

## Arunachal CM predicts NDA's continued rule in Assam



**Guwahati, Apr 04:** Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Saturday expressed confidence that the NDA is set for a third term in Assam. He said this while addressing a gathering in Sonapur Higher Secondary School Playground in support of AGP candidate Basanta Das from the Nawboicha (SC) constituency. "The energy at the Sonapur Higher Secondary School Playground today was incredible! The massive turnout sends a clear signal: the people are ready to bring the NDA back for a third term in Assam," he wrote on X. The Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister also underlined the close

ties between Arunachal Pradesh and Assam and said that the two states share a strong and interdependent relationship. The Chief Minister said that Arunachal's growth is closely linked to the contribution of Assam's people and reiterated commitment to their welfare. Apart from this, Khandu also addressed a gathering at Yuva Nagar in the newly created Ranganadi Assembly constituency, where he said the response reflected a shift in public mood. Khandu noted that longstanding boundary issues between the two states have seen progress towards resolution. Commenting on the double engine govern-

ment, Khandu opined that the BJP's presence at the Centre and in both states has enabled a stronger focus on infrastructure, security and development. Khandu also maintained that a dispute-free border and continued cooperation between the two states would help ensure stability and economic progress in the region. The Arunachal CM's confident projection of an NDA victory in Assam reflects both political momentum and public enthusiasm in the region. His statements highlight the alliance's emphasis on development, stability, and regional cooperation, which he believes will secure voter trust for another term.

## Funding freeze pushes Meghalaya's rural schools to brink of collapse

**Shillong, Apr 04:** Secondary schools across rural Meghalaya are staring at a collapse following a decade-long freeze on government grant-in-aid, the Meghalaya Schools Welfare Development Association (MSWDA) has informed. Since 2014, the state government has effectively stopped extending financial lifelines to newly established "permitted" secondary schools, the MSWDA claimed, prompting teachers to survive on a pittance, funded by meagre fees from rural parents who often struggle to afford basic necessities. MSWDA president HM Marbaniang said that while some schools receive "Science Grants," the government has failed to provide ad-hoc grants for general subjects. This policy gap leaves history, language, and social science teachers without state support, a move the association suggests prioritises STEM optics over the foundational stability of the teaching workforce.



"The funding crisis has led to a staffing emergency. Some schools are currently operating with only one or two teachers because all new recruitment has been halted. This neglect directly impacts examination results and the overall quality of education in rural and semi-urban areas," Marbaniang said. According to data provided by the association, there is a significant regional disparity when it comes to Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) schools. Out of 1,544 schools facing management bottlenecks and "No Objection Certificate" (NOC) disputes, 1,434 are located in the Kha-

si and Jaintia Hills, while only 10 are in the Garo Hills. This suggests a systemic bureaucratic hurdle specifically affecting the eastern part of the state. These "Non-NOC" issues often involve a tug-of-war between local communities, who built the schools, and a government seeking control without providing adequate funding. According to MSWDA, this tug-of-war has left schools stranded in limbo, unable to secure recognition or financial aid. Despite multiple memoranda submitted to the Education Minister and Chief Minister in 2025, the association claims it has received no positive response. The "Non-NOC" disputes often pit local communities—who built and manage

the schools—against a government seeking control without providing adequate funding. According to MSWDA, this tug-of-war has left schools stranded in limbo, unable to secure recognition or financial aid. Despite multiple memoranda submitted to the Education Minister and Chief Minister in 2025, the association claims it has received no positive response. The "Non-NOC" disputes often pit local communities—who built and manage

## Four underground cadres arrested in Tengenoupal

**Imphal, Apr 04:** Security forces arrested four cadres belonging to different underground outfits from Yangoubung village under Moreh Police Station in Tengenoupal district. They were identified as Keisham Suman-ta Meitei (25) (PLA) of Toubungkhok Awang Leikai, Imphal West district; Angom Somorjit Singh alias Nongsaba (32) (NRFM) of Kakching Khunou Awang Kshetri Leikai, Kakching district; Yumnam Naoba Singh alias Shinsangamba (26) KCP (MFL) of Gwalatabi Mamang Leikai, Imphal East district and Khundrakpam Shyamson Meitei alias Mang-anleiba (25) KCP (MFL) of Ukhongshang Mamang Leikai, Thoubal district. Meanwhile, security forces continued to conduct search operations and area domination in the fringe and vulnerable areas across districts. Movement of 276 vehicles carrying essential items along NH-37 was ensured. Strict security measures were taken up in all vulnerable locations and security convoy was provided in sensitive stretches in order to ensure free and safe movement of the vehicles. A total of 117 Nakas/Check points were installed in different districts, both in the hills and the valley, however none was detained.



## Cong demands postponement of Census exercise in Manipur

**Imphal, Apr 04:** The Manipur Congress today demanded that the Census exercise in the state be deferred until normalcy is restored and all internally displaced persons (IDPs) return to their native homes. Addressing a press conference at Congress Bhavan, state unit president Okram Ibobi Singh said conducting the Census amid the ongoing conflict would lead to inaccurate and unreliable data, as thousands of people remain displaced. "Many displaced Meitei residents from Kangpokpi and Churachandpur are currently staying at relief camps in Imphal valley, while Kuki residents from Imphal areas are staying in hill areas. Till they return to their original places, Census exercises should be deferred, else data would be inaccurate," Singh said. The former chief minister said the party was not opposing the Census but was concerned

about maintaining accurate data. "We are not raising objections to the Census exercise, but are concerned about maintaining appropriate data and figures," he said. He also questioned how house-listing would be conducted in conflict-affected areas. "There are claims of houses being completely destroyed during the ethnic conflict in Moreh, Churachandpur and other areas. How will house listings be conducted at such places as part of the Census exercise?" Singh said. Chief Minister Y Khemchand Singh had recently said the state government is making efforts to ensure a free and fair Census. His statement came amid rising public demands to delay the exercise until the National Register of Citizens (NRC) or a similar mechanism to identify illegal immigrants is implemented.

## Assam's football legend Gilbertson Sangma no more

**Guwahati, Apr 04:** Assam football legend Gilbertson Sangma passed away on Friday morning at the age of 70. He breathed his last at around 7 am at his Kahilipara residence in Guwahati. Widely regarded as the finest footballer to emerge from Assam, Sangma spent his entire domestic career representing his State and Assam Police. One of his defining moments came in 1981, when he scored the winning goal to help Assam Police lift the Bordoloi Trophy against Dempo SC. Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal and Assam Agriculture Minister Atul Bora, among others, have condoled his demise and offered condolences to his family. "Saddened to learn about



the demise of legendary footballer Gilbertson Sangma. He made outstanding contribution to Indian football and has been a great inspiration for the youth of the

Northeast," Sonowal said. "Assam has lost one of its finest footballers, Gilbertson Sangma. His brilliance on the field and dedication to the sport inspired countless young talents. An irre-

placeable loss to our sporting world," Bora wrote on X. A forward of consistency and influence, Sangma's 17-year career coincided with Assam's rise as a competitive force in domestic football, at a time when the landscape was largely dominated by Bengal and Kerala. In the 1974-75 season, he played a pivotal role in one of Assam's most memorable campaigns, scoring the goal that knocked out defending champion Kerala and propelled the team into the quarterfinals of the Santosh Trophy. Sangma also earned national recognition, representing India three times in 1975 in friendly matches against Indonesia and Thailand.

## Shija Hospitals conducts back-to-back kidney transplants in Agartala

**Imphal, Apr 04:** Shija Hospitals & Research Institute Pvt. Ltd. (SHRI), under its exclusive agreement with the Government of Tripura, has facilitated the first-ever back-to-back kidney transplants in Agartala. The procedures were conducted on March 30 and 31 at AGMC & GB Pant Hospital, taking the total number of kidney transplants under the programme in Tripura to seven. The transplants were carried out in coordination between the Shija transplant team and the team at AGMC & GB Pant Hospital, with continued clinical support and guided expertise contributing to the steady strengthening of local transplant capabilities. Dr. Somorendro Paonam, Consultant Urologist, Shija Hospitals, reiterated Shija's commitment to supporting the Agartala team in progressing towards operational independence. He also emphasised the development of cadaveric transplant protocols to address the growing need for organ donation. Since initiating its transplant programme in 2016, Shija Hospitals has achieved key milestones, including the region's first ABO-incompatible transplant in 2021 and the first deceased donor transplant



in 2023. The hospital has successfully completed 130 kidney transplants, including 5 deceased donors and continues to play a significant role in advancing transplant services in Northeast India. Shija Hospitals remains committed to advancing access to quality kidney care through sustained collaboration, clinical expertise, and technology. It may be recalled that the National Health Mission (NHM), Tripura and Shija Hospitals & Research Institute Pvt Ltd (SHRI) signed a RBSK-Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) at NHM, Tripura in 2023. The MOU symbolizes a strategic partnership with the goal of capitalizing on the strengths and knowl-

edge of NHM Tripura and SHRI. NHM Tripura excels in delivering accessible healthcare services, and will combine its efforts with SHRI, a distinguished institution acknowledged for its cutting-edge medical research and exceptional healthcare provisions. This strategic partnership between NHM Tripura and SHRI sets the stage for a transformative era in healthcare delivery, promising a brighter, healthier future for the citizens of Tripura. Shija Hospitals & Research Institute is the first NABH accredited medical college hospital in NE India, committed to delivering comprehensive healthcare services and cutting-edge medical research.

