adult ignorance: the majority are disastrously wrong in their estimates on crime (78% of people polled think it’s rising when it fell 90% in the last three decades), benefits (many think most goes to the jobless when most goes to pensioners) or how incomes are distributed (extreme inequality is often grossly underestimated). A new school curriculum, out

in 2027, will bring in the kind of citizenship education with critical thinking at its core taught brilliantly in some schools, but barely at all in most, killed off by Michael Gove when he dropped it from his Ebacc. Accompanying sixth formers to the polling station could give them a habit for life: this is a chance for them to become the most democratically minded generation. Expect a reverse ferret from the right, who can hardly go into the next election still opposing votes at 16.

3 reasons tech stocks Nifty IT Index cracks 4%; Infosys, Wipro, Coforge plunge

Mumbai: The technology stocks continue to be under pressure. The Nifty IT Index is down 2.5%. TCS and Wipro have hit fresh 52-week lows in early trade. The top 5 large cap losers are the IT stocks. The Infosys and Wipro ADRs had also plunged over 4% in overnight trade. The Indian IT stocks have seen significant losses. Top counters like Infosys, TCS are down 10% so far this year. The cut for Wipro is even deeper, down over 15% so far this year. The Nifty IT Index is down 10% in 2026 so far.

Dr VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Investments pointed out that, “Tech stocks, reeling under the Anthrop-ic shock, are unlikely to recover soon. The sharp dip in the ADRs of top Indian IT companies in US yesterday, indicates that Indian IT will continue to struggle. Even with occa-

sional profit booking, the undertone of the market will remain resilient mainly because there is a trend of FIIs turning buyers. One of the biggest concerns for the IT sector is the disruption that AI is set to bring forth for the IT sector. opportunities by unlock- ing incremental addressable spend. Ac- cording to Kotal Institutional Equities, the application of AI to legacy technologies in the enterprise tech stack requires contextual awareness to integrate legacy deterministic software with the probabilistic nature of re- cent technology, which involves significant heavy lifting.” One of the biggest concerns for the IT sector is the disruption that AI is set to bring forth for the IT sector. US Fi- nancial services stocks JPMorgan, Bank of America, and Charles Schwab fell by more than 2% amid concerns.

Ceigall India bags NHAI project worth Rs 2,160 crore in Bihar

Mumbai: Ceigall India’s wholly owned subsidi- ary, Ceigall Infra Projects, has received an order worth Rs Rs. 2,160 crores from the National High- ways Authority of India (NHAI) for a highway con- struction project in Bihar.The company in its regula- tory filing said that it has received a Letter of Award (LoA) for the construction of a four-lane highway stretch on NH-139W, covering the Sahebganj–Are- raj–Bettiah corridor in Bihar.Project to cover 78.94 km on NH-139W in BiharThe total length of the project is 78.942 km comprising two sections. Section one covers Sahebganj to Areraj, spanning 38.362 km, Hybrid Annuity Mode (HAM), which involves partial government funding during the construction phase, with the remaining investment recovered through annuity payments.The construc- tion period for the project is 730 days. After com- pletion, the company will operate and maintain the highway for a period of 15 years.Ramneek Sehgal, Chairman & Managing Director, Ceigall India said



that the project will strengthening national highway networks. “This project is closely aligned with the Government of India’s PM Gati Shakti vision of integrated and multimodal infrastructure develop- ment. Strengthening national highway networks is critical to improving logistics efficiency, enhancing regional connectivity, and accelerating economic growth,” Sehgal added

HUL Q3FY26: Profit more than doubles to Rs 6,603 crorea

Mumbai: Hindustan Unilever (HUL) reported a 120% year-on-year (YoY) jump in its Q3FY26 net profit at Rs 6,603 crore from Rs 2,989 crore reported in its Q3FY25. This includes the profit from the Hindustan Unilever’s ice cream business which has been treated as a discontinued operation after it was demerged into Kwality Wall’s (India).Excluding the profit from discontinued operation the FMCG firm saw a decline of 30% YoY in its net profit at Rs 2,118 crore.The FMCG firm reported revenue from the operations at Rs 16,197 crore, up 5.71% YoY from Rs 15,322 crore reported in Q3FY25.Key highlights from Q3FY26

On the sequential basis the company saw a jump of 145.10% from Rs 2,694 crore reported in Q2FY26. Reve- nue also increased 3.07% quarter-on-quarter (QoQ) from Rs 15,715 crore reported in Q2FY26 The company re- ported an exceptional item (loss) of Rs 576 crore in Q3 including Rs 113 crore due to the implementation of new labour codes led to an increase in gratuity and compen- sated absences liability as of December 31, 2025. HUL said it expects FY27 to be better than FY26, driven by the benefits of portfolio reshaping and continued transfor- mation across channels. It expects a supportive consump- tion environment going ahead, backed by macroeconom- ic stability and favourable policy measures. HUL said it will focus on “driving competitive, volume-led revenue growth, anchored around its four key strategic priorities.” HUL also gave an update on its acquisitions, said it will acquire the remaining 49% stake in Zywie Ventures Pri- vate for a cash consideration of Rs 824 crores. With this acquisition, Zywie Ventures and its wholly owned sub- sidiary Zenherb Labs will become 100% wholly owned subsidiaries of HUL. HUL’s board also approved the sale



of its entire 19.8% stake in Nutritionalab Private Limited to USV Private for Rs 307 crores, subject to customary closing adjustments.During the quarter, HUL delivered a 4% Underlying Volume Growth (UVG). Its total expenses istood at Rs 13,078 crore, up 6.37%.EBITDA grew 3% YoY at Rs. 3,788 crores while EBITDA margin at 23.3% remained within the guided range.“During the quarter, de- mand trends reflected early signs of recovery, underpinned by supportive policy measures,” CEO and Managing Di- rector Priya Nair said.Nair further said, “Against this backdrop, we delivered a competitive performance, with 6 per cent revenue growth and 4 per cent Underlying Vol- ume Growth.” “We continued to build desirability at scale with our brands, accelerate market development in high- growth demand spaces and strengthen our capabilities to scale Channels of the Future with a dedicated organisation for Quick commerce,” she said.

USV to acquire 79% stake in Wellbeing Nutrition ₹1,583

Mumbai: USV, a pharmaceutical and biotechnology company, will ac- quire a 79 per cent stake in Wellbe- ing Nutrition at a valuation of ₹1,583 crore.USV has signed a definitive agreement to acquire a 79 per cent equity stake in Nutritionalab Pvt Ltd, which owns “Wellbeing Nutrition”, according to a joint statement.This includes 35 per cent from the found- er Avnish Chhabria and 44 per cent from existing shareholders. Its inves- tors -- Early backers Fireside Ventures and Hindustan Unilever -- will divest their collective 40 per cent stake.This ₹1,583 crores all-cash transaction rep- resents the largest exit in India’s health and wellness startup space to date, it added. ”The addition of Wellbeing Nutrition reinforces USV’s evolution into a comprehensive healthcare pow- erhouse spanning both therapeutic ex- cellence and consumer wellbeing,” it said.“We look forward to unlocking the next phase of growth by leverag- ing USV’s global capabilities while preserving Wellbeing Nutrition’s core mission of transparent, sustainable, and high-quality nutrition,” USV Managing Director Prashant Tewari said.Wellbeing Nutrition has built a good presence supported by its om-



nichannel presence. The company has witnessed 120 per cent growth in the last 2 years and is poised to cross ₹450 crores in revenue by FY’27, the statement claimed. This strategic ex- pansion of USV, a leading player in di- abetes and cardiac care, into consumer wellness is aligned with its expansion across the healthcare continuum. Wellbeing Nutrition founder Avnish Chhabria said: “Together, we are com- mitted to shaping a new benchmark

for health and wellness, while preserv- ing the integrity, culture, and purpose with which Wellbeing Nutrition was founded.”The current management with Saurabh Kapoor (Co-Founder) will continue to operate the business under the oversight of the Board. Founded in 2019, Wellbeing Nutrition has a retail presence in over 6,000 out- lets. The brand also has a presence in international markets such as the UAE and Europe.

India’s Bullet Train dreams stretch: Decoding rise of Indigenous tech in the MAHSR Project

Mumbai: India’s first bullet train corridor between Mumbai and Ahmedabad is steadily moving ahead, with significant civil works completed across Gujarat and progress gathering pace in Maha- rashtra, the government informed the Lok Sabha on Wednesday. The 508-km Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail (MAHSR) Project is being developed with technical and financial assistance from Japan and is currently the only high-speed rail (HSR) project under execu- tion in the country. The corridor, which will run through Gujarat, Maharashtra and the Union Ter- ritory of Dadra & Nagar Haveli, will have 12 stations — Mumbai, Thane, Virar, Boisar, Vapi, Billi- mora, Surat, Bharuch, Vadodara, Anand, Ahmedabad and Sabarmati. According to the government, the entire 1,389.5 hectares of land required for the project has been acquired, all statutory clearances obtained, and 1,651 utilities shift- ed. The Centre said the MAHSR project is not only about building a bullet train corridor but also about developing domestic expertise in advanced rail technologies. Long- span steel truss girders are being fabricated in Indian workshops, while heavy construction machin- ery for full-span launching is now being manufactured domestically. Several components of slab track systems and specialised track ma- chines are being produced by Indi- an manufacturers. IIT agencies, in collaboration with IITs, are also handling dynamic analysis and de- sign refinements to build long-term high-speed rail capability. The project has introduced innovations such as the full-span launching method for 40-metre prestressed



box girders, indigenous noise barriers along elevated sections, and an indigenously developed Rail Turnover Prevention Device (RTPD) to enhance safety during derailments. Advanced simula- tion tools for overhead equipment (OHE) interaction and traction power supply systems have also been developed with IIT Delhi. Around 1,000 Indian engineers and skilled workers have been trained in Japanese methodologies, and a dedicated track training facility has been set up in Surat. Construction progress is significantly advanced in Gujarat. Foundation and pier works have been completed over 352 km, girder casting over 342 km and girder launching over 331 km. Track bed construction has reached 152 km, while erection of OHE masts has covered 121 km. In Maharashtra, foundation work

has been completed over 74 km and piers over 65 km, though gird- er casting and launching are still in early stages. Of the 12 planned stations, foundation works have been completed at eight stations in Gujarat. In Maharashtra, work is ongoing at Thane, Virar and Boisar, while excavation at the Bandra Kurla Complex (BKC) un- derground station is nearing com- pletion. Concreting works have progressed substantially, with the Level-4 basement slab fully completed.Seventeen river bridge- es have already been completed. Work is at an advanced stage on major bridges over the Narmada, Mahi, Tapi and Sabarmati rivers in Gujarat, and ongoing on four riv- er bridges in Maharashtra. Depot construction at Thane, Surat and Sabarmati is also in full swing.The 21-km under-sea tunnel section has

commenced, with 4.8 km already completed between Ghansoli and Shilphata in Maharashtra.

Safety measures have been a ma- jor focus, with structures designed to withstand seismic forces. Via- ducts and bridges include steel and damper stoppers to prevent dis- lodgement during earthquakes, and an Earthquake Early Warning Sys- tem (EQEWS) is being installed. Stations are being designed with controlled entry points, baggage scanners, Door Frame Metal De- tectors (DFMDs) and CCTV sur- veillance, along with anti-vibration and wind-pressure management features. Sustainability standards aligned with IGBC Platinum norms are also being incorporated. The government said ₹86,939 crore has been spent on the project till De- cember 31, 2025.

Ticket pricing is proposed to re- main competitive with existing rail and air travel options, and long- term viability assessments factor in projected passenger demand, economic benefits and regional development. In a related update, the Railways Ministry said the Eastern Dedicated Freight Cor- ridor (EDFC) from Ludhiana to Sonnagar has been fully commis- sioned, while 1,404 route kilo- metres of the Western Dedicated Freight Corridor (WDFC) from JNPT to Dadri have been complet- ed. Currently, an average of 406 freight trains run daily on these corridors, easing congestion on the conventional rail network.

This information was provided by the Union Minister for Rail- ways, Information & Broadcast- ing and Electronics & Information Technology, Ashwini Vaishnaw, in a reply to questions in Lok Sabha.

Nifty below 25,900, Sensex slides 500 points, sell-off in tech stocks

Mumbai: The markets are under signif- icant selling pressure in afternoon trade. Both the benchmark indices extended their losses. At the time of writing, the Sensex was trading at 83,712, down 520 points or 0.62%. Similarly, the Nifty slipped 142 points or 0.55% to 25,811. The broader mood was cautious as selling intensified across key sectors, especially information technology stocks.So what exactly is drag- ing the market lower today?Let’s take a look at the three main factors behind the decline.Sharp selling in IT stocksOne of the biggest drag on the market is the sharp plunge in technology sector shares.The Nifty IT index tumbled nearly 5% during the session. Moreover, every constituent trading in the red. Losses across the pack ranged between 4-6%Among the worst hit were Coforge, which dropped around 6%, and LTIMindtree, which fell about 5%.In- fosys and Tata Consultancy Services each declined roughly 5%, while Wipro and Persistent Systems also lost around 5%. Tech Mahindra, Mphasis and HCLTech fell between 4-5%. Many investor fear that the rapid adoption of AI tools could dis- rupt existing revenue streams, especially in software services and consulting.Glob- ally, US financial services stocks such as JPMorgan, Bank of America and Charles Schwab fell more than 2%. Software com- panies like Salesforce and Intuit also de- clined over 4%.Weak cues from global markets and ADR fall

Another factor weighing on sentiment is the sharp dip in American Depository Receipts (ADRs) of Indian IT companies in the US overnight. The fall in ADRs signalled weak global investor appetite for the sector.Concerns about US interest rates are also playing a role. Adding to the discussion, Dr. VK Vijayakumar, Chief In- vestment Strategist at Geojit Investments, said, “The latest US jobs data indicating addition of 1,30,000 jobs last month and unemployment falling to 4.3% points to the possibility of no rate cuts by the Fed in the near-term. In India, too, it appears that



the rate cutting cycle is over since growth is good and inflation is expected to inch back to the RBI’s long-term target by the end of FY 27. Support to the market has to come from earnings growth, and there are sectors like automobiles, jewellery, hotels, segments of capital goods, telecom and fi- nancials that are doing well on the earnings front and have the potential to continue to do well. Tech stocks, reeling under the An- thropic shock, are unlikely to recover soon. “The sharp dip in the ADRs of top Indian IT companies in US yesterday, indicates that Indian IT will continue to struggle. The switch from IT to other segments will help performing stocks in performing sec- tors. The sharp rise in stocks like Eicher, Titan and Apollo Hospital in response to results indicate that the market will reward better-than-expected results. Even with oc- casional profit booking, the undertone of the market will remain resilient mainly be- cause there is a trend of FIIs turning buy- ers. The fact that FIIs were buyers in six of the last seven trading sessions, indicate that at least the trend of sustained selling is over. In the near-term the market is like- ly to consolidate around the current levels with an upward bias,” he added.

53 people dead or missing after migrant boat capsizes



Mediterranean: Fifty-three people are dead or missing after a boat capsized in the Mediterranean Sea off the Libyan coast, the UN migration agency said on Monday. Only two survivors were rescued. The International Organization for Migration said the boat overturned north of Zuwara on Friday, in the latest disaster involving people attempting the perilous Mediterranean crossing in the hope of reaching Europe. In a statement, the IOM said: “Only two Nigerian women were rescued during a search and rescue operation by Libyan authorities.” It added that one of the survivors said she lost her husband and the other said she lost her two babies in the tragedy. The agency said its teams provided the survivors with emergency medical care upon disembarkation. “According to survivor accounts, the boat – carrying migrants and refugees of African nationalities departed from Al-Zawiya, Libya, at around 11pm on February 5. Approximately six hours later, it capsized after taking on water,. IOM mourns the loss of life in yet another deadly incident along the Central Mediterranean route.” The Geneva-based agency said trafficking and smuggling networks were exploiting migrants along the route from north Africa to southern Europe, profiting from dangerous crossings in unseaworthy boats while exposing people to “severe abuse”. It called for stronger international cooperation to tackle the networks alongside safe and regular migration pathways to reduce risks and save lives. The IOM fears that hundreds of people have died since the start of the year attempting to cross the Mediterranean amid harsh weather

conditions on the dangerous crossing. A spokesperson for the European Commission said Brussels was trying to address the root causes of irregular migration and promote legal, safe and orderly pathways to the European Union. “These tragic events once again underline the need to intensify joint efforts with our partners, including Libya, to prevent such dangerous journeys and to combat the criminal networks of migrant smugglers that put lives at risk,” they told Agence France-Presse. Between the start of 2014 and the end of 2025, more than 33,000 migrants died or went missing in the Mediterranean, according to the IOM’s Missing Migrants Project. Last year, it recorded 1,873 missing or dead in the Mediterranean, including 1,342 on the central route. of wrongdoing internally, certainly would have looked at something like this and something like Pretti’s death and referred that to DOJ for potential criminal investigation. And, you know, that headline was a quote from one of the former lawyers in that office who had said, you know, “They don’t care about civil rights.” And that story essentially portended that in that environment, it’s really going to come down to whether or not a federal prosecutor is willing to prosecute a federal agent, because they do have qualified immunity if they are doing — you know, if these allegations transpire in the course of them following orders under the executive branch, doing their jobs, there’s an argument that, you know, they have immunity, and it’s going to be a federal matter. So, it is a really tricky area in terms of seeking accountability,

Two senior Norwegian diplomats being investigated over Epstein

Garmany: Two high-profile diplomats are under investigation by Norwegian authorities in connection with their relationship to the late sex offender Jeffrey Epstein. Norway’s financial crimes squad, Økokrim, is investigating Mona Juul, who resigned as ambassador to Jordan and Iraq on Sunday, on suspicion of gross corruption while working at the ministry of foreign affairs, it said on Monday. It is investigating her husband, Terje Rød-Larsen, a former diplomat and former president of the International Peace Institute (IPI), on suspicion of complicity in gross corruption. Pål Lønseth, head of Økokrim, said: “We have opened an investigation to clarify whether criminal acts have occurred. We are facing a comprehensive and, by all accounts, long-term investigation.” “Among other things, Økokrim will investigate whether [Juul] received benefits in connection to her position,” Lønseth added in a statement. Lawyers for both Juul and Rød-Larsen have said their clients are cooperating with investigators and are confident the allegations will be found to be without merit. The couple, who were part of a small group of diplomats facilitating the 1993-1995 Oslo accords, are the latest heavyweight Norwegians to make the headlines over the Epstein files. The revelations have sent shockwaves through the Nordic nation, chiefly because of the US financier’s relationship with Crown Princess Mette-Marit, but also because of his ties to other notable figures. Økokrim, the national authority for investigation and prosecution of economic and environmental crime, has already opened an investigation into Thorbjørn Jagland, a former Labour prime minister of Norway, former chair of the Norwegian Nobel committee and former secretary general of the Council of Europe. Appearance in the files does not in itself imply wrongdoing or illegal behaviour. Mette-Marit has expressed “deep regret” over her relationship with Epstein, who killed himself in jail in 2019 as he awaited trial for sex crimes against minors, acknowledging “poor judgment”. Released by the US Department of Justice, the files appear to show that Juul and Rød-Larsen’s two children were bequeathed \$10m by Epstein and that Rød Larsen was appointed executor of Epstein’s will in 2017 (this was later revoked). It appears from the files that they visited Epstein’s private island with their children in 2011, with Rød-Larsen later thanking the American for the trip and describing the island as “totally unique”. “We all loved it!” Rød-Larsen wrote in an email, before adding: “Mona sends a kiss.” Announcing Juul’s resignation, Norway’s foreign minister, Espen Barth Eide, said her contact with Epstein had “revealed a serious lapse in judgment,” adding: “The situation makes it difficult to restore the trust that the role requires.” Juul’s lawyer, Thomas Skjelbred, said a “serious charge” had been brought against his client. He added: “At the same time, she views it positively that the allegations will now be subject to a thorough investigation, allowing the actual circumstances to be clarified. My client does not recognise the accusations made against her.” Juul, he said, a former ambassador to Britain and Israel, will attend questioning with Økokrim this week and that she will cooperate with the ministry of foreign affairs’ inquiries. Rød-Larsen’s lawyer, John Christian Elden, said it had noted the charge against him for alleged complicity in corruption between 2011 and 2018 “centred on an apartment transfer in 2018 and a possible trip in 2011”. Elden added: “He remains fully available to the investigators and is cooperating to the fullest extent practically possible at this stage. Rød-Larsen is confident that once all the factual circumstances have been thoroughly reviewed, the investigation will clarify that there is no basis for criminal liability, and the case will be dismissed.” Rød-Larsen has apologised several times for the relationship he had with Epstein and in 2020 stepped down as chief executive of IPI, a thinktank. A prince, an ambassador, senior diplomats, top politicians. All brought down by the Jeffrey Epstein files. And all in Europe, rather