## Tripura CM flags 'transparency issues' in Tipra Motha funds ahead of ADC polls

**Agartala, Apr 04:** With just days left for the elections to the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAACD), Chief Minister Manik Saha has raised questions over the source of election funds of the Tipra Motha Party, setting the stage for a fresh political confrontation in the state. Addressing reporters in Agartala, Saha said there appeared to be a lack of clarity regarding how the party was managing its poll expenses. Referring to recent remarks made by Tipra Motha founder Pradyot Kishore Debbarman, the Chief Minister claimed that there had been internal discussions within the party about aligning with the BJP to secure adequate resources for elections. "Now that there is no alliance and both parties are contesting separately, people have the right to know where their election funds are coming from," Saha said. He added that if any irregularities are found, the matter could be examined through appropriate channels. The remarks come at a time when political activity has intensified in the tribal council areas ahead of the April 12 polls. The TTAACD elections are seen as crucial, not only for local governance but also for shaping the political direction of tribal regions in Tripura. Saha also accused the Tipra Motha-led administration in the council of financial mismanagement. He alleged that funds meant for development in the tribal areas had not been properly utilised. According to him, this has affected the

pace of development and slowed down socio-economic progress in the region. "There are serious concerns about how development funds have been handled. This needs to be looked into carefully," he said, without providing specific figures. On the issue of land, the Chief Minister rejected allegations that urban local bodies were encroaching on land under the council. He described such claims as misleading and said the state government remains committed to protecting the territorial boundaries of the council areas as per existing laws. "The government is fully aware of its responsibility. There will be no compromise on protecting the land and rights of the people living in these areas," Saha said. He also drew a comparison between Tipra Motha's functioning and that of the All India Trinamool Congress, alleging that a culture of fear and pressure had entered the political space in the council areas. Without going into details, he claimed that such practices could affect the democratic environment during elections. Calling for peaceful participation in the polls, the Chief Minister appealed to voters to cast their votes without fear. He assured that the administration would take all necessary steps to ensure that the election process remains free and fair. "We want people to come out and vote freely. The government will ensure that there is no disturbance and that every voter feels safe," he said.

## Shah links Meghalaya violence to infiltration

**Shillong, Apr 04:** Union Home Minister Amit Shah has linked the violence in Meghalaya's Garo Hills to alleged infiltration, claiming that "infiltrators" marry Garo women to hijack the Garo Hills Autonomous District Council (GHADC) — reframing the recent fatal unrest in the region as a struggle for demographic survival. Address-

ing an election rally in Assam recently, Shah asserted that outsiders exploit marriage to gain political control over tribal institutions. "There was an election in Meghalaya in Garo Hills. There was violence because they lure the innocent Garo women, these infiltrators marry them, [and] wanted to capture the GHADC," Shah said.

## Modi, Himanta prepared roadmap for tribal development, BJP's win will ensure implementation: Amit Shah

**Dudhnoi, Apr 04:** Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma have prepared a roadmap for tribal development, and the BJP's return to power in the state will ensure its implementation.Addressing a rally in Dudhnoi in Goalpara district, Shah said that Congress never made an Adivasi woman the country's President, but Modi changed that and Droupadi Murmu became the nation's first citizen.

"At the top is the PM, and here, in Assam, there is the CM. both have a roadmap for the development of tribals in the state, it will be taken forward if people give the BJP a mandate for the third successive time," Shah said. He alleged that the Congress never talked about tribal welfare and since Independence, its successive governments had spent only Rs 25,000 crore on tribal development but in the last 11 years, the PM has given Rs 1.38 lakh crore for them, he said.The Union minister called Goalpara 'Mini Assam' as several tribes, including Rabha, Bodo, Hajong, and Koch, along with Adivasi tea garden workers, reside in the district, and only the BJP can ensure their development.He also asserted that

tribal areas will not come under the ambit of the Uniform Civil Code (UCC).“The Congress is spreading rumours to scare tribals that they will be affected by the UCC, but this is absolutely untrue and no tribal will fall under its ambit,” he said. Shah also asserted that it was the prime minister who had taken the art, culture, food, textiles, music and dance of tribals to the global stage.“Each tribal family will be given a cow and a buffalo, and I, as the cooperation minister, will ensure this,” Shah said.On the recent violence in the adjoining Garo hills of Meghalaya, Shah said that infiltrators sought to capture power in the Garo council by marrying tribal women, and this led to the strife.He accused the Congress of making Assam an ‘adda’ (centre) for infiltrators and the BJP government has already started the process of sending them back.“Give us another five years in power in Assam, and we will rid the state of each and every identified infiltrator by sending them back,” he said.The Union home minister said that the BJP restored peace in Assam, signing several accords since 2019 and bringing over 10,000 youths to the mainstream through surrenders.

## Incomplete drainage projects trigger widespread waterlogging in Digboi amid heavy rain

**Digboi, Apr 04:** Heavy rainfall since Wednesday night has led to waterlogging in several parts of Assam's Digboi, affecting roads, traffic movement and local infrastructure. Residents stated that waterlogging has increased following the start of road widening and drainage works.The situation has also affected daily activities, including school commutes, with children navigating waterlogged roads.One of the most affected areas is the National Highway near No. 1 Golai, where ongoing road widening and drainage work have coincided with water accumulation on the roadway. Although drains have been constructed on both sides, the absence of functional outlets has resulted in water stagnation, disrupting vehicular movement. Traffic movement has been affected, with vehicles navigating submerged stretches. Residents said they are facing difficulties in daily commuting.The situation has also impacted infrastructure



projects. Frequent changes of contractors have affected the progress of the bypass road project being executed by the NHIDCL, contributing to delays and coordination issues. Waterlogging has extended to nearby facilities, where several oil tankers were reported stranded at the Golai terminal after significant water accumulation near the entry and exit points of the AOD terminal. Fuel supply was also affected. At the Saligram Bridhichand oil

depot in the Digboi Station area, fuel supply to customers was reportedly disrupted at the time of filing this report.Concerns have also been raised regarding the township drainage project being implemented by the Public Works Department. Residents stated that in some areas, drains have been constructed without adequate outlets, affecting water flow. A PWD engineer acknowledged that no provisions for drainage outlets

were made during construction and indicated that openings would be created after project completion.The township drainage project from Charali to Ramnagar via Borbil, covering around 3.5 km, is being executed with an estimated cost of approximately Rs 8 crore under the Chief Minister's Corpus. The project has drawn attention following concerns raised by residents regarding its design and implementation.Local residents, including members of student organisations, have called for an inquiry into the project, citing concerns over construction quality and public expenditure.

Earlier, residents had staged protests at No. 1 Golai, temporarily blocking the highway and seeking completion of the affected stretch. A meeting between NHIDCL officials, the administration and local representatives was subsequently held, during which assurances were given regarding early completion of the work.

## Jharkhand CM Hemant Soren stresses historical challenges of Adivasi tea workers

**Guwahati, Apr 04:** Jharkhand Chief Minister and Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) president Hemant Soren on Friday stressed the historical challenges faced by Assam's Adivasi tea garden communities.JMM has fielded 21 candidates, including two in Tinsukia, Jarnel Minz from Margherita and Bharat Nayak from Digboi, while Munna Karmakar's nomination from Makum was rejected. He described their situation as a matter of rights, identity, and constitutional recognition during the ongoing campaign for the April 9 Assam Assembly elections. With polling scheduled on April 9 in a single phase, the election campaign highlights ongoing issues related to migration, labour rights, and inclusion in Assam's polity.Soren noted that the tea garden communities contributed significantly to Assam's development but have had limited access to land rights, education, and social recognition. Addressing crowds at multiple rallies, including at Rajgarh Tea Estate in Dibrugarh and other locations in upper Assam, Soren referred to the colonial-era migration of Adivasi labourers from the Chhotanagpur region to Assam's plantations.He added that despite decades of independence, socio-economic conditions such as low wages, healthcare access, education, and



land security remain areas of concern for the community, which is estimated at 60–70 lakh.The JMM leader advocated for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status for Assam's tea tribes, citing the difference in benefits compared to similar communities in Jharkhand.

He questioned the continued challenges faced by these communities and described the issue as significant in the context of India's democratic framework.Soren emphasized that the campaign

extends beyond politics, focusing on securing constitutional rights and recognition for Adivasi communities.Analysts note that Soren's campaign in upper Assam may influence voter consolidation in constituencies where tea workers form a significant proportion of the electorate.

Critics from the ruling side have responded by citing development projects, while Soren's campaign has focused on community recognition and rights.

## The chief minister of Tripura exhorts voters to support BJ Tribal council elections

**Agartala, Apr 04:** Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Thursday asserted that the BJP is the only party capable of bringing development to the tribal areas of the northeastern state.

Addressing an election rally for the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) polls at Paharpur in Gomati district, he alleged that the CPI(M), Congress and Tipra Motha Party (TMP) had ruled the tribal council in the past but failed to bring meaningful change in the lives of indigenous people.“The BJP is the only party which could usher in development in the tribal areas of the state. If you vote for us, we will ensure speedy development”, he said.Accusing the TMP of siphoning off funds meant for development, the CM said the state has sanctioned 28 projects amounting to Rs 200 crore for the tribal council over the past three years, apart from the budgetary outlay.“Out of Rs 200 crore, Rs 112 crore has already been released to the TMP-controlled trib-

al council, but no utilisation certificate has been submitted yet. You all know where the funds are going,” he alleged. Saha claimed that Rs 30 crore was allocated to set up a modern hospital at Khumulwng in West Tripura, followed by an additional Rs 10 crore for the project.