than the United States. The huge trove of Epstein documents released by the U.S. Department of Justice has sent shock waves through Europe’s political, economic and social elites — dominating headlines, ending careers and spurring political and criminal investigations. Former U.K. Ambassador to Washington Peter Mandelson was fired and could go to prison. British Prime Minister Keir Starmer faces a leadership crisis over the Mandelson appointment. Senior figures have fallen in Norway, Sweden and Slovakia. And, even before the latest batch of files, Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor, brother of King Charles III, lost his honors, princely title and taxpayer-funded mansion. Apart from the former Prince Andrew, none of them faces claims of sexual wrongdoing. They have been toppled for maintaining friendly relationships with Epstein after he became a convicted sex offender. “Epstein collected powerful people the way others collect frequent flyer points,” said Mark Stephens, a specialist in international and human rights law at Howard Kennedy in London. “But the receipts are now in public, and some might wish they’d traveled less.” The documents were published after a public frenzy over Epstein became a crisis for President Donald Trump’s administration and led to a rare bipartisan effort to force the government to open its investigative files. But in the U.S., the long-sought publication has not brought the same public reckoning with Epstein’s associates — at least so far. Rob Ford, a professor of political science at the University of Manchester, said that in Britain, “if you’re in those files, it’s immediately a big story.” It suggests to me we have a more functional media, we have a more functional accountability structure, that there is still a degree of shame in politics, in terms of people will say: “This is just not acceptable, this is just not done,” he said. U.K. figures felled by their ties to Epstein include the former Prince Andrew — who paid millions to settle a lawsuit with one of Epstein’s victims and is facing pressure to testify in the U.S. — and his ex-wife Sarah Ferguson, whose charity shut down this week. Like others now ensnared, veteran politician Mandelson long downplayed his relationship with Epstein, despite calling him “my best pal” in 2003. The new files reveal contact continued for years after the financier’s 2008 prison term for sexual offenses involving a minor. In a July 2009 message, Mandelson appeared to refer to Epstein’s release from prison as “liberation day.” Starmer fired Mandelson in September over earlier revelations about his Epstein ties. Now British police are investigating whether Mandelson committed misconduct in public office by passing on sensitive government information to Epstein. Starmer has apologized to Epstein’s victims and pledged to release public documents that will show Mandelson lied when he was being vetted for the ambassador’s job. That may not be enough to stop furious lawmakers trying to eject the prime minister from office over his failure of judgment. Experts caution that Britain shouldn’t be too quick to pat itself on the back over its rapid reckoning with Mandelson. said “there is something about parliamentary democracy,” with its need for a prime minister to retain the confidence of Parliament to stay in office, “that I think does help drive accountability. A few high-profile Americans have faced repercussions over their friendly ties with Epstein. Most prominent is former U.S. Treasury Secretary Larry Summers, who went on leave from academic positions at Harvard University late last year. Brad Karp quit last week as chair of top U.S. law firm Paul Weiss after revelations in the latest batch of documents, and the National Football League said it would investigate Epstein’s relationship with New York Giants co-owner Steve Tisch, who exchanged sometimes crude emails with Epstein about potential dates with adult women.

RSF drone attack kills 24 people fleeing fighting in central Sudan

Garmany: A drone attack by a paramilitary group has hit a vehicle carrying displaced families in central Sudan, killing at least 24 people, including eight children, a doctors’ group said on Saturday. The attack by the Rapid Support Forces took place close to the city of Er Rahad in North Kordofan province, according to the Sudan Doctors Network, which tracks the country’s war. The vehicle was transporting displaced people who fled fighting in the Dubeiker area, the group said in a statement. Among the dead children were two infants. Several others were wounded and taken for treatment in Er Rahad, which suffers from severe medical supplies shortages, like many areas in the Kordofan region, the statement said. The doctors’ group urged the international community and rights organisations to “take immediate action to protect civilians and hold the RSF leadership directly accountable for these violations” There was no immediate comment from the RSF, which has been at war against the Sudanese military for control of the country for about three years. Sudan was plunged into chaos in April 2023 when a power struggle between the military and the RSF exploded into open fighting in the capital, Khartoum, and elsewhere in the country, leaving tens of thousands dead and millions displaced. A drone attack on Friday on a World Food Programme (WFP) aid convoy in North Kordofan province killed one and wounded several others, said Denise Brown, the UN humanitarian coordinator in Sudan. Brown said the convoy was heading to deliver “life-saving food assistance” to displaced people in the city of El Obeid in North Kordofan when it was struck. The attack burned the trucks and destroyed the aid, she said “Attacks on aid operations undermine efforts to reach people facing hunger and displacement,” she said in a statement. Last week, a drone strike hit close to a WFP facility in the Blue Nile province, wounding a WFP worker, Brown said. Emergency Lawyers, an independent group documenting atrocities in Sudan, blamed the RSF for the attack, while the Sudan Doctors Network called it a “flagrant violation of international humanitarian law [which] amounts to a full-fledged war crime”. Massad Boulos, a US adviser for African and Arab affairs, condemned the attack on X and called for holding those responsible accountable. “Destroying food intended for people in need and killing humanitarian workers is sickening,”



he said. “The Trump administration has zero tolerance for this destruction of life and of US-funded assistance; we demand accountability.” The British minister for international development and Africa, Jenny Chapman, called the attack on the WFP convoy “disgraceful” “Civilians are starving,” she wrote on Saturday on X. “Aid workers and humanitarian operations bringing vital food should never be targeted.” In a strongly worded statement on Saturday, Saudi Arabia’s foreign ministry criticised the RSF for its recent drone strikes, including on the vehicle of displaced families, the WFP convoy and on a hospital in Kordofan that killed 22 people. The Saudi statement called for the RSF to stop its attacks on civilians and aid convoys, and called out foreign parties that continue to “deliver illegal arms, mercenaries and foreign fighters” — an apparent reference to the United Arab Emirates, which has been accused by rights groups and UN experts of arming the paramilitary group. The UAE has denied the accusations. In recent months, Kordofan has become a flashpoint in the war and the army managed to break the RSF siege of two major cities in the region earlier this year. The devastating war has so far killed more than 40,000 people, according to UN figures, but aid groups say that is an undercount and the true number could be many times higher. It created the world’s largest humanitarian crisis with more than 14 million people forced to flee their homes. It has fuelled disease outbreaks and pushed parts of the country into a famine that still spreads as the war shows no sign of abating. In a report released on Thursday, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) said famine was found in two more areas in the western region of Darfur where famine was confirmed for the first time in a displacement camp in August 2024. The report warned that acute malnutrition is expected to worsen in 2026, with a 13.5% increase in cases of acute malnutrition in children under five and pregnant and breastfeeding women — from 3.7 million children and women in 2025 to nearly 4.2 million in 2026. Severe acute malnutrition, the most dangerous and deadly form of malnutrition, is expected to increase to 800,000 cases, up 4% from 2025, it said. Mohamed Abdiladif, the country director for Save the Children in Sudan, said children were already dying from hunger-related causes in many parts of Sudan. “Every day we hear devastating stories of parents.

Gunmen kill 162 in west Nigeria attack

Kwara: Gunmen have killed at least 162 people in a village in Kwara state in western Nigeria, a Red Cross official has said, making it one of the deadliest attacks in recent months in the country, which has been plagued by interlinked security crises. Armed gangs — locally known as bandits — who loot villages and kidnap for ransom operate in swaths of the country, while jihadist groups are active in the north-east and north-west. Intercommunal violence is also prevalent in the central states. “Reports said that the death toll now stands at 162, as the search for more bodies continues,” Babaomo Ayo-deji, Kwara state secretary of the Red Cross, said, updating the earlier toll of 67. Earlier, a local lawmaker in the Kaiama region, Sa’idu Baba Ahmed, said between “35 to 40 dead bodies were counted” from the attack on Tuesday evening. The attack was confirmed by police, who did not provide casualty figures, and the state government, which blamed it on “terrorist cells”. “Many others escaped into the bush with gunshot,” Ahmed said, adding that more bodies could be found. The gunmen invaded Woro village about 6:00 pm (1700 GMT) on Tuesday and set “shops and the king’s palace ablaze”, said Ahmed. He added that the traditional king’s whereabouts were unknown. Kwara state governor AbdulRahman AbdulRazaq condemned the attack as “a cowardly expression of frustration by terrorist cells following the ongoing counter-terrorism campaigns in parts of the state”. The Nigerian military has intensified operations against jihadists and armed bandits, with the army making regular claims of killing huge numbers of fighters. Last month, the military said it had launched “sustained coordinated offensive operations

against terrorist elements” in Kwara state and achieved notable successes. Local media reported that the army had “neutralised” 150 bandits, a term used to mean killed. “They successfully neutralised ... terrorists, while others managed to escape into the forest,” the army said in a statement on 30 January, adding it had cleared their hide-outs. “Troops also stormed remote camps hitherto inaccessible to security forces where several abandoned camps and logistics enablers were destroyed significantly degrading the terrorists’ sustenance capability,” it added. In response to the myriad insecurity woes, local authorities in Kwara state imposed curfews in certain areas and had closed schools for several weeks before ordering them to reopen on Monday. Insecurity in Africa’s most populous country has been under intense scrutiny in recent months since US president, Donald Trump, alleged a “genocide” of Christians in Nigeria. The claim has been rejected by the Nigerian government and many independent experts, who say the country’s security crises claim the lives of both Christians and Muslims, often without distinction. Over the weekend, killing at least 30 Palestinians, including those who were seeking shelter in tent cities. Former President Bill Clinton has been compelled by Republicans to testify before Congress about his friendship with Epstein. Trump, too, has repeatedly faced questions about his ties to Epstein. Neither he nor Clinton has ever been accused of wrongdoing by Epstein’s victims. The Epstein files reveal the global network of royals, political leaders, billionaires, bankers and academics that the wealthy financier built around him.

Walking in the Lake District drizzle rewired my head’: readers’ life-changing trips

I did a circuit of the Old Man of Coniston in the Lake District on a grey, drizzly weekday in October and it quietly rewired my head. I’d been running on always-on mode, and that climb forces you to slow down and breathe properly. From the Coppermines valley up to the ridge, then along the rocky summit and back via Goat’s Water, it’s rugged without being showy. The weather kept the crowds away, and the low cloud made the tarn feel like a secret. I came home muddy, soaked and weirdly calm, and started making space for long walks again.

I binned the car after cycling in Italy

A couple of years ago, after turning 60 and retiring, I invested in a simple but nice bicycle, and participated in a “silver Giro d’Italia”, organised by a cycling club in Milan. I met like-minded people from all over Europe and we followed our own mini tour – starting from Milan’s cathedral down to Pisa, ending with a route along the coast and around the famous tower. We stopped at wonderful trattorias along the way for pasta-fuelled lunches and slept in simple hotels. The experience motivated me to sell my car and use my bike to get around – it’s been a brilliant move. I am fitter and better off. I’ve done a favour to myself and the environment.

Volunteering raised my horizons

The British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) ran very popular working holidays doing environmental conservation in the 1980s – hedge-laying, walling, scrub-bashing in the UK and exciting wildlife adventures such as tracking wolves in Slovakia. Volunteers ranged from teenagers to pensioners, some employed and some



signing on every week. My first experience was building a footbridge and hanging some farm gates in a remote part of Devon. We slept on the floor of the local village hall, cooked our own meals and had a shower in a sports centre midweek. Teamwork and friendship blossomed over the week and I exceeded my wildest expectations of what could be achieved with largely unskilled honest labour. BTCV changed its name to the Community Volunteers in 2012 and I continue to volunteer with a local group that is a member of TCV’s community network, still getting scratched and sore but

revelling in the company and continually amazed by what gets done.