“But the tribal council has failed to set up the hospital yet. It is evident that the TMP-controlled tribal council is misusing public funds at their will”, he alleged.Urging people to vote for the BJP in the elections, the CM also highlighted the work done for the welfare of the indigenous people.Saha added, “We are spending around 40 per cent of the state's budget for the welfare of tribal people. The state had only four Eklaya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) before the BJP came to power in 2018. Currently, 12 EMRS are functioning, and nine more are in the pipeline”. Polling for 28 seats of the tribal council will be held on April 12, while counting will take place on April 17.

## Govt redesigning school ecosystem: Kekhrielhoulie Yhome

**Dimapur, Apr 04:** major step towards strengthening government school infrastructure was marked with the inauguration of several new facilities at PM SHRI Government High School (GHS), New Market, Kohima, on Wednesday. The newly inaugurated facilities included an Atal Tinkering Lab, Science Lab, ICT/Computer Lab, Library Room, and Vocational Lab. Advisor for School Education and SCERT, Kekhrielhoulie Yhome, delivered an extensive and candid address during the inauguration programme, stressing the importance of community participation, systemic reform, and rebuilding trust in government schools. Speaking at the programme, Yhome highlighted the collective effort behind the establishment of the school infrastructure, stating that the 24,000-square-foot plot was purchased by the community at a cost of Rs 5.5 lakh. He said he has been encouraging the community to acquire more land if possible, adding that contributions may be needed from all stakeholders, including the state government. He also underscored the need for an approach road and urged the community to actively participate in its development.Acknowledging the efforts of the school administration, Yhome saluted the leadership of the headmaster, along with 33 teachers and 3 MTS staff, who are currently managing the school and training around 301 students. He noted that

the school has been appearing for matriculation examinations since it was upgraded to a high school in 2016. This year, around 24 to 26 students are expected to appear for matriculation, while Class 9 presently has around 60 students across sections.Reflecting on enrolment trends, Yhome said the school had recorded a peak of 246 students in 2023, after which the numbers declined. However, this year saw 60 new admissions, including 19 students who shifted from private schools. He also cited a similar example from a recently inaugurated high school in Pesuchah, where 64 new admissions were recorded, including 34 students from private institutions. He expressed encouragement over such trends, particularly in urban community schools catering to working-class populations, noting that these schools contribute significantly despite limitations such as land constraints.He stated that the education system is currently being re-evaluated, admitting that its design has been flawed. all schools. He explained that the redesigned system will be based on three pillars — infrastructure, governance, and curriculum and pedagogy.He informed that teachers are now required to undergo a minimum of 50 hours of professional training, particularly in leadership development, under the newly established School Leadership Academy.

## Assam Elections 2026: CM Himanta Biswa Sarma rejects ‘Hitler’ label, affirms ‘Mama’ image

— The interaction, recorded on video and later shared by Sarma on X (formerly Twitter), took place in Duliajan as he campaigned ahead of the state's single-phase assembly elections scheduled for April 9.

**Guwahati, Apr 04:** During a roadside media interaction on Thursday as part of his election campaign, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma responded to questions from a BBC Hindi journalist, rejecting labels such as “Hitler” or “anti-democratic fascist” and stating that he is known as “Mama” (uncle) among people in the state. In a post on X, he wrote: “The BBC can call me whatever they want to, but for the people of Assam, I am their Mama! @BBCHindi #AssamElections2026.” Sarma has stated that his remarks and actions are directed at illegal immigrants and not at any religious community.

Opposition parties, including the Congress, and some minority groups have raised concerns over his statements and policies. They have alleged that such measures and remarks disproportionately affect certain communities and have pointed to legal cases related to his use of the term “Miya.”The interaction occurred close to the polling date. Issues related to identity, land and illegal immigration continue to be part of political discussions in the state.

Reactions on social media platforms were varied. Some users expressed support for Sar-



ma's remarks, while others raised concerns about his statements and governance record. No additional statement has been issued by the chief minister's office regarding the interaction. The full version of the exchange was later shared by the broadcaster, showing the complete interaction.The interaction took place during the ongoing election campaign, with Sarma leading the BJP's efforts for a third consecutive term. The party's manifesto includes proposals such as implementing a Uniform Civil Code within three months of

returning to power, while stating that tribal rights will be protected.It also outlines plans for stricter measures against “love jihad” and “land jihad,” eviction drives against illegal encroachment, and empowering district authorities under the Immigrants (Expulsion from Assam) Act, 1950, to identify and deport illegal immigrants within 24 hours.Sarma has been associated with policies addressing illegal immigration from Bangladesh. His government has conducted eviction drives on forest and government lands, which he

has described as targeting “Bangladeshi infiltrators” and “encroachers.” He has also used the term “Miya,” commonly used to refer to Bengali-speaking Muslims in Assam, in the context of demographic concerns.In January 2026, he stated that his administration would “continue to disturb the Miyas” through measures such as evictions, revisions of electoral rolls and border checks to prevent them from “walking over our heads.”The interaction, recorded on video and later shared by Sarma on X (formerly Twitter), took place in Duliajan as he campaigned ahead of the state's single-phase assembly elections scheduled for April 9, with results expected Sarma, surrounded by supporters, security personnel and journalists, responded. elt satisfied and united under his leadership.Sarma replied, stating that “all are dancing and we have united Assam.” When asked whether he had encountered opposition during recent interactions with the public, he said, “Nobody opposed me,” adding that voters would see this themselves. The journalist then referred to criticism in which he has been described as “Hitler” or his approach labelled as anti-democratic and fascist.

## The government of Meghalaya brings up the Vande Mataram issue with the Center

**Shillong, Apr 04:** The Meghalaya government has taken up concerns regarding the rendition of Vande Mataram at official events with the central government.“It is a standing order issued by the central government requiring Vande Mataram to be played whenever the Governor is present at an event and this guideline is being followed uniformly across the country,” Sangma said.He said the State government will continue to adhere to the directive from New Delhi until told otherwise.

The union ministry of home affairs in its order mandating the rendition of the full six-stanza version of Vande



Mataram at government functions, official events and school assemblies. The practice so far had been singing only the first two stanzas of the celebrated composition of Bankim Chan-

dra Chattopadhyay that was adopted by the constituent assembly as the national song in 1950.Several groups, including the opposition Voice of the People Party and the Khasi Students' Union has opposed singing the full version of Vande Mataram, arguing that the later stanzas of the national song invoke Hindu deities and are at odds with indigenous tribal beliefs and traditions.“I am not against the national song Vande Mataram. But I am totally against the full-length version of the national song and I fully subscribe to the first two stanzas,” VPP legislator Adelbert Nongrum said.

## NDA won't allow Assam to become the land of love and land jihad: Adityanath

**Guwahati, Apr 04:** Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Friday said the NDA would not allow the Congress and the All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) to change Assam's demography.Addressing a rally in the election-bound state's Barpeta, Adityanath alleged that the two Opposition parties had played with Assam's culture.“The Congress and the AIUDF tried to change Assam's demography by allowing infiltrators to come here. The infiltrators committed a robbery on your rights. They tried to capture the rations, houses and lands of the people of Assam,” the UP Chief Minister alleged.He added that efforts were being made to identify each and every infiltrator and drive them out.“The NDA's resolve is to not allow Assam to become the land of love jihad and land jihad. We will not allow the Congress-AIUDF conspiracy to alter Assam's demography to succeed,” Adityanath said.

## Manipuri short film wins multiple awards; CM congratulates

**Imphal, Apr 04:** Manipuri short film “The Nightmare of Bembi”, directed by Tenzing Pukhrambam, has garnered remarkable international recognition, bringing immense pride to the State.

The film has secured multiple accolades across prestigious film festivals, including Best Psychological Drama (War Theme) at the Indian Panorama International Film Festival 2025-26, Mumbai; Best Short Film at the Oceaniek Short Films Awards 2026, Chandigarh; and several top honours at the Jakarta Independent Cine Awards 2026, Guwahati, including Best Debut Director, Best Actress, Best Screenplay, and Best Music. The short film has also been recognised at the Kodaikanal International Film Festival and the Athvikvaruni International Film Festival in Tamil Nadu. The 23-minute film follows Bembi, a young girl whose life is shattered after her village is attacked and her mother killed, causing her to suffer from haunting nightmares.

The film focuses on the psychological aftermath of violence, following Bembi’s struggle with memory, trauma, and a fractured reality. Rooted in the lived realities of the ongoing situation in Manipur, the film stands as a

poignant and courageous artistic expression that has resonated deeply with audiences and juries worldwide.

Such accomplishments reaffirm Manipur’s growing presence in global cinema and highlight the immense creative talent of its people. Meanwhile, Chief Minister Y Khemchand extended his heartfelt appreciation and commendation to the entire team of “The Nightmare of Bembi” for bringing laurels to the state and for elevating Manipuri cinema to the global stage. “It is a matter of immense pride that the Manipuri short film The Nightmare of Bembi has been honoured with the Best Psychological Drama award at the Indian Panorama International Film Festival 2025–26.

The film stands as a compelling reflection of the conflict situation and its far-reaching human consequences,” the Chief Minister said in a social media post. “Directed by Tenzing Pukhrambam, the film presents a powerful narrative marked by depth, sensitivity, and unforgettable imagery.