Seasick captain gave me a North Sea adventure

Crossing the North Sea when I was 16 in 1962, I crewed on a small wooden yacht sailing overnight from Belgium to the Suffolk coast. The wind increased and the waves got higher. The skipper stayed below with severe sea sickness until dawn. The seas got bigger and then I was looking up at them breaking over me while I steered alone by the compass. I tied myself in the open cockpit with two ropes. At last there ahead was the Southwold lighthouse flashing a

welcome beam. My adventure had included fear and uncertainty. But learning some tenacity and perseverance was a life-changing experience.

Alpine yoga and hikes in Austria

Desperate for an exciting winter break we ended up choosing MoaAlm near Kals am Großglockner in Austria. Beyond MoaAlm’s superb vegan food we discovered authentic Austrian warmth as locals greeted us in their villages. Sophie’s yoga classes transformed our practice, especially sun salutations as dawn light flooded the mountain-view studio. I had one of the best mountain hikes of my life

climbing to the snowfields and culminating in views across to the distant Dolomites. For my wife, it was a chance to rediscover her love of skiing with one on one tuition. The holiday was with Weareactive.

Hospitality and kindness in Florence

The Florentine night sky exploded with noise and colour, as I celebrated the San Giovanni festival in June with hundreds of excited locals. After a bereavement, I booked a three-week Italian language course through Apple Language Courses, opting to stay with a local host family. During that time, I immersed myself

in learning the enchanting language, spending my free time admiring Botticellis at the Uffizi, daydreaming by the River Arno with its terracotta reflections, consuming my body weight in gelati and experiencing some sorely needed Florentine hospitality and kindness. I returned from my Italian adventure with my heart soothed and something that money cannot buy ... hope.

Children’s joy on a road trip in France

Our first road trip as a family ignited a love of France and travel in our sons. A drive to the Loire valley, via an exciting ferry crossing, and a wildflower

meadow in which to eat our picnic and stretch our legs. Then there was the wonder of our “tiny” house (a mobile home on a campsite). There was daily swimming, endless seafood and pain au chocolat. We planned and executed it on an absolute shoestring but realising that the smaller parts of travel, which as adults we take for granted, can be awe-inspiring for children was our biggest and most valuable lesson.

Scandinavia with my daughter

I travelled to Scandinavia with my adult daughter on a backpacking trip and came home changed. In Stockholm the Abba Expe-

rience turned singing badly into pure joy. In Gothenburg we slowed down and did some vintage shopping, enjoyed the green spaces and had some long cafe stops, which created space for real conversation. In Copenhagen we walked everywhere – from the lights of Tivoli Gardens to the cool Meat-Packing district, the city rewards curiosity. Travelling with my daughter stripped away old roles and reminded me the best journeys aren’t just defined by where you go, but by who you travel with. Ask someone you love to come with you; it will make your trip unforgettable.

Serenity in Croatia

My sailing holiday in Croatia was truly serene, with breathtaking scenery at every turn. From crystal-clear waters to dramatic coastlines, every island felt beautiful in its own way. Exploring the islands revealed an incredible diversity of landscapes and atmospheres. The cities of Split and Dubrovnik were especially memorable, rich with history, charm and timeless beauty. Wandering their ancient streets and coastal views made the experience unforgettable and deeply inspiring.

Backpacking in Colombia taught me to improvise

Sometimes it’s things going wrong that change you most. I went backpacking through Latin America at 26, organised and needing everything to go to plan. In Mocoa, where the Colombian Amazon tangles with the Andes, thick jungle clings to steep green mountains, with monkeys calling from the canopy. I did not speak Spanish, had no phone signal and did not bring enough cash for the bus, but the kindness of strangers got me where I needed to be. I learned you don’t need to plan everything, and I sleep much better for it.

Angelina Jolie Opens Up On Breast Cancer Surgeries: ‘Scars Are Proof Of Living Fully’

Hollywood star Angelina Jolie has once again spoken publicly about her breast cancer scars, describing how they serve as reminders of strength and intention. In a recent interview with French radio outlet France Inter, the 50-year-old actor reflected on her journey after undergoing preventive surgeries, including a double mastectomy in 2013.

Scars as proof of living fully

Jolie shared that she has always been more interested in the scars people carry and the experiences behind them. She said she sees her scars as proof of living fully and making tough but necessary decisions when needed. “Well, I’ve always been someone more interested in the scars and the life that people carry”, she said, explaining that she has never believed in the idea of a flawless life. Jolie stated that she doesn’t believe in the idea of a “perfect” life without any struggles or scars. She explained that these scars were her personal choice to protect her health so that she could spend more time with her children. “I’m not drawn to some perfect idea of a life that has



on o
scars,”
Jolie said during the conversation. “So no, I think, hey, you know, I see my scars are a choice I made to do what I could do to stay here as long as I could with my children,” she added.

Angelina Jolie on her life choices

Angelina Jolie, long an advocate for cancer awareness, made the decision to undergo preventive surgeries after seeing her mother, Marcheline Bertrand, battle ovarian cancer for many years before passing away in 2007 at the age of 56. She said her personal experience made her more aware of hereditary cancer risks and motivated her to take such a step in her life. Earlier, speaking to TIME France, Jolie explained that sharing her scars is part of spreading aware-

ness about breast cancer. She said that seeing other women share their own scars is very moving to her, and by sharing hers, she hoped to join them in creating “I share these scars with many women I love and I’m always moved when I see other women share theirs,” she said. “I love my scars because of that, you know, and I’m grateful that I had the opportunity to have the choice to do something proactive about my health. I lost my mom when I was young, and I’m raising my children without a grandmother,” Jolie added.

From Late Nights to Feeling Yourself Again: A Galentine’s Party Checklist

This year, Galentine’s Day falls on a Friday, making it the perfect time to go out with your girlfriends and enjoy a night filled with love, laughter and maybe a few drinks. These nights are a celebration of your girls, and they tend to run well into the night. A great dinner, good music, and that one extra drink no one planned for. Conversations stretch, and the clock stops being a priority. But if you have Valentine’s Day plans the next day, it is important to look refreshed and your best for a full day filled with that perfect someone. And the secret to feeling fresh the next day is a few smart basics handled right before your head hits the pillow. You don’t need an elaborate fix; just a quick routine to handle before you call it a night.

Hydration Basics

Hydration tends to get overlooked after late nights, but it is the foundation of recovery. Drinking water before bed is vital because it helps the body flush out toxins and restores the cellular balance disrupted by alcohol or lack of sleep. Keeping a water bottle on your nightstand ensures you can take those final sips to re-energize your system from the inside out and fight off dehydration while you sleep.

The Recovery Pouch

Keeping a small pouch with essentials like a rehydration sachet, hand sanitiser, and a pack of PartySmart gummies can help. These safe, effective gummies made with 100% natural actives help prevent the after-effects of the night, so you can wake up without a hangover the next morning. Take it before you party or right before you go to bed to ensure you’ve done the necessary to stay fresh the next day.

The Nightly Reset

Keep micellar water or wipes by your bedside for a quick reset that avoids skin irritation. Removing your makeup before bed prevents clogged pores and lets your

skin recover while you sleep. For a quick fix, keep micellar water or a small packet of makeup wipes right by your bed for those nights when a full sink wash feels like too much effort. Always remember to remove makeup before you sleep to avoid waking up with irritated or breakouts.

The Cooling Moisture Reset

A lightweight aloe vera gel helps soothe skin that feels tired or puffy. Apply this right after removing your makeup to lock in moisture overnight. Its non-sticky texture absorbs quickly and works well around the eye area. Follow it up with a light moisturiser. Keeping the gel in your routine adds a refreshing layer that calms the skin instantly. This final step ensures you wake up with a face that feels hydrated and recovered.

These quick steps handle the essentials before you call it a night, making the recovery effortless. It’s the easiest way to reset so you can wake up feeling refreshed and ready for whatever the next day brings.



Wife Sutapa Sikdar reveals that O’Romeo was initially offered to Irrfan



Mumbai: Filmmaker Vishal Bhardwaj posted an emotional Instagram comment the day before O’Romeo debuted, reminiscing on his journey, creative challenges, and the powerful emotions that influenced his most recent work. He received words of encouragement from the profession as well as from Sutapa Sikdar, his close friend and colleague and the wife of actor Irr-

fan Khan.O’Romeo was originally called Sapna Didi, and the director had approached Irrfan Khan with the idea, according to Sutapa Sikdar’s remark on Vishal Bhardwaj’s post. Sutapa Sikdar wrote, “Aap-ko bahut bahut Mubarak! Bahut Pehle aapne yeh sapna dekha tha tab iss ka naam sapna didi tha. Aap-ka Sapna Pura hua Aar aap sapne dekhte dekhte Romeo ban gaye!! Aap ko

salaam aur Duniya mein Zulm Khatam hone ka Sap-na dekhte rehna chahiye! In his note, Vishal Bhardwaj expressed pride in the film O’Romeo, commending the dedication of his team and HODs for their vision, integrity, and commitment to his artistic vision. He reflected on the film’s emotional depth, revealing how it helped him address his internal conflicts related to love and violence. Bhard-

waj noted that feelings of powerlessness in the face of societal injustice inspired the violent aspects of his protagonist, who acts out against the emotional turmoil he feels.

Despite the darkness, he emphasized the power of love as an equally intense force in his life, shaped by his experiences with compassionate individuals. He described O’Romeo as the most complete version of himself as a filmmaker, encapsulating his artistic extremes—massive, poetic, violent, and loving. Concluding, he shared his fulfillment from the filmmaking journey regardless of its box office success and quoted poet Dr. Basheer Badr, suggesting a hopeful outlook towards the future. O’Romeo, starring Shahid Kapoor alongside a notable ensemble cast, released in theaters on February 13 and received an ‘A’ certificate from the Central Board of Film Certification.

According to Rajkumar Hirani, he intends to use AI to create a movie



Mumbai: Filmmaker Rajkumar Hirani wants to embrace AI as a creative ally rather than see it as a danger to the industry. The director recently disclosed that he intends to use AI to create a short film, stating that he already has a “good” tale he wants to use the technology to tell.The filmmaker stated in an interview with Variety India that he would like to use artificial intelligence (AI) to create a short film. He disclosed that he has al-

ready identified a narrative he wishes to convey with artificial intelligence and will shortly bring his idea to life. ”I want to make a short AI video since I get really enthused about AI things sometimes. Therefore, AI is going to be a really useful tool, and we should start getting to know it soon. It is a fantastic tool that is here to stay. It’s not necessary to use it or create an entirely AI movie. But fill that up with a lot of things that we

were unable to do before. It’s going to be economical. Furthermore, creating a fully AI movie is not simple. Well, we won’t be visiting the sets, but it’s just as consuming. Making a whole AI movie is a lot of work,” Hirani remarked. The director added, “AI is going to be a great tool. I am planning to do a short, 4-5 minutes, film. Because I have a story to tell, and second, I feel I can learn that way the best. So, while I’m writing, I’ll do that in the next few months. I have a good story. I’ll have something interesting.” His comment, however, immediately provoked a social media discussion, with some wondering why AI is being used to tell stories in the first place and others wondering whether this is how movies will develop in the future.One said, “AI is a curse to creativity,” while another said, “What a sad waste of sheer talent.” “AI can’t and should not replace human creativity

and art,” one response said. Dunki, Hirani’s final film as director, came out in 2023. Shah Rukh Khan addressed the delicate subject of illegal immigration to the big screen in Dunki. The film told the touching story of four friends—Manu, Sukhi, Buggu, and Balli—who want to move to London in order to live a better life, but who must first endure a difficult but transformative journey to get there. The movie was released on December 21, one day prior to the release of Salaar: Part 1 - Ceasefire, starring Prabhas. Taapsee Pannu was also featured. It was also revealed last year that Hirani and actor Aamir Khan would be working together again on a biopic about Dadasaheb Phalke, the Father of Indian Cinema. After PK (2014) and 3 Idiots (2009), this feature film will be Aamir and Hirani’s third joint venture. The project has not yet released any additional details or updates.

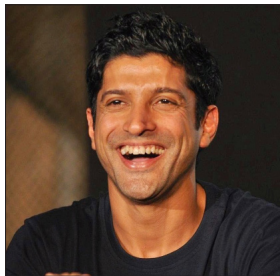
Sunny Deol remembers Dharmendra

Mumbai: Sunny Deol, an actor, has had a stellar run over the last three years. Jaat had a respectable box office result after Gadar 2 became a smash, and now Border 2 is making tremendous sums of money.Sunny thanked his followers for their love and unwavering support during the Border 2 victory press conference on Thursday. Calling him Sunny Deol 2.0, one of the reporters lauded Sunny’s incredible comeback to the public eye. Sunny responded, “I don’t know where it was hiding all these years,” saying, “Itne saal pata nahi kahan chupa hua tha.” It’s very charming. I simply want to tell everyone to work hard, love what you do, stay positive, and remember that time is something you never know when it will come or leave, but you should be prepared for it.He attributed all of his accomplishments to God’s favor and his late father, actor Dharmendra. “Yeh sab mere papa ki blessings and Waheguru di meher hai,” meaning that everything is due to God’s grace and my father’s blessing.The people still love me today, just as they did in the past. I get so much affection everywhere I go,” he continued. Inspired by the actual events of the 1971 India-Pakistan War, Border 2 was launched on January 23 and shows how the Army, Navy, and Air Force work as a single unit. Sunny Deol returns in uniform as a result.In its first week of release, the movie brought in ₹224.25 crore, while in its second week, it brought in ₹70.15 crore. Border 2 earned ₹2.85 crore on day 15 and ₹5.25 crore on day 16. According to preliminary estimates, the movie made ₹6.59 crore nett on day 17 in India. In India, Border 2 has brought in ₹309.09 crore nett thus far. It currently generates ₹361.94 crore in domestic gross revenue from 84985 shows.Varun Dhawan, Diljit Dosanjh, Ahan Shetty, Mona Singh, Sonam Bajwa, Anya Singh, Pranav Vashisht, and Medha Rana all play important parts in the war drama. Border 2 is a follow-up to the popular 1997 film of the same name. J P Films and T-Series support it. The events of the Battle of Longewala during the 1971 India-Pakistan war served as the basis for the 1997 movie, but the same fight also serves as the setting for Border 2.In addition, Varun Dhawan, Ahan Shetty, and Diljit Dosanjh play important parts in the movie.

In Sam Mendes’s The Beatles films, Farhan Akhtar plays Ravi Shankar, marking his Hollywood debut

Mumbai: Farhan Akhtar, an actor and filmmaker, will shortly make his big Hollywood debut. He will appear in the ambitious four-part biography of the legendary band The Beatles directed by Sam Mendes.

Farhan will portray Pandit Ravi Shankar, the famous Indian classical musician who welcomed the Beatles during their 1970s trip to India and was a close friend of the band.A new casting announcement for The Beatles: A Four-Film Cinematic Event was released by Sony Pictures on Thursday. Farhan, who was supposed to play Ravi Shankar, was one of them. Furthermore, the release revealed that Harry Lawtey will play Stuart Sutcliffe, the first drummer of The Beatles; Morfydd Clark



would play Cynthia Powell, John Lennon’s first wife; and Lucy Boynton would play Jane Asher, Paul McCartney’s fiancée. Farhan’s first overseas film project will be this one. He made a cameo in the Disney+ series Ms. Marvel, which debuted in 2022, marking his first appearance in an American television program. No information has been released regarding Farhan’s start date for filming.The lives of the four individuals that made

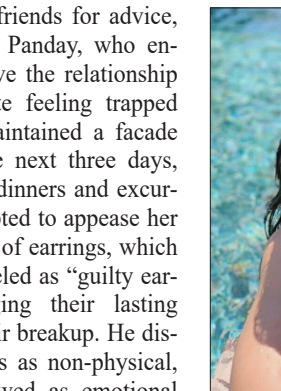
up the most well-known and influential pop band in history are chronicled in the four-part film The Beatles. The four movies are all filmed from the viewpoint of one of the Fab Four. Barry Keoghan plays Ringo Starr, Joseph Quinn plays George Harrison, Paul Mescal plays Paul McCartney, and Harris Dickinson plays John Lennon in the movies. The supporting cast of the movies is equally excellent. Anna Sawai will play Yoko Ono, James Norton will play Brian Epstein, and Saoirse Ronan will play Linda McCartney. Harry Lloyd plays producer George Martin, Mia McKenna-Bruce plays Maureen Starkey, and Aimee Lou Wood plays Pattie Boyd.Mendes stated when the project was originally revealed that he wanted

to add something fresh to the big-screen experience and was “honored” to portray the tale of one of the greatest bands in music history. ”I’m thrilled to be narrating the tale of the greatest rock group of all time, and I’m thrilled to question the idea of what a moviegoing experience is,” Mendes said in a statement.Jack Thorne, Peter Straughan, and Jez Butterworth wrote the movies. By the end of this year, shooting should be finished, and then there will be a lengthy post-production timeline. Filming is now in progress, with a global release date of April 2028.The movies, which are directed by Sam Mendes, are made by Apple Corps, Neal Street Productions, and Sony Pictures Entertainment.

Shanaya Kapoor reveals that her ex-boyfriend cheated on her during foreign vacation

Mumbai:Actress Shanaya Kapoor shared a personal story about a traumatic moment in her past relationship during her appearance on the podcast Relationship Advice. While on vacation with her ex-boyfriend, she believed she was in a perfect relationship until an incident led her to discover he was communicating with five other women. The situation unfolded when Shanaya borrowed his phone to order a taxi and noticed a message from his ex-girlfriend. Upon investigating further, she found explicit conversations with multiple women, indicating he was behaving as if he were single. Shocked, Shan-

aya reached out to friends for advice, particularly Ananya Panday, who encouraged her to leave the relationship immediately. Despite feeling trapped abroad, Shanaya maintained a facade of normalcy for the next three days, even during shared dinners and excursions. Her ex attempted to appease her by gifting her a pair of earrings, which she humorously labeled as “guilty earrings,” acknowledging their lasting presence despite their breakup. He dismissed the messages as non-physical, which Shanaya viewed as emotional cheating, a significant violation of trust. Currently, she is promoting her film Tu



Yaa Main, set to release alongside another film, O Romeo.



Yaa Main, set to release alongside another film, O Romeo.

Shivram and Anveera are the twins of Ram Charan and Upasana Konidela



Mumbai: Ram Charan and Upasana Konidela welcomed twins—a boy and a girl—on January 31, revealing their names as Shivram and Anveera Devi during a private naamkaran ceremony at their Hyderabad home.

In an interview with Variety India, the couple discussed the personal and spiritual significance behind the names, emphasizing their cultural roots. Shivram, sharing connections to both Lord Shiva and Lord Rama,

represents devotion and justice, while also honoring Ram’s father, Shiv Shankar Vara Prasad. Anveera Devi symbolizes boundless bravery and divine femininity, with “Veera” meaning courage and “Devi”

denoting strength. Upasana reflected on her experience of motherhood, noting that she feels more at ease this time around, having learned to focus on consistency, routine, and love for her children. Both parents expressed gratitude for their growing family, with Ram stating, “I feel so grateful to have been blessed with three children,” and highlighting the importance of raising resilient and responsible children. The couple had sought guidance from an astrologer for the twins’ due dates and engaged an alchemist for blessings prior to their birth. Ram and Upasana have known each other for years prior to their marriage in June 2012, and their first child, daughter Klin Kaara, was born in June 2023.

The Bishnoi gang targets Ranveer Singh and threatens to hurt his employees

Mumbai: Ranveer Singh has received another threat, this time from someone claiming to be connected to the Bishnoi gang, only days after a menacing note appeared on his phone. The anonymous man is heard telling actor and filmmaker Rohit Shetty in the terrifying audio message that their “entire staff” will be attacked and killed if they don’t pay attention to them and do as they say. Ranveer Singh was threatened again on Friday, this time by the Bishnoi gang, who threatened to “hurt” his entire staff if he did not “fall in line.” The actor received the threat via a voicemail from an unidentified individual purportedly connected to the Bishnoi gang. The caller also warns filmmaker Rohit Shetty in the voice message that if he does not “fall in line,” there will be dire repercussions. ”If you two don’t fall in line in time, we will deal with you in such a way that your seven generations will remember it,” a man can be heard stating in the voice note. You enjoy offering advice, Ranveer Singh, and you did just that, no issues. You advised folks to go to the police station and submit an application. Now pay attention to what I’m saying: we have all of the information about everyone who works under you, including your manager and all of the



employees, including their residences, where they go to work, when they return, and where their families reside. We’ll start focusing on them instead of talking to you. At that point, you will realize your mistake. The man can be heard in the voice message accusing Ranveer of breaking a pledge and warning him to keep his word or face dire repercussions. But he doesn’t say exactly what he’s talking about. ”Ranveer Singh, you made a statement and then broke it. I’m leaving you this voicemail because of this: either you keep your word or we’ll show you the consequences of breaking it. You and Rohit Shetty, take a seat and pay close attention. And I’m telling everyone in Bollywood as well: anyone we call needs to get in line on time. In the audio note, the man says, “If you don’t, you’ll see what we do to all of you later.” Following the

actor’s purported receipt of a menacing voicemail on WhatsApp last week, in which the caller allegedly demanded lakhs, Ranveer and his wife Deepika Padukone quickly increased security outside their Mumbai home.The couple has sent armed personnel outside their home, according to an official letter from the housing complex to the Dadar Police Station. According to the letter that was issued to the police station, the couple had sent out six armed security guards without the Society Managing Committee’s “permission.” The letter further notes that the two actors are stationed alongside another uniformed police officer. An Indian report According to Today, security outside Ranveer’s home was promptly increased when he notified the Mumbai Police of the extortion threat. In the meantime, the cops started looking into the situation.