This remarkable achievement underscores the creative excellence and storytelling strength of Manipur’s film fraternity,” Khemchand said.

## Awareness programme on LPG usage held in Kakching

**Imphal, Apr 04:** An awareness-cum-training programme regarding the proper usage of LPG gas and the safety precautions to be taken by LPG gas consumers to avoid accidents was held on Friday at Elangkhanpokpi and Langmeidong, Kakching district. The first awareness programme was organised by the Library and Educational Guidance cum Cultural Organisation in collaboration with All Gas Care (AGC) Manipur State at the Elangkhanpokpi Mamang Leikai Library Hall. The second programme was organised by the Langmeidong Maning Awang Leikai Meira Paibi at the Langmeidong YDC Club Community Hall. All Gas Care (AGC) Manipur State Manager Shagolssem Joyprakash and AGC Field Assistant and renowned Comedian Happy Rajen participated in the awareness programme. Before the programme began, renowned comedian Happy Rajen entertained the public and provided a brief demonstration on how to stay safe from fire accidents caused by LPG gas. Regarding the practical training on gas usage and safety measures,



AGC Manipur State Manager Sh. Joyprakash stated that today’s training is very important and essential, especially for women. He further elaborated that while using LPG gas for cooking, all problems will be prompted to

gas stoves. However, because of unaware or lack of knowledge, we don’t response to the signal and thus incidents of gas leaks occur frequently. He stated that this awareness-cum-training program was organised to make the

public aware of what actions can be taken and also to share information with the people. The organising localities expressed their gratitude to the AGC staff for conducting this very important programme.

## Prayers, mourning mark Good Friday in Kangpokpi, Senapati

**Imphal, Apr 04:** Christians across Kangpokpi district on Friday observed Good Friday with solemn prayers and deep mourning, commemorating the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. A spirit of devotion marked the day as large numbers of believers gathered in churches and prayer halls from early morning. Special services were held between 11 am and 3 pm, traditionally believed to be the hours of Christ’s crucifixion, with worshippers offering silent prayers, reading scriptures and singing hymns reflecting themes of sacrifice, repentance and hope. Major churches in Kangpokpi district headquarters, including Kangpokpi Christian Church, Kuki Baptist Convention Centre Church, Christian Revival Church and Kangpokpi Independent Baptist Church, witnessed significant participation. Church leaders, in their sermons, highlighted the spiritual significance of the day, describing the



crucifixion as the ultimate expression of love and sacrifice, and urged the faithful to practise compassion, forgiveness and humility. Special prayers were also offered for those affected by the ongoing conflict in Manipur, following an appeal by the Committee on Tribal Unity,

reflecting a sense of collective grief among the Kuki-Zo community. Shops and establishments remained closed, while many families observed fasting and prayers at home, marking the day with quiet reflection. Good Friday, observed by Christians worldwide, commemorates the cru-

cifixion of Jesus Christ and precedes Easter Sunday, symbolising hope, resurrection and the triumph of faith. Good Friday was also observed by Christians in Senapati district, commemorating the crucifixion and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Marking the occasion, a solemn worship service was held where believers gathered for prayers, reflection and the observance of the Lord’s Supper. Delivering the sermon, Rev. Chiluyio, Pastor of MBC Song Song, spoke on the significance of Christ’s suffering and sacrifice.

Referring to Romans 5:8, “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us”, he highlighted the message of God’s love and redemption for humanity. Prayers were also offered seeking peace, healing and unity, as believers reflected on the spirit of forgiveness and compassion associated with Good Friday.

## CM Khemchand on peace mission, en route to Jiribam

**Imphal, Apr 04:** Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh is en route to Jiribam district. His entourage, along with MLAs and senior government officials, has encountered no untoward incidents along the way. The Chief Minister is scheduled to arrive in Jiribam at around 1 pm. The visit is scheduled from April 4 to April 6, during which the Chief Minister is expected to engage with community leaders from both Meitei and Kuki groups in a bid to restore trust and stability in the region. During the tour, the Chief Minister will make brief stops at Leingangpokpi Police Outpost, Jiribam District Hospital and Lamlenkhul, reviewing ground-level conditions and interacting with officials and locals.

The Chief Minister is accompanied by seven MLAs, including Tongbram Robindro, Kongkham Robindro, L. Rameshwar Meetei, Dr S. Ranjan, H. Dingo, S. Premchandra and Paonam Brojen. Earlier, on April 2 after meeting with Union Home Minister Amit Shah, the Chief Minister chaired a high-level review meeting at the Secretariat to assess security measures along National Highways. Notably, this is the second visit of Chief Minister Khemchand to Jiribam since assuming office. The Chief Minister has visited the district on February 11 during which he met Meitei and Kuki representatives, including displaced persons from both the communities.

## Owaisi calls BJP, Congress ‘two sides of same coin’, alleges ‘politics of hate’ in Assam

**Guwahati, Apr 04:** All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) president Asaduddin Owaisi has launched a strong political attack on both the BJP and the Congress during his campaign visit to Assam, describing the two national parties as “two sides of the same coin” and accusing them of failing to address the concerns of Muslims in the state. Addressing public meetings in Goalpara and Dhubri, Owaisi campaigned in support of candidates of the All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF). He said that both the BJP and the Congress have, over the years, contributed to the difficulties faced by Muslims in Assam, and claimed that neither party has encouraged the rise of strong leadership from within the minority community. Owaisi told the gatherings that his visit to Assam was aimed at strengthening Muslim leadership so that people from the community could live with dignity and have a stronger voice in governance. He said that without proper representation, many issues affecting minorities remain unaddressed. Taking aim at Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, Owaisi accused the state government of following what he described as “politics of hate.” He said that a Chief Minister should represent all citizens equally, regardless of who they vote for, and questioned what he called a growing sense of division in the state’s political environment. During his speech, Owaisi raised concerns over eviction drives carried out in different parts of Assam. He alleged that more than 3,000 families had been evicted in a manner he described as illegal and unconstitutional. According to him, many of those affected were Bengali-speaking Muslims who had already suffered due to river erosion and displacement. He said these actions had added to the hardships faced by vulnerable communities. The state government, however, has maintained that such eviction drives are aimed at clearing encroachments from government land, forest areas, and wetlands, and are part of efforts to protect public resources. Owaisi also made serious allegations regarding the treatment of Indian Muslims, claiming that they were being unfairly targeted and, in some cases, threatened with being pushed towards Bangladesh. He described this as a matter of concern and said it reflects a deeper problem in the political approach towards minorities. Turning his criticism towards the Congress, Owaisi said that policies such as the National Register of Citizens (NRC), along with the use of detention centres and Foreigners’ Tribunals, had made life difficult for many Muslims in Assam. He argued that these measures were initiated during Congress rule and have had lasting effects on the ground.

## Assam cracks whip on five errant LPG distributors

**Guwahati, Apr 04:** The Assam government has placed five LPG distributors in the State under suspension with immediate effect, pending further review by the competent authority.

In the backdrop of the prevailing situation in West Asia, and in line with the action plan of the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Government of India, strict monitoring of LPG supplies is being undertaken across the State at both State and district levels, in coordination with Oil Marketing Companies. As part of this ongoing exercise, certain irregularities relating to distribution practices and compliance norms have come to the notice of the authorities in respect of five distributors -- B.M. Gas Service, Tezpur; Biswanath Gas Distributor, Biswanath Charali; Gadadhar Gas Service, Dhubri; K.A. Indane Gramin Vitrak, Howly (Barpeta) and Prakash Indane Agency, Hojai.

It has further been decided that no LPG supplies shall be released to the above distributors from the date of suspension, and

no allocation will be made to them in the Supply Planning and Distribution (SPD) system until further orders. Consumers of these agencies have been suitably tagged to alternate distributors to ensure that there is no interruption in LPG supply.

Meanwhile, the overall LPG supply situation has been reviewed at both the Central and State levels. Consumers are assured that adequate stocks of LPG are available and the domestic consumers continue to receive 100 per cent allocation. With regard to commercial consumer, the Government of Assam has recently complied with certain reform criteria and has secured an additional 10 per cent allocation for commercial LPG consumption, taking it up to 70 per cent thereby providing further relief to the sector.

The Government reiterated its zero-tolerance policy towards any irregularities in the distribution of essential commodities, and added that further action will be taken based on the outcome of the ongoing review.

## Ulfa-I cadre surrenders in Arunachal Pradesh

**Khonsa, Apr 04:** A cadre belonging to the United Liberation Front of Asom (Independent) surrendered before security forces in the Khonsa area of Arunachal Pradesh’s Tirap district on Friday, official sources said on Saturday.

The surrendered cadre has been identified as Jintu Gogoi (23) alias Arun Asom. He was reportedly a self-styled private of the outfit. “Based on credible intelligence inputs from our sources regarding the presence of a hardcore insurgent of the Ulfa-I cadres in the general area of Noglo, a focused operation was launched by the Khonsa Battalion, Assam Rifles. During the course of the operation, our sources were activated and tasked with establishing contact with the insurgent and

persuading him to surrender,” said an official of the Assam Rifles.

The official added, “Sustained pressure and persistent negotiations motivated the insurgent to shun the path of violence and return to the mainstream. The efforts yielded a positive response, and the insurgent agreed to surrender.” The insurgent was subsequently taken into custody at COB Noglo. “During the surrender, he deposited one 7.65 mm pistol with magazine and 10 rounds of 7.65 mm live ammunition. This successful surrender underscores the effectiveness of intelligence-based operations and the humane, persuasive approach adopted by the Khonsa Battalion, Assam Rifles,” the official said. (EOM)

## Indian LPG tanker safely navigates Hormuz amid regional tensions

**New Delhi, Apr 04:** An Indian LPG tanker has successfully crossed the Strait of Hormuz amid ongoing tensions in West Asia, while another vessel carrying Iranian LPG has reached Mangalore, according to official statements on Saturday.

“LPG vessel Green Sanvi has safely transited the Strait of Hormuz, carrying 46,650 tonnes of LPG cargo with 25 seafarers on board,” the government said, adding that it was the seventh Indian-flagged tanker to pass through the route since disruptions began. Separately, the ministry of petroleum and natural gas said the vessel Sea Bird, carrying about 44,000 tonnes of LPG from Iran, berthed at Mangalore on April 2 and is currently discharging cargo. Officials indicated that this could be the first import of Iranian LPG in several years, fol-



lowing a temporary easing of US sanctions on Iranian oil and refined products.

According to the update, 17 Indian-flagged vessels remain in the western side of the strait, while several others have completed transit in recent days. Earlier, vessels BW TYR and BW ELM, carrying about 94,000 tonnes of LPG combined, reached Mumbai and New Mangalore respectively. Additional consignments carried by vessels Pine Gas, Jag Vasant, MT Shivalik and MT Nanda Devi had reached Indian ports in

March. India meets about 60 per cent of its LPG demand through imports, with a significant share sourced from the Middle East. The recent arrivals are expected to support domestic supply. Authorities said all Indian seafarers in the region are safe and maritime operations remain under close monitoring. The Directorate General of Shipping is tracking vessels and coordinating with stakeholders, while a control room is functioning round the clock to handle queries and facilitate crew movement.

## Mizoram cracks down on illegal sale of urea

**Aizawl, Apr 04:** Mizoram State Agriculture, Horticulture and Marketing Cooperative Federation (MAHFED) Limited initiated action against illegal sale and unauthorized distribution of urea in the state.

Acting upon credible information about illegal sale and distribution of urea in Aizawl in contravention of the provisions of the Fertilizer (Control) Order, 1985, MAHFED Ltd. conducted a detailed field inspection encompassing verification of distribution practices and interaction with farmers and end-users.

The findings of the inspection, corroborated by recorded statements of purchasers, reveal that urea-being a controlled and subsidized essential commodity-was being sold at prices significantly exceeding the Government-notified Maximum Retail Price (MRP) of Rs 266.40 per 45 kg bag (inclusive of GST), with instances of sale reported at rates as high as Rs 450 per bag.

Such acts constitute a clear and unequivocal

violation of Clause 3(3) of the Fertilizer (Control) Order, 1985, which strictly prohibits sale of fertilizers above the prescribed price, and attract penal consequences under the provisions of the Essential Commodities Act, 1955.

Further, it has been detected that an unregistered private entity, namely M/s Zekyl Enterprises, Siphir, Aizawl, has been engaged in the unauthorized procurement and distribution of urea through irregular and extra-legal channels, without possessing the mandatory Certificate of Registration under the Fertilizer (Control) Order, 1985. Such activities, including the unregulated movement and sale of subsidized fertilizer, constitute a grave breach of Clause 7 of the said Order and point towards the existence of an illicit parallel supply mechanism.

In view of the foregoing, stringent and time-bound action has been initiated. MAHFED Ltd. is proceeding against the defaulting cooperative societies through issuance of formal show

cause notices, while necessary steps are being undertaken, in coordination with the competent authorities, to investigate and prosecute the unauthorized operations of M/s Zekyl Enterprises, including initiation of penal proceedings, and closure of illegal activities.

“The Government reiterates its zero-tolerance stance against any form of malpractice in the distribution of subsidized agricultural inputs. Such acts not only undermine the regulatory framework but also exploit the farming community and distort the equitable distribution mechanism intended for their welfare,” an official statement said. “All stakeholders are hereby cautioned to adhere strictly to the provisions of the Fertilizer (Control) Order, 1985 and other applicable laws. Any deviation shall invite strict legal action, including prosecution under the relevant statutory provisions.

This is issued with the approval of the competent authority,” the statement said.

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## Prevention Is Better Than Cure

The ancient wisdom that prevention is better than cure has never rung truer than in contemporary India. Whether one speaks of public health, environmental degradation, road safety, or communal disharmony, the nation continues to pay a staggering price for acting after the damage is done rather than forestalling it. The cost — in lives, livelihoods, and public money — is incalculable. Consider public health. India’s disease burden — from tuberculosis to dengue to malnutrition — persists not for want of medical science but for want of political will to invest in sanitation, clean water, and preventive care. Every rupee spent on immunisation saves scores spent on hospitalisation. Yet curative infrastructure consistently draws more budgetary attention than preventive measures. The same logic holds for disaster management: early-warning systems, earthquake-resistant construction, and flood-control planning cost a fraction of post-disaster relief and reconstruction. Governance, too, demands a preventive orientation. Corruption metastasises when oversight mechanisms are weak; hate speech goes unchecked until violence erupts; ecological collapse unfolds silently until rivers run dry. A mature democracy does not merely manage crises — it renders them avoidable. The state must pivot from a reactive to a proactive model: investing in education, strengthening institutions, enforcing environmental norms, and nurturing social cohesion before fault-lines widen into fractures. Prevention demands imagination — the discipline to address problems that have not yet announced themselves dramatically. It is the mark of enlightened governance to invest in what citizens may never notice: the epidemic that did not happen, the bridge that did not collapse, the riot that was never lit. India must cultivate this imagination as a national habit. The cure, inevitably, costs more than we can afford.

I woke up before dawn on Wednesday to a call from my younger sister, Nazia. The ICU doctors had asked that the family come in. A quiet fear settled in my chest. And then, as gently as a song reaching its last note, my first cousin Dalia Nausheen, our beloved Dalibu left us. She fought for so long, decades of illness, a relentless battle with cancer that would have dimmed most spirits. But not hers. Nothing could keep her from what she loved most: music, travelling, friendship, and above all, her fierce independence. Even in her final days, when the body was tiring, her mind was moving ahead, planning the next journey, the next performance, the next step. That is how she will remain with us: always looking forward, always alive with purpose. Dalia was the daughter of legendary architect Muzharul Islam and Husne Ara Islam, born into a home where art, intellect, and culture were not just appreciated but lived. Our childhood in Paribagh was not ordinary. It was a world of constant movement, of voices and ideas, of music that never quite stopped. We grew up surrounded by artistes, thinkers, and leaders, absorbing without even realising—a way of life rooted in creativity and expression. We took our first steps into music together at Chhayana. Those early lessons shaped us, but more importantly, they bound us. Whether it was music, cricket, drama or dance, we cousins shared a close-



ness that defined our lives. In that shared world, Dalibu stood out, not by trying but because she was. Her voice carried something deep, something that stayed with you long after the song ended. In 1971, while still so young, she crossed into then Calcutta and joined the Bangladesh Mukti Sangrami Shilpi Sangstha. With nothing but her voice, she became part of the struggle, singing for

freedom fighters, for refugees, for a nation just born. Music, for Dalibu, was never just performance; it was devotion. Whether she sang DL Roy, Atul Prasad, or semi-classical compositions, there was always depth, always meaning. It was a lifelong journey of refinement, even till her final days. But her creativity could not be contained within music alone. It flowed into everything she

touched: jewellery design, cooking, hand-painting saris. When I began my journey with block-printed saris in early 1984, she was there, designing my first exhibition with care and imagination. That was Dalibu—present, engaged, quietly shaping the worlds of those she loved. She was also the centre of a vast and vibrant circle of friends, many of whom had stood at the forefront in 1971,

and many who continue to shape our cultural life today. People were drawn to her, not just because of her talent, but because of her spirit. She was warm, gracious, and deeply loyal, but not quite predictable. Her wit could disarm you, her dry humour could catch you off guard, and when she chose, her words could land with sharp, unflinching clarity. She spoke her mind, always.

Life asked much of her. She lost her husband, Azad Hafiz, in 2014. Her sons, Diraan and Ayan, built their lives abroad. Elder brother Sajjad Shahrear passed away recently. Yet, she never allowed loneliness or hardship to define her. She carried herself with dignity, choosing resilience over compliance, independence over dependence. Her other elder brother, Tanvir Mazhar, stood by her with unwavering devotion, a constant presence in her life. Even towards the end, she remained connected to her arts. Her last performance at The Daily Star, organised by Gems of Nazrul on the birth anniversary of Kazi Nazrul Islam in October 2025, was a memorable one—a refusal to step away from the stage that had defined her. Her contributions did not go unrecognised. The Ekushey Padak in 2020 and the Nazrul Padak in 2024 were acknowledgements of a life given to music and to the cultural soul of this country. But for us, her true legacy lies in the memories she leaves behind, in the lives she touched, and in the music that continues to echo. Saying goodbye is never easy. It asks us to accept what the heart resists. But perhaps with Dalibu, we can hold on to something more enduring. Not the loss, but the presence she created. The gatherings she inspired and the courage she embodied. Your battle was long, your music was our solace. Now you rest, my dear Dalibu. And in the quiet that follows, we can still hear you.