Out of the rs. 5 crore debt, Rajpal Yadav has already paid rs. 2.5 crore

Mumbai: Rajpal Yadav doesn’t appear to be getting any help anytime soon. The actor’s counsel stated that Rajpal has already paid ₹2.5 crore towards the disputed amount and is willing to deposit more after the Delhi High Court postponed the actor’s bail application to February 16 in the ongoing check bounce case.Following the hearing, Bhaskar Upadhyay, Rajpal’s attorney, addressed the reporters outside the court to clarify a few points regarding the case. According to the lawyer, the actor has already paid ₹2.5 crore of the ₹5 crore he owed for the movie. Bhaskar emphasized that commitments alone shouldn’t be the basis for incarceration in these situations. ”On the basis of an undertaking alone, no one should be put in jail. We informed the court that we would meet him in jail

and take orders if this was solely a financial issue. We attempted to talk to him in jail today, but it was unsuccessful. To find out the court’s position on the earlier undertaking, we shall meet with him in person. In Hindi, he stated, “If we pay the money, the matter will be treated as a settlement and not be argued on merit.” ”The initial ₹5 crore turned into ₹11 crore,” the lawyer went on. In this scenario, we have already paid ₹2.5 crore. We presented a cheque for ₹25 lakh today, and around ₹1 crore had already been placed with the register. We are prepared to deposit any aid that we get with the court. On that front, there are no significant problems. What the court rules on Monday is the only question left. On February 5, Rajpal Yadav turned himself in at Tihar Jail after the Delhi High

Court refused to give him additional time in cases involving long-pending check bounces. In relation to the cases, the actor, who starred in movies like Mujhse Shaadi Karogi, Waqt, Phir Hera Pheri, Partner, Bhool Bhulaiyaa, Hungama, and Chup Chup Ke, faces responsibility of around ₹9 crore.In order to finance his directorial debut, Ata Pata Laapata (2012), Rajpal borrowed ₹5 crore from Delhi-based Murali Projects Pvt Ltd in 2010. This is when the case began. A financial dispute and significant damages resulted from the movie’s commercial failure. A sessions court in 2019 maintained the actor’s 2018 conviction for check dishonour under the Negotiable Instruments Act, which resulted in a six-month jail sentence. In the end, the amount owed approached ₹9 crore.

A property dealer in Dehradun was shot dead 500 meters from the home of a senior police officer

Dehradun, Feb 13:Today in Dehradun, a 45-year-old stone-crusher operator and real estate dealer was shot and killed. The Senior Superintendent of Police's (SSP) home was only 500 meters away from the attack, which raises severe concerns about local security. This is the third murder in 11 days and the second in 48 hours. Unknown assailants shot and killed 45-year-old Vikram Sharma, a stone crusher and real estate broker, close to a movie theater at approximately 10:15 a.m. The assailants started shooting as he was exiting a gym. According to police, he was instantly killed by three bullets fired by the assailants. Sharma operated



a stone crusher company, according to Dehradun Superintendent of Police (City) Pramod Kumar. Following the shooting, the city was closely monitored, and roadblocks were erected in several places to track down the assailants. According to officials, Sharma might have been carrying a weapon because

he felt threatened. He was unable to utilize it, though, because of the assaults. Soon after the event, senior authorities arrived at the scene, including SSP Ajay Singh and IG Garhwal Rajeev Swaroop. The police are looking into every possibility. Police claim that over 50 cases, including more

than 20 murder cases, have been filed against Sharma in several states. According to preliminary investigations, the murder might be connected to rivalries, potentially including Jharkhandi gangs. Additionally, according to officials, Sharma had commercial ties in Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, and Uttarakhand. Prior to the incident, Sharma had called Saurabh Singh, a close friend, and requested that they meet close to the gym. By the time he got there, Sharma had already been slain, Saurabh Singh said. Although Sharma was born in Kashipur, Uttarakhand, his family now resides in Dehradun.

Skywalk Connecting Nizamuddin Railway Station and Sarai Kale Khan RRTS Station finished

New Delhi, Feb 13: Finally, a skywalk connecting the Hazrat Nizamuddin railway station and the Sarai Kale Khan Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) station has been finished. To make the changeover easier for travelers, the 280-meter skywalk contains many travelators. With travelators, this is Delhi's first National Capital Region Transport Corporation (NCRTC) station. The skywalk's civil construction is finished. While the roof is being worked on, six travelators have been erected. By March, it should be open. In order to facilitate transitions between various forms of transportation, the skywalk is an essential piece of infrastructure for Sarai Kale Khan. It solves long-standing problems with pedestrian crowding, traffic jams, and the lengthy walks that were previously necessary to get to the transportation hub by constructing a dedicated



corridor.

One of the biggest stations along the 82.15-kilometer circuit is Sarai Kale Khan. In the upcoming years, it is anticipated to grow into a significant transportation hub that links Delhi with neighboring states and is built to accommodate large passenger loads. Sarai Kale Khan metro station (Pink Line), Hazrat Nizamuddin railway station, Veer Haq-

eqat Rai ISBT, and city bus services are the four main transportation hubs that are conveniently close by. On February 22, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath of Uttar Pradesh will officially open the last section of the corridor.

From Delhi's Sarai Kale Khan to Meerut's Modipuram, services will now run the entire distance.

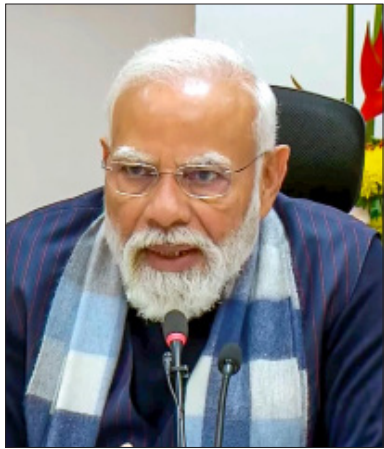
Along with the introduction, Meerut Metro services will start, enabling smooth transitions between the intra-city metro system and the fast Namoharath trains. With an estimated total cost of about Rs 30,000 crore, the project is anticipated to raise the proportion of public transportation on the Delhi-Meerut route from the present 37% to 63%.

PM Modi congratulates Tarique Rahman on his resounding victory

New Delhi, Feb 13: India would continue to support a democratic Bangladesh, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said Friday, congratulating Tarique Rahman, the head of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), on his party's resounding victory in the general elections. PM Modi expressed his "warm congratulations" to Rahman for leading the BNP to victory in a post on X. I want to express my sincere congratulations to Mr. Tarique Rahman for guiding the BNP to a resounding win in Bangladesh's legislative elections. The Prime Minister stated, "This victory demonstrates the confidence of the people of Bangladesh in your leadership." "India will keep advocating for a democratic, forward-thinking, and inclusive Bangladesh. I'm excited to collaborate with you to further our shared development objectives and fortify our complex relationship," he continued.

As the BNP won a majority in the parliamentary elections, PM Modi de-

livered his speech. According to media counts, the party had more than the 151 seats needed to establish the government. However, the final results have not yet been formally announced by the Election Commission. The BNP's media unit declared in a statement on X that the party would establish the next government after gaining a majority of seats. Elections were held to choose a new government to succeed Muhammad Yunus's temporary administration, which took power eighteen months ago after the Awami League rule fell in August 2024. The party of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was later dissolved. In the absence of Sheikh Hasina, who escaped to India and is still in exile, the election was generally perceived as a straight struggle between the BNP and its erstwhile ally, Jamaat-e-Islami. The 13th legislative elections were held in conjunction with a referendum on the July National Charter, an 84-point reform plan. Tarique Rahman would be the



first male prime minister of Bangladesh in 36 years if the BNP were to form the government.

Rahman has advised party members to forego victory rallies in favor of holding special prayers around the country. Rahman returned to Bangladesh in December after more than 17 years of self-exile.

The Rajasthan Royals will name Riyan Parag as their captain

New Delhi: The all-round player Riyan Parag is said to have impressed head coach Kumar Sangakkara the most during his interviews with possible candidates, and the Rajasthan Royals are about to appoint a new captain. The Assam cricket player's name has apparently been finalized by the management as the replacement for Sanju Samson, who was moved to the Chennai Super Kings (CSK) prior to the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026 auction, even though a formal announcement on the subject has not yet been made. Although the other candidates' names have not been made public, it is anticipated that Parag faced competition for the leadership position from individuals such as Ravindra Jadeja and Yashasvi Jaiswal. A few months ago, Jaiswal made his interest for the leadership position known in public. However, according to a rumor, the team has chosen Parag to be the captain for the time being. Parag will lead the Royals for the second time. When Sanju Samson was struggling with fitness issues, he captained the team for eight games. In four games, Parag averaged a solid 38.57, and he finished with

a career-high 95 against the Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) at Eden Gardens. However, in those eight games under his leadership, the team only managed to win two. The appointment of Riyan Parag, who is only 24 years old, represents one of the biggest changes in leadership in the Rajasthan Royals' history. Although many anticipated that the team would rely on the explosive Jos Buttler or the senior experience of recently signed Ravindra Jadeja, the management seems to have opted for continuity and long-term goals. An 11-year relationship with the Royals came to an end with Samson's departure. The squad continuously battled for play-off berths under his direction, making it all the way to the final in 2022. Ravindra Jadeja and Sam Curran arrived in Rajasthan as a result of the historic transaction that saw Samson join CSK.

Head coach Kumar Sangakkara's choice to support Parag indicates a willingness to center the team around a youthful, domestic core for the ensuing ten years, even though Jadeja was frequently mentioned as a possible captain.

The Aravalli Zoo Safari Plan from Haryana is rejected by the Supreme Court



New Delhi, Feb 13:The Supreme Court ruled on Thursday that "anyone will not be allowed to touch the Aravallis," preventing the Haryana government from submitting a comprehensive plan for a jungle safari until experts have defined what the "Aravalli range" is. When the bench analyzes the primary question on the Aravalli range, it will address the jungle safari issue, according to Chief Justice Surya Kant, Justices Joymalya Bagchi, and Vipul M. Pancholi. According to the Haryana counsel, the safari project's detailed project report (DPR) has been updated from 10,000 acres to more than 3,300 acres. According to him, their only request is to be permitted to submit the DPR for review to the centrally empowered committee (CEC). "We are not experts," the bench stated. The definition of Aravalli will be determined by the experts. We will not permit anyone to touch the Aravallis until the definition of the Aravalli range is finalized. According to CJI Kant, the Aravalli is a range that crosses numerous states and is not just in Rajasthan or Haryana. He said, "We will deal with this issue of safari with the main matter," but the Haryana government's attorney responded that the two issues were completely unrelated. When granting approval, the CEC can also be extremely discriminating at times. They will paint a really positive picture of these trees, animals, and woods if we allow it," the bench noted. According to CJI Kant, the safari project will be addressed after the expert group has given its opinion. The Haryana government's ambitious "Aravalli Zoo Safari project," which was dubbed the largest zoo-safari in the world, was put on hold by the top court in October of last year.

Barcelona loses to Atletico Madrid by a startling 4-0 Score

New Delhi: On Thursday, Atletico Madrid crushed Copa del Rey champions Barcelona 4-0 in the first leg of their matchup in the semi-finals. Following an early own goal by Eric Garcia that put Diego Simeone's team ahead, goals from Antoine Griezmann, Ademola Lookman, and Julian Alvarez gave Atletico a commanding advantage at the break. Atletico maintained their substantial lead over the record 32-time champions when Barca defender Garcia was sent off in the closing moments. They will take that lead into the second leg at Camp Nou on March 3.

Both teams blew big chances in the second half, with Garcia being sent off in the closing moments and Barca's Pau Cubarsi having a goal disallowed. Atletico managed to maintain a sizable lead over the record 32-time champions, which they will carry into the sec-



ond leg on March 3 at Camp Nou.

The Copa del Rey is Atletico's greatest chance to win a trophy this season because they are far behind in La Liga and don't have the caliber of a team that will likely advance far in the Champions League. In order to thoroughly destroy the Spanish champions in the first half, the Rojiblancos summoned their finest football of the season.

After seven minutes, Garcia's pass bobbed toward Joan Garcia and then under the goalkeeper's foot on the

uneven Metropolitan stadium pitch, giving the home team the lead. The ball crossed the line first, and Lookman rammed it back into the net for good measure, but it was recorded as an own goal by Eric Garcia. The Barca goalkeeper raced back towards his goal to try to save it. Griezmann, a former Barca striker, scored the second goal as Atletico relied on Giuliano Simeone and Lookman's speed to frequently break through the Catalans' high defensive line.

Barcelona's Fermin Lopez struck the crossbar, but it was one-way traffic, and Atletico almost scored a third when Jules Kounde cleared Alvarez's shot off the line. After a brilliant team move, Nigerian international Lookman eventually scored the third goal, and Simeone, the ecstatic Atletico coach, ran down the touchline to celebrate.

Team India Reveals Abhishek Sharma's Availability Against Pakistan

New Delhi: Abhishek Sharma, India's game-changing opener, may have been discharged from the hospital, but there are still questions around his availability for the crucial T20 World Cup group league match against Pakistan on February 15 in Colombo. After complaining of a high fever and stomach pain, Abhishek, who has a stomach ailment, had to stay in the hospital for a few days. After being discharged from a hospital in Delhi on Wednesday, Abhishek did not practice on Thursday while the Indian team went through the motions at the Kotla because he was still feeling a little under the weather. "From what I've heard, he appears to be in good health. He practiced today as well. Varun Chakravarthy, who was instrumental with the ball in the victory over Namibia, told me he was on his way. On Sunday, India will meet their bitter rivals, Pakistan, in Colombo. Additionally, there has been considerable weight loss, and it takes time to recover from a serious stomach virus and restore the stamina and strength necessary to play premier cricket. Suryakumar Yadav, the captain of India, had stated at the toss that Abhishek will be out for a game or two before fully recovering. According to captain Suryakumar



Yadav, "Abhishek isn't fine still, might take one or two games," giving ample clues that he might not start against Pakistan. In Abhishek's absence, Sanju Samson and Ishan Kishan opened. It is acknowledged that Abhishek's training session in Colombo would serve as a gauge of his development. He may be deemed fit if he bats for an extended period of time, as he typically does during routine nets. If one follows the India net sessions over the past year, Abhishek has batted several times, averaging between 75 and 90 minutes in a three-hour session. The Indian squad won both of its opening matches in the T20 World Cup 2026, defeating Namibia and the USA to take first place in Group A. They now only need to win once more to guarantee their spot in the Super Eight

round of the competition. But a lot of the initial talk about Sunday's big match against Pakistan in Colombo is focused on Abhishek Sharma's availability. Due to his ongoing recuperation from a stomach virus, the left-handed batter was unable to play in India's second World Cup match. According to reports earlier this week, Abhishek was ill and suffering from a high temperature during the tournament opener against the USA in Mumbai. He did not play in the second innings or participate in the handshakes after the game. After the crew arrived in Delhi, his condition deteriorated, and he was taken to a private hospital in the city. India did not immediately bring him back into the starting lineup after his discharge on Wednesday. However, Abhishek was in the dressing room for the

game against Namibia, which raised expectations that he will play in this weekend's big encounter against Pakistan at the R Premadasa Stadium. Suryakumar Yadav, the captain, virtually acknowledged that Abhishek might require more time to recuperate and might not start for Pakistan. At Thursday's toss, he stated, "Abhishek isn't fine yet, might take one or two games." Abhishek did not train on Thursday because he was still feeling weak. He had apparently lost some weight as a result of the stomach ailment, and in extreme situations, recuperation can be drawn out, particularly when it comes to restoring the power and stamina needed for elite cricket. Sanju Samson and Ishan Kishan opened the batting in his place. Nevertheless, teammate Varun Chakravarthy provided a divergent report following the game, rekindling speculation that Abhishek would still play against Pakistan. "From what I've heard, he appears to be in good health. He practiced today as well. Chakravarthy, who was instrumental with the ball in the victory over Namibia, told me he was on his way. Until India arrives in Colombo and conducts their first training session ahead of the high-stakes match, the rumors are probably going to keep going.

Guntas Kaur Sandhu tied 17th after Round 1 at Women’s Amateur Asia-Pacific Golf Championship in Thailand

Wellington: India’s Guntas Kaur Sandhu carded a one-under 71 at the Royal Wellington Golf Club in the New Zealand capital on Thursday to emerge as the best Indian at tied 17th position after the opening round of the Women’s Amateur Asia-Pacific, according to an IGU media release. The tournament is hosted by The R&A (Royal & Ancient, Scotland), the world governing body for the rules of golf, in association with the Asia-Pacific Golf Confederation (APGC). Part of the four-member team sent by the Indian Golf Union (IGU), Guntas began on a modest note with a bogey on the first hole before sinking birdies on the third, eighth and 12th holes. But a bogey on the 15th hole pegged her back. She trails the leader, Yunseo Yang of South Korea, by seven strokes.

Other Indians in fray, Ananyaa Sood (2-over 74; Tied 42nd), Zara Anand (7-over 79; Tied 66th) and Jia Kataria (9-over 81; Tied 75th) had a disappointing first round. Guntas Kaur Sandhu, ranked 545th in the world, had a remarkable domestic season, winning four times on the IGU circuit,



namely the Gujarat Ladies & Junior Girls Amateur, Eastern India Ladies & Junior Girls Amateur, Southern India Ladies & Junior Girls Amateur and the Maharashtra Ladies & Junior Girls Amateur Golf Championships. She finished third in the 2025 IGU All India Ladies & Junior Girls Amateur Championship. Speaking about her round, Guntas said, “Royal Wellington is a challenging parkland course. I attacked the flags from the start, but got mixed results

today. I will draw inspiration from some of my good performances on the domestic IGU circuit tomorrow. Looking forward to a memorable outing here.” The winner of World Amateur Asia-Pacific earns invitations to play in three major championships -- the AIG Women’s Open, the Amundi Evian Championship and The Chevron Championship. Among the other Indians in the 120-player field, Aditi Ashok finished with a flourish, birdieing her closing hole, the ninth, to post 1-under 71 and sit tied 70th. Pranavi Urs had a tougher day, carding 1-over 73 to be placed T-86, while Hitaashee Bakshi was level par with five.

Sania Mirza explains Next Set vision to empower women athletes and inspire change across India



Dubai: Indian tennis legend Sania Mirza has opened up about her initiative “Next Set,” which supports and empowers young women athletes across India, particularly in tennis. The initiative, designed to support India’s top and emerging women athletes, also aims to provide structured, professional backing to women already competing at a high level. Further, it aims to bridge the gap between talent and performance by creating a dependable ecosystem around promising athletes.

Speaking to ANI, Mirza said the idea stemmed from her own experiences of navigating the sport without a strong systemic support structure. The aim is to try to take the “Next Set” to the next level and help young athletes all over the country with different sports, but in

general, I felt like we needed some help coming our way in tennis. There are a lot of expectations, a lot of pressure, a lot of financial pressure, and all kinds of things,” the 39-year-old said. Highlighting the disparity in resources between Indian players and their international counterparts, the former Indian tennis player said that many young players struggle to afford essential support systems such as coaches, physiotherapists, and trainers. So what happens is they are competing against people who have multiple people travelling with them, along with really good support staff, and we are not able to afford it because there is no solid system helping these tennis players. I know the struggles that I went through, and hence that’s the reason I’ve been thinking about it, and we’ve

got some great people helping us, and we give them support,” she said.

Under the “Next Set” initiative, Mirza revealed that players will have access to a travelling support team, including a physio, coach, and trainer, during Indian tournaments. The program will also host multiple camps throughout the year, where Mirza herself will mentor athletes, share her experiences, and provide guidance—including financial assistance wherever possible. Right now, we have a physio, a coach, and a trainer travelling with them in the Indian tournaments, which are happening. And we’re going to try to provide that. We’re going to have multiple camps throughout the year, which I will be part of to share my experience and help them with any kind of financial stuff that we are able to do. And that is how the “Next Set” came into play, to give these young girls a platform to play on an equal field,” the former Indian tennis star said. Mirza also reflected on the limited facilities and support systems available to women athletes during her playing days, saying her initiative “Next Set” is designed to ensure the next generation does not face the same struggles. Mirza added that when she turned professional, structured backing in areas such as equipment, coaching teams, physios, and mental conditioning was either limited or difficult to afford. equipment, ntal conditioning was either limited.

Have worked on more speed and revs on the ball,” Varun Chakaravarthy reveals after training focus

Chakaravarthy credits overspin switch for success

New Delhi: India’s mystery spinner Varun Chakaravarthy on Thursday said he is reaping the rewards of consciously adding more pace and revolutions to the ball, an effort that has sharpened his effectiveness in T20 cricket.