## Jared Kushner is seeking peace deals in the Middle East. He’s also raising money for his own firm

After Donald Trump returned to the White House, his son-in-law and former senior adviser Jared Kushner declined to take a job in the new administration and instead planned to focus on running his Miami-based private equity firm. Kushner said he would also forgo raising more money for his company while Trump was in office, to avoid any appearance of a conflict. But since last summer, Kushner has re-emerged as a high-level peace envoy for Trump, helping broker a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas in Gaza; steering negotiations to end the war between Russia and Ukraine; and, most recently, playing a central role in the aborted negotiations between Iran and the US over Tehran’s nuclear program. Kushner still doesn’t hold an official government position – he’s a private citizen who has been negotiating some of the most important foreign policy agreements on behalf of the Trump administration, with a direct line to the president. And Kushner is once again trying to solicit foreign investments for his firm, Affinity Partners, which he largely built with billions of dollars in funding from three authoritarian Arab states and US allies: Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. In recent months, as he continued his freelance diplomacy for the Trump administration, Kushner has approached investors, including foreign governments that have an interest in his diplomatic work, about securing at least \$5bn in new financing for his company, according to the New York Times. The White House insists that Kushner’s role as one of Trump’s top negotiators in the Middle East – while he continues to own and manage a company mainly funded by three Arab petrostates that are dependent on US weapons and protection – poses no conflict of interest. Kushner “only acts in the best interests of the American public”, a White House spokesperson said in response to the Times’s revelations. Despite the administration’s denials, it’s hard to avoid the perception that Kushner is leveraging his influence over US policy – and his proximity to the president – to drum

up new business for his company. It’s also clear that Kushner is raising money for his personal benefit as Trump has plunged the US into a war against Iran, which has caused immense destruction across the Middle East and global disruption in energy prices and supply. Even Iran’s foreign minister, Abbas Araghchi, saw an opportunity to criticize Kushner’s perceived profiteering during a military conflict, when he posted a screenshot of the New York Times headline on Twitter/X: “Jared Kushner Solicits Funds for His Firm While Working as Mideast Envoy.” The minister wrote that a “fair and equitable deal” between the US and Iran “was within reach” – an apparent reference to Kushner’s role in the failed negotiations with Iranian officials, which included Araghchi. The Times reported last month that Kushner’s representatives had already met with officials from Saudi Arabia’s sovereign wealth fund, which under an earlier deal must get the first chance to invest whenever Affinity tries to raise additional funding. The Saudi Public Investment Fund is controlled by the kingdom’s crown prince and de facto ruler, Mohammed bin Salman, who is close to both Kushner and Trump. Six months after Kushner left the first Trump administration in 2021, his fledgling firm secured a \$2bn investment from the Saudi fund – despite Kushner and his team having little track record in private equity. That investment, which was reportedly made after Prince Mohammed overruled a panel of advisers who had objected to investing in Kushner’s new project, made the Saudi fund the earliest and largest investor in Affinity. During Trump’s first term, Kushner cultivated a friendship between the president and Prince Mohammed, and Kushner helped convince Trump to make Saudi Arabia the first stop of his maiden foreign trip as president in May 2017. Trump later reportedly boasted that he had protected the crown prince from US sanctions and pressure from Congress over the 2018 assassination of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi. In December 2024, weeks before Trump returned to the White House,

Kushner revealed that Affinity had raised an additional \$1.5bn earlier that year from wealth funds controlled by Qatari and UAE officials. The company had also disclosed that nearly 99% of its funding came from foreign sources – mainly Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the UAE – prompting an investigation by Ron Wyden, a Democrat who chaired the Senate finance committee at the time. In a letter to Kushner’s firm, Wyden questioned whether the company was a way for foreign powers to buy influence with a second Trump administration, noting: “Affinity’s investors may not be motivated by commercial considerations, but rather the opportunity to funnel foreign government money to members of President Trump’s family.” To assuage his critics, Kushner said in a podcast interview in December 2024 that he had decided to “preemptively try to avoid any conflicts” by raising new funds from his foreign investors months before Trump won the election. Kushner also suggested that he would not solicit additional money for Affinity during Trump’s second term. “We don’t have to raise capital for the next four years,” he told the podcaster, Patrick O’Shaughnessy. Earlier in the presidential campaign, Kushner faced questions about whether his firm accepting billions of dollars from Saudi Arabia and other Arab governments would make it difficult for him to take on a leading foreign policy role in a second Trump White House. In February 2024, he told a conference hosted by Axios that he would not join a future Trump administration. “I served in government, and I think my track record is pretty impeccable,” Kushner said. “Now I’m a private investor.” But Kushner has now backtracked on both promises he made in 2024. He ended up working for Trump, as an unofficial peace envoy with substantial power but little scrutiny of his personal and financial relationships with foreign governments and leaders like Prince Mohammed. Kushner is also trying to raise funds for Affinity – from some of the same governments and leaders who have a stake in the negotiations he has led,

especially on Gaza and Iran. Since the Gaza negotiations accelerated in September, Kushner has played a prominent role as Trump’s all-around troubleshooter, along with Steve Witkoff, a longtime Trump friend who serves as the president’s special envoy for peace missions. And it’s difficult for Kushner to keep his diplomatic work from overlapping with his business interests. For example, in January, Kushner attended the World Economic Forum in Davos as part of an official US delegation that included Trump, Witkoff and the secretary of state, Marco Rubio. At Davos, Kushner outlined a fanciful, US-led “master plan” for rebuilding Gaza, presenting a slideshow filled with high-rise luxury towers and beaches packed with tourists. Aside from laying out the Trump administration’s vision for Gaza, Kushner also met with foreign leaders and officials to drum up \$5bn in new investments for his firm, according to the New York Times. That’s one of the clearest examples of Kushner blurring the line between his work as a Trump envoy and his personal interests. And if Kushner is able to attract more foreign capital, Affinity can rake in larger management fees. (The US Senate investigation found that, by September 2024, Kushner’s firm had been paid \$157m in management fees over three years without returning any profit to its foreign investors.) Those fees, and Kushner’s full ownership of Affinity, also increased his personal wealth and turned him into a billionaire last year. One way for Kushner to avoid questions about his financial conflicts would be to take a leave from running his firm while he works for the Trump administration, even in an unofficial capacity. Affinity could also forgo soliciting investments from sovereign wealth funds and other entities connected to governments in the Middle East, for the rest of Trump’s term. But Kushner shows no sign of stepping away from Affinity or adjusting its strategy. Instead, he seems intent on continuing to do business with foreign governments and leaders who also have interests in the military conflicts that Kushner is trying to resolve on behalf of his father-in-law.

## Austerity and the crisis of fuel, confidence and coordination

Last week, while buying vegetables from an open market, I could not help feeling dissatisfied over the hiked price of every item. “It seems you are still in a moon-sighting mode,” I said, to which the seller responded nonchalantly, “What can I do? There is not enough supply after Eid.” The market had yet to resume its usual motion. This was the week when we were supposed to recalibrate, when offices returned to their rhythm, and transport networks started wheeling. But the flight to regularity was stalled by both geo- and domestic political concerns, leading to increased uncertainty and anxiety among businesses and consumers alike. The proverbial flap of butterflies—understatement intended—in the Gulf straits has caused a tsunami in the rest of the world. The queues at the refilling stations extend beyond miles; altercations among punters stretch beyond their patience limits as we muse over the tit-for-tat missions in Tehran and Tel Aviv. Even though we are listed among the few privileged countries whose ships are allowed through the Strait of Hormuz, the fear of fuel shortages remains high. UK-based newspaper The Independent has marked Bangladesh as “the country that could be the first to run out of fuel due to the US-Iran war.” Although the government sources cited in the report vehemently deny any such possibility, recent austerity measures make the warning quite likely. Attempts like fuel price passes, temporary rationing, and directives on “economical use” highlight our structural vulnerability. We import roughly 95 percent of our primary energy requirement, making us susceptible to global price shocks and foreign exchange pres-

sures. In theory, the call for austerity is pragmatic demand management, but its timing could not have been worse. The decision comes when the economy has just begun to restart from a prolonged festive shutdown. Then there are the fun-seekers who are already eyeing another long weekend by manoeuvring the Bangla New Year holiday next week. Even under normal conditions, the post-holiday economic recovery phase produces friction. With austerity overlaying this moment, when fuel becomes pricier and less available, the friction can deepen further. On top of that, there are some mixed administrative signals: rationing of fuel, school openings on alternate days, and a plan to allow tax-free EV buses for educational institutions. Then there is this divide between public and private sectors. The private sector does not have the luxury of getting a salary from a national exchequer. It must maintain its cash flow despite different shutdowns. Export-oriented industries—particularly RMG—operate under rigid delivery schedules dictated by global buyers. The deadlines do not get obliterated; they simply get compressed. Just when these sectors need extended hours for economic recovery, they are faced with a logistical freeze. The authorities have shortened banking hours, hampering coordination with customs, transport, and utilities. Real economic loss is likely to result from these austerity measures. Ironically, many of these administrative decisions stem from the public sector that has a different temporal logic. The system often normalises shorter hours and extended holidays. The performance metrics of bureaucracy frequently fail to align with the urgent needs of private-sector recovery. This creates a structural asymme-

try that hinders effective governance and intensifies economic challenges, especially during periods of crisis when rapid action is essential to facilitate recovery efforts. This is where austerity begins to feel less like policy and more like imbalance. To be clear, Bangladesh’s current measures are not austerity in the classical deflationary sense. The situation is not akin to the European context marked by wholesale fiscal contraction. Instead, the approach is a hybrid model where automatic fuel pricing shifts global cost fluctuations onto the consumers in smaller increments. The administrative controls are imposed to manage demand as well as to signal discipline. But the underlying logic is not free from familiar risks. First, let us consider the question of distribution. The austerity measures have created a sensation that prices may go up, leading scrupulous traders to hoard essentials, including fuel. If the government is forced to adjust fuel prices, the charges will cascade through transport costs into food prices and eventually affect every household, particularly the low-income ones. The initial attempt at rationing encouraged informal markets to thrive and led to selective enforcement. Second, there is the question of perception. Austerity is not only about economic adjustment but also about legitimacy. Households implicitly question whether they share the burden when asked to conserve energy, limit consumption, and absorb the rising costs. Are elites equally constrained? The SUVs with hosters are still roaming the streets while ride-sharing bikers are forced to spend one-third of their shifts collecting fuel. Is discipline being demanded only downward? This brings us to the third point: the question of governance style.

# Oracle layoffs Techie fired via automated HR mail receiving performance bonus ‘Rs 48 LPA to zero overnight

**Mumbai:** Oracle layoffs: Amid reports of widespread layoffs at Oracle impacting employees across regions, professionals have taken to social media to share personal accounts of job losses and the emotional toll that follows. The developments come as uncertainty grips the global tech sector, with workforce reductions becoming increasingly common.

The post quickly drew attention, with users expressing empathy and concern over the manner in which layoffs are being handled in the tech industry. Many pointed to the lack of human communication in such decisions, especially for long-serving employees.

A recent post on X has gone viral, detailing the experience of a senior employee who was allegedly laid off without prior notice despite years of service and recent recognition.

The user wrote, “Just got off a call with a friend who got laid off



from Oracle yesterday... Yesterday morning. No call. No warning. Just an automated HR email.”

According to the post, the employee was a Principal Software Engineer earning Rs 48 LPA and had spent 14 years with the company. He had recently moved his elderly

parents to Bengaluru and taken on higher living expenses, including a monthly rent of Rs 85,000. The post further mentioned that he has two children — one in college and another preparing for JEE — and was left stunned by the sudden turn of events. The post further said, “14

years of loyalty. 48 LPA to zero in one email. And they still put People First in their job postings. Hypocrites.” The emotional impact was evident, with the user noting that the employee sat in silence for several minutes, reflecting on how to break the news to his family.

# Kinet Railway Solutions achieves new milestone for Vande Bharat Sleeper train

**Mumbai:** Work on Vande Bharat sleeper trains has hit a new milestone this week as Kinet Railway Solution successfully completed its first car body. The update comes mere weeks after Prime Minister Narendra Modi flagged off the first Vande Bharat sleeper train between Kamakhya and Howrah. The manufacturing of the first car body was carried out at the Marathwada Rail Coach Factory in Latur, Maharashtra. The company said in a statement “We are pleased to announce the successful completion of the first fully integrated car body at our Latur facility;”. The introduction of sleeper variants of the Vande Bharat trains is transforming long-distance travel in India by offering faster, safer, and more comfortable journeys for passengers. India’s first

Vande Bharat Sleeper train was launched on 17 January 2026 on the Kamakhya–Howrah route. The train was developed by BEML using technology from the Integral Coach Factory (ICF). The introduction of sleeper variants of the Vande Bharat trains is transforming long-distance travel in India by offering faster, safer, and more comfortable journeys for passengers. Kinet Railway Solution was established to actively participate in the Vande Bharat project in India. Kinet Railway Solution is a joint venture between Transmashholding (TMH) and Rail Vikas Nigam Limited (RVNL). Indian Railways has selected Kinet Railway Solution to manufacture and maintain 120 Vande Bharat Sleeper trainsets, comprising a total of 1,920 coaches. The com-

pany was selected through an international tender. The Ministry of Railways has awarded contracts for the manufacturing of Vande Bharat Sleeper trains to three firms, including BEML, Kinet Railway Solutions, and a consortium of Titagarh Rail Systems Limited and Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL). BEML has been assigned the responsibility of designing and developing 10 sleeper trainsets, reflecting its strong capabilities in rail engineering. Vande Bharat Sleeper Project has achieved a major milestone as Kinet Railway Solution completed its first car body for Vande Bharat Sleeper trainset. The manufacturing of the first car body was held at the Marathwada Rail Coach Factory in Latur, Maharashtra.

## FPI exodus puts Sensex in bear territory in dollar



**Mumbai:** Shares of steel and aluminium producing companies were in focus on Thursday amid reports of the US President Donald Trump’s administration preparing to introduce a new rule on imports of products made using steel and aluminium products. The Nifty Metal index fell over 3 per cent to hit an intraday low of 11,052.55, dragged by Hindustan Copper, Hindustan Zinc, APL Apollo Tubes, Tata Steel, Steel Authority of India, Adani Enterprises, NMDC, and Jindal Steel falling over 2 per cent each. At 12:35 PM, the Nifty Metal index was trading at 11,239.15 levels, down by 1.52 per cent against the previous session’s close of 11,412.05. In comparison, the benchmark

NSE Nifty50 was quoting at 22,349.70 levels, down 329.70 points or 1.45 per cent. According to media reports, the United States could soon set a 25 per cent tariff on finished goods that contain imported steel and aluminium. Currently, a 50 per cent tariff is applied only to the value of the steel and aluminium used inside a product, while a proposed plan would instead impose a flat 25 per cent duty on such finished goods. However, products made largely of steel and aluminium would continue to attract the higher 50 per cent tariff. Among others, Vedanta, National Aluminium (NALCO), JSW Steel, Hindalco, and Lloyds Metals also fell over 1 per cent.

# Sensex, Nifty outlook for Monday, April 6 Key levels, trading strategy The BSE Sensex and NSE Nifty

**Mumbai:** Domestic equity markets ended a holiday-shortened, three-session trading week on a mostly flat note with a negative bias. The indices logged their sixth consecutive week of decline. Despite the overall weekly drop, where the BSE Sensex and NSE Nifty edged lower by 0.35% and 0.46%, respectively, Thursday’s session witnessed a sharp recovery that helped offset deeper losses. The 30-pack Sensex closed at 73,319.55, while the 50-pack Nifty settled at 22,713.10. Both benchmarks rebounded roughly 2.4% in their last session to end in the green. On the upside, analysts broadly see immediate resistance between 22,800 and 23,000. Overcoming this could open the door to a stronger supply hurdle in the 23,200–23,500 zone. Bank Nifty: Ponnudi notes the index is trading around 51,500, with a breakdown below 51,000 likely to push it toward the crucial 50,000 mark. Mishra identified further long-term support at 48,800 and 47,500. Resistance is staged around 52,000 to 52,500, with further supply pressure expected to be between 53,000 and 55,700.

Sensex: Currently near 73,300, the Sensex faces immediate resistance in the 73,800–74,000 range. Analysts believe an advance above 75,000 is necessary to meaningful-



ly shift sentiment, whereas a break below 72,000 could trigger further correction toward the 71,500–71,000 zone. Trading strategy: Hariprasad said for a highly selective approach, noting that the market is transitioning into a consolidation phase marked by low visibility. Mishra advised investors to prioritise capital preservation and tilt their portfolios toward fundamentally robust large-cap stocks with clear earnings visibility, while selectively exploring op-

portunities in metals, energy, and IT. However, Nifty futures on the NSE International Exchange recently traded down 165 points, or 0.73%, at 22,540, hinting at a negative opening. Domestic institutional investors (DIIs) have been a stabilising force, cushioning the market with inflows of around Rs 29,250 crore, which nearly offset the Rs 29,400 crore in outflows from foreign institutional investors (FIIs). Ponnudi R, CEO of Enrich Money noted. “Recent

gains appear to be relief-driven rather than indicative of a trend reversal, with rallies facing selling pressure and lacking sustained follow-through,” Ponnudi said. “The Reserve Bank of India’s monetary policy decision will be a key event, with participants closely tracking guidance on interest rates and the inflation outlook,” said Ajit Mishra – SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd. Key levels to watch

Nifty: Analysts highlighted that the index is currently stabilising near the 22,700 zone. Hariprasad pointed to 22,500 as immediate support, with a critical demand base formed in the 22,000–22,100 zone. Mishra added that deeper support lies at the 200 WEMA of 21,930, followed by 21,750. Despite the late-week rebound, the market’s remains fragile and influenced by external cues, such as elevated crude oil prices and the ongoing US-Iran conflict. Hariprasad K, SEBI-registered research analyst and founder of Livelong Wealth, observed that the strong demand emerging at lower levels indicates the market is attempting to build a near-term base. Still, he said that the broader trend is likely to remain ‘sell on rise’ in the near term unless the index can sustain itself above critical zones.

## 2 Large-cap stocks with a perfect Piotroski score

**Mumbai:** When we think about largecaps, we usually consider the financial health of the companies to be better than that of other mid and smallcap companies. However, that might not always be the case! When we tried to find largecap stocks with a perfect Piotroski score of 9, a financial metric that indicates the financial health of any company, we just found two of them. And surprisingly, both are from the same sector – the pharmaceutical sector. During 2025, this sector had a domestic market size of around USD 60 billion, which is projected to reach a whopping USD 130 billion by 2030. The Indian pharmaceutical industry is already the 3rd largest in the world by volume and 11th by value. During FY25, the annual turnover of the industry stood at ₹4.72 lakh crore, and exports stood at USD 30.5 billion. During 2025, Sun Pharma acquired Checkpoint Therapeutics Inc., which is the only and first-ever US FDA-approved Anti-PD-L1 antibody for cutaneous squamous cell carcinoma.

In the first half of FY26, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in this sector surged to ₹13,193 crore, and with the Biopharma Shakti proposal in the Union Budget 2026-2027, India’s pharma sector is poised to become one of the biggest global pharmaceutical manufacturing hubs. The above numbers perhaps indicate the reasons behind the two largecap stocks with the perfect Piotroski score being from this sector only. Let’s explore both stocks. #1 Sun Pharmaceutical Industries Limited: The Largest Company of All

Sun Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd. is the largest pharmaceutical company in the country with a market capitalisation of over 4 lakh crore (as of 2 April 2026). It has a global presence in over a hundred countries, and it is the 13th largest pharma brand in the US generic medicine market as well. The company offers generic medicines, branded generics, innovative medicines, and APIs. There are 40 manufacturing facilities with different manufacturing capabilities, which include ointments, liquid medicines, tablets, injectables, capsules, and more. It is not just the global presence that sets Sun Pharma apart, but its research and development capabilities, which make it truly global. Diversified Revenue Base During Q3FY26, Sun Pharma generated a gross sale of around ₹15,469 crore. US formulations contributed to 28% of this sale value, that is around ₹4,250 crore, which is a 6.2% YoY increase from the ₹4,030 crore generated in Q3FY25. The Indian formulation market contributed to 32% of the sales during the quarter, which is around ₹4,999 crore, up 16.2% from the corresponding quarter last fiscal. Emerging Markets constituted 19% of the gross sales, which amounts to around ₹2,999 crore, which is a whopping 28.3% rise from ₹2,338 crore of Q3FY25.

The rest of the world made another 17% while the APIs and others made the remaining 4% of the gross sales. Though APIs witnessed a drop in sales by 4.7% during the quarter, sales from the rest of the world surged by a massive 20.8%.

## ICICI Bank, Airtel, Infy, Titan, BEL, Groww, IndiGo, Tata Steel among top picks

**Mumbai:** Indian benchmark indices have tumbled sharply amid the ongoing West Asia crisis, rising crude oil prices, a depreciating Indian rupee, and persistent FII outflows. To recall, the BSE Sensex and Nifty50 have declined 13–14 per cent each in 2026 so far, while the fear gauge India VIX has nearly tripled on a year-to-date basis. However, brokerage firms have pencilled out select picks for FY27. Motilal Oswal Financial Services has highlighted FY26 as a near six-sigma year marked by major geo-economic and geopolitical events. These developments pushed equity market volatility to extreme levels amid economic uncertainties. Artificial intelligence emerged as a significant force influencing global market returns, particularly benefiting sectors linked to the AI ecosystem, it said. B&K Securities emphasised that policy decisions are more challenging under these conditions. Balancing growth support with inflation and external account management narrows policy options. Supplier diversification offers some relief but does not significantly reduce India’s dependence on imported energy, leaving it vulnerable to global price changes. These areas may receive ongoing policy support and investor interest, even

if immediate conflict-related risks ease, according to B&K Securities. The situation highlights structural challenges extending beyond short-term disruptions. It views the West Asia conflict as a catalyst for deeper global economic shifts. B&K Securities has picked ICICI Bank, Coal India, Max Financial, and Ashok Leyland from the large-cap space, while it has selected Aurobindo Pharma, GSK Pharma, Radico Khaitan, Navin Fluorine, Ramco Cements, Shyam Metals, Welspun Corp, Chalet Hotels, Usha Martin, Neuland Labs, Graphite India, BlackBuck, CarTrade Tech, Avalon Technologies, and Hindustan Foods as top broader market picks. Motilal Oswal pointed out that while these policy measures have yet to fully impact market sentiment, they are expected to deliver benefits in FY27. Domestic politics remained relatively calm in FY26, with only the Bihar state elections resulting in a record victory for the NDA coalition, signalling policy continuity. Looking ahead, B&K Securities suggested that while markets have priced in many risks, medium-term investment themes such as energy security, bioenergy, fuel substitution, supply-chain resilience, and increased inventories of critical materials will remain important. De-

fence spending is also expected to continue attracting attention beyond the conflict period

Motilal Oswal expects FY27 to present a more favourable base for Indian equities, despite ongoing geopolitical risks. Valuations have corrected, with the Nifty trading at a discount to long-term averages, offering a strong entry point amid expectations of double-digit earnings growth over the medium term. Bharti Airtel, State Bank of India (SBI), ICICI Bank, M&M, Titan, Bharat Electronics (BEL), Eternal, Tata Steel, Infosys, and InterGlobe Aviation (IndiGo) are the top picks of MOSFL from the Nifty50 basket, while it has picked TVS Motors, Groww, Indian Hotels, AU Small Finance Bank, Dixon Tech, Premier Energies, Coforge, Radico Khaitan, Delhivery, Lenskart, and ACME Solar as top non-Nifty ideas. The ongoing conflict in West Asia is likely to deepen global divisions rather than remain a short-term disruption, believes B&K Securities. This points to a more fragmented and uncertain international environment ahead. It highlighted that the energy shock from the conflict is still developing. Motilal Oswal observed a divergence between domestic and foreign institutional investors. Domestic investors re-

mained strong buyers, investing \$96 billion in FY26, while foreign investors recorded outflows of \$20 billion. This shift led to increased market sensitivity to foreign investment flows and was accompanied by an 8 per cent depreciation in the rupee

On the policy front, Motilal Oswal reported that both the Reserve Bank of India and the government actively pursued measures to stimulate demand. The RBI cut the cash reserve ratio and repo rate, alongside liquidity injections, while the government introduced tax reforms and bilateral trade agreements with the UK, EU, and US. For India, B&K Securities pointed out that higher energy costs affect the current account, inflation, and growth, tightening macroeconomic balance and limiting policy flexibility. These effects reflect a wider economic adjustment, as import costs influence inflation and growth.

Markets have moved away from expecting multiple rate cuts, facing a less predictable path with the possibility of prolonged higher rates if energy prices remain elevated, B&K Securities noted. Commodity prices follow a typical cycle—gold, base metals, then oil—indicating that reflationary pressures are still emerging.

## Following business pressure, the UK is considering relaxing planning requirements for industrial farms



**Washington:** Ministers are revising planning laws to make it easier to establish extensive animal farms, despite worries about water contamination, air quality, and community resistance. Documents obtained by the Guardian under the Freedom of Information Act show that ministers and officials discussed proposed changes to the national planning policy framework (NPPF) in response to concerns raised by the country’s leading chicken producers, who have been lobbying on the issue for at least two years. The British chicken Council (BPC), which represents the industry, warned agricultural minister Angela Eagle last October that “access to more growing space is the number one priority for the poultry meat sector.” In its submission to the government’s farm profitability review last summer, it said: “The need for a solution – either through planning reform or land-use policy – and the urgency of that need dwarfs all other issues currently facing us.” Before a poultry industry roundtable with Eagle in January, the BPC said it needed the government to “develop national planning direction and oversight for food production [...] to safeguard the UK’s long-term food security”. At the meeting, Eagle said: “We have also announced proposals to reform the planning system to more quickly unlock food and farming infrastructure. Planning should enable ambition, not stifle it.” Her briefing notes directly linked the proposed changes to industry lobbying, describing plan-

ning reform as one of the industry’s “biggest asks” and saying her department and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government had been working to “find solutions to planning barriers to poultry sheds and other infrastructure necessary for food production”. The draft NPPF includes several measures that could make it easier to approve new intensive livestock developments, including a higher bar for refusing applications on environmental grounds, less scope for local authorities to adopt tougher rules, greater weight to “domestic food production” and a new emphasis on “better accommodation for livestock”. The industry says it needs more space to house chickens due to voluntary commitments to lower stocking density. Critics say these welfare commitments are voluntary and planning conditions do not guarantee lower stocking densities will be maintained over the long term. Last month, several restaurant chains withdrew from the Better Chicken Commitment over its call to end the use of fast-growing birds. Richard Griffiths, the chief executive of the British Poultry Council, said planning reforms were needed to accommodate welfare improvements rather than to expand production. “Over the last year or so we have seen the biggest welfare-focused change in the industry in this generation, with a voluntary reduction in stocking density from 38kg to 30kg per square metre,” he said. “This requires additional space to simply bring us back – in

bird numbers – to where we were previously. This discussion is not about expansion of production.” He added the sector had to balance welfare with environmental impact and food security, saying that failing to support domestic production could lead to more imports. The BPC has also called for food production to be considered “critical national infrastructure”. But Prof Paul Behrens, an expert in food systems at the University of Oxford, said the food security case for intensive poultry was “illusory” because the sector “depends on imports for feed and vitamins, while making us more vulnerable to disease outbreaks like avian flu”. The poultry sector’s planning difficulties are largely driven by organised opposition, including local people, who often raise concerns over water pollution, air quality and the climate crisis.

Agriculture is the leading cause of water pollution in the UK. The Environment Agency estimated last year that it accounts for 70% of