The world’s top-ranked T20 bowler said he is constantly pushing himself to improve, whether by refining his existing deliveries or experimenting with new ones, after India registered a 93-run win over Namibia in the T20 World Cup. So I have definitely worked on few aspects of my bowling such as speed, speed and more revs. People do work on variations also, but I worked on perfecting my existing balls, so that helped a lot,” he said. In the past, Chakaravarthy has spoken about how switching to over spin from side spin contributed significantly to his success. He has taken 63 wickets in 38 T20Is at an impressive average of 15.19 and a frugal economy rate of 7.06. He was too good for the Namibian batters on Thursday night, finishing with three wickets in 12 balls. Such was his accuracy that he dismissed opener Louren Steenkamp with a googly off his very first ball of the match. Chakaravarthy also said he has worked on his



Follow-through, which has helped him extract more zip off the surface. As a bowler who is always looking to improve, he said he regularly works on adding new deliveries to his armoury. That has been my process. I have always had some delivery coming up. It’s up to me, if I am courageous enough, I will try it in the next match, but it depends,” he said. “There are few balls which just clicked for me in the matches, and there have been few variations which I have been trying for the last six years which did not come out,” he added. While not complaining, Chakaravarthy said he was surprised by the behaviour of the pitches in the first two games in Mumbai and Delhi.

Again, same, if you see the matches that we have played, the bilaterals leading up to this World Cup, they were

All very flat. This (Delhi) was definitely a little surprising, even the first match and this wicket also. But we have to adapt ourselves, whatever comes our way,” he said. Today also, it was keeping a bit low, but I wouldn’t say there was a lot of turn, but keeping low,” he pointed out. Chakaravarthy said dew could play a big role in Colombo, as it did on Thursday night. Dew does play a big factor when you are bowling second and if you have to defend, sometimes it will play a big factor. There was a lot of dew today also, but we were able to do well. But we are also experienced because we play a lot of Indian Premier League, we know how to bowl if the dew comes in,” he said ahead of the Pakistan game.

Giving credit to the opposition, Chakaravarthy said he was impressed with the tac-

tics and variations used by Namibia captain and spinner Gerhard Erasmus, who bowled round-arm at times and also from well behind the stumps. I would say he bowled very tactically. He was very great and I could see that the way they had planned their bowling, they had worked on it and there was a lot of thought behind it,” he said. “If you see the last four overs, their bowling, they had precise plans and they executed them. So, they did come up with good research and plan,” he added. The southpaw played another special knock on Thursday night against Namibia, a 24-ball 61, to fire India to 86 for one in the powerplay. The blitzkrieg came in Abhishek Sharma’s absence and led to India smashing their highest powerplay score in the history of T20 World Cup. In the quiet, cobbled streets of Lucca, Tuscany, the rhythm of Crishan Kalugamage’s life was long defined by the heat of a wood-fired oven. By day, he is a pizzaiolo — a man who stretches dough and perfects the blistered crust of a classic Margherita. But while his hands worked the flour, his mind was revisiting the dusty pitches of Negombo, Sri Lanka, and the wickets he was destined to take.

I-League rebranded as Indian Football League, with 10 teams confirming participation for new season

AIFF rebrands I-League, Indian Football League launched

New Delhi: The I-League has officially been rebranded as the Indian Football League, the All India Football Federation (AIFF) announced on Thursday, marking another structural shift in the country’s domestic football landscape. The decision was approved during an online meeting of the AIFF Executive Committee and will come into effect from the 2025–26 season. “The All India Football Federation’s Executive Committee, in an online meeting on Thursday, approved the rebranding of the I-League to the Indian Football League from the 2025-26 season,” the AIFF said in a post on its official X account.

The committee further ratified the charter for the Gov-



Erning Council of the Indian Super League and the Indian Football League,” the federation added. The move follows discussions held last month between AIFF officials and club representatives, where the proposal was first cleared. India’s top domestic competition was originally known as the National Football League (NFL) from 1996 to 2007,

Eefore being rebranded as the I-League. However, the launch of the Indian Super League in 2014 reshaped the domestic hierarchy, pushing the I-League into the second tier. The upcoming season — now under its new name — will be a truncated one, beginning on February 21. Ten teams have already confirmed participation: Dia-

mond Harbour, Real Kashmir, Gokulam Kerala, Rajasthan United, Dempo SC, Namdhari FC, Shillong Lajong, Sreenidi Deccan, Aizawl FC and Channari FC. Meanwhile, it is understood that the AIFF Executive Committee has rejected Churchill Brothers’ plea to be included in the ISL 2025–26 season.

The Goan club had initially been declared champions of last season’s I-League and promoted to the ISL. However, the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) later ruled that Inter Kashi were the rightful champions. The Varanasi-based club were subsequently promoted to the ISL. Churchill Brothers challenged the AIFF’s decision in the Delhi High Court, matpending.

Muzarabani becomes third Zimbabwe bowler with 100 T20I wickets, sets team’s best World Cup figures

Colombo: Pacer Blessing Muzarabani not only blessed Zimbabwe with a stunning victory over Australia in their ICC Men’s T20 World Cup clash but also became the third pacer from his team to enter the 100 T20I wicket club, alongside Richard Ngarva and Sikandar Raza. Muzarabani, Brad Evans and Brian Bennett starred in a massive victory for Zimbabwe over the 2021 T20WC champions, boosting their chances of a Super Eight qualification by giving them two victories in two matches. They still have to play Sri Lanka and Ireland in the remaining Group Stage fixtures. In the defence of 170 runs, Muzarabani bowled a spell he would remember for a lifetime, taking 4/17 in four overs, getting precious wickets of Josh Inglis, Tim David and half-centurion Matt Renshaw as well. In 85 T20Is, he has taken 100 wickets at an average of 21.08, with a four-wicket haul to his name and best figures coming today. Above him are Ngarva (111 wickets in 91 matches at an average of 20.96, with two four-fers)



And Raza (103 wickets in 129 matches at an average of 23.03, with two four-fers and a five-wicket haul). Also, Muzarabani’s spell is also the best bowling figures for Zimbabwe in a T20 World Cup match.

Coming to Zimbabwe’s T20 World Cup campaign, they have got off to a fine start with two wins in two matches, with four points, with wins over Oman and, on Friday, a stunning victory over Australia. Australia elected to field first, and Zimbabwe started off well with a 61-run partnership between Tadiwanashe Marumani (35 in 21 balls, with seven fours)

and Brian Bennett. Later on, a 70-run stand between Bennett (64 in 56 balls, with seven fours) and Ryan Burl (35 in 30 balls, with four boundaries) and skipper Sikandar Raza’s cameo of 25* in 13 balls, with two fours and a six, took Zimbabwe to 169/2 in 20 overs, with Marcus Stoinis and Cam Green getting a wicket each. In the run-chase of 170 runs, Australia lost their first four wickets for just 29 runs, but a 77-run stand between Glenn Maxwell (31 in 32 balls, with a four and a six) and Matt Renshaw (65 in 44 balls, with seven fours and a six) brought

Australia back in the hunt. However, Zimbabwe bowlers kept chipping away with regular wickets and bundled out Australia for 146 in 19.3 overs. Blessing Muzarabani (4/17 in four overs) and Brad Evans (3/23) were amongst the top bowlers for Zimbabwe, with Muzarabani getting home the ‘Player of the Match’ award. (ANI). Uncapped quick Newman Nyamhuri replaces injured pacer Blessing Muzarabani as Zimbabwe announced their 15-member squad for the upcoming T20I tri-series in Pakistan, which also features Sri Lanka. This series will be a preparations for all three teams for the upcoming ICC Men’s T20 World Cup, which will take place next year in India and Sri Lanka, as reported by ICC. The squad sees just one change from the group that recently faced Afghanistan in a home series. The player who misses out on the squad is Muzarabani, who has been ruled out due to a back injury, and Nyamhuri has been announced as his replacement for the series Zimbabwe Pakistan by ICC.

Kerala Blasters announce ISL 2025-26 squad

Kochi: Kerala Blasters FC have confirmed their squad for the forthcoming Indian Super League campaign, according to a release. Ahead of the new season, the club has shaped a refreshed group with an emphasis on balance, adaptability and responsible squad building. The roster reflects a mix of returning domestic players, emerging Indian talent and new foreign additions who are expected to strengthen key areas within the structure. Head Coach David Catala will work with a unit designed to grow together over the course of the competition. Continuity in several positions has been complemented by targeted changes, providing healthy competition for places and flexibility in approach. The squad has been assembled with an emphasis on continuity, internal growth and smart reinforcement across departments. The goal-keeping group will be led by Sachin Suresh and Arsh Shaikh, offering reliability along with strong competition for places. In defence, the experience of foreign centre back Oumar Bah, together with the leadership responsibilities carried by Indian U23 captain Bikash Yumngam, provides a stable framework while areas. The overall composition reflects the club’s intention to stay competitive development.

Small army runs Milan Cortina Games three veteran women lead smoothly

Milan: A small army keeps every Olympics running around the clock. At the Milan Cortina Winter Games, some of them are seasoned veterans dating back 20 years. About 18,000 volunteers are spread out across northern Italy, blanketing the venues in a sea of navy blue uniforms. The Associated Press this week interviewed three Italian women who are volunteering in Milan. Two of them volunteered for the 2006 Turin Games — Italy’s second time hosting the Winter Olympics — and the third worked for its local organizing committee. An example for her daughters Cristina Romagnoli traded her Italian heritage to be Irish for a few weeks in 2006. As a volunteer in the Alps west of Turin, she was assigned to Ireland’s athletes.

We were supporting the team almost 24 hours a day, and to thank the work of the volunteers they even invited us to parade with them during the closing ceremony,” she said. Romagnoli, then 25, has few photos from those Games — a time before iPhones — but treasures her pins, volunteer guide book and lunch vouchers as souvenirs. When the Milan Cortina Olympics were announced, she was ready for round two. In Milan, where she’s from, she’s volunteering at the short track speedskating venue. We might help



Them with their clothes, or with the maintenance of the arena’s protection cushions,” she said. “It is about giving our availability and support for the whole competition, for any need there might be either during the game and during the training sessions as well.” Romagnoli, now 45, is ready for her daughters, 10 and 11, to take the torch next. I wanted them to breathe what is really the Olympic spirit, the Olympic sports values,” she said. “I hope that when they will have the right age to participate, they will do it either in my place or together with me.” Angela Frisina was 50 when she volunteered in Turin. She felt caught in a never-ending cycle between work and home. So when a colleague suggested she apply for the Winter Games, she was intrigued. Born in Reggio Calabria but raised in Turin, she wanted to give back to her adopted hometown. She spent the Games at a hotel that hosted sponsors and delegations, her duties ranging

from giving them directions for the venues and gift shops to doling out restaurant tips. And the experience changed her life. I didn’t go to the cinema. Just work, son, home,” she told the AP. “And for me, these Olympic Games opened the window. The door!” She joined a Turin Olympics volunteer alumni group and has spent the next two decades giving her time across Italy, including at last year’s Vatican Jubilee and the Eurovision Song Contest in 2022. Now the 70-year-old nonna — “grandmother” in Italian — is volunteering as an usher, helping people find their seats at the women’s ice hockey arena in the Milan suburbs. She video chats with her 5-year-old grandson between shifts to tell him about the people she’s met. Even though she’s remained in Italy, Frisina says talking to tourists from countries near and far has broadened her horizons. Olivia Azzalini found love ahead of the Turin Olympics. She worked for the local organizing 2003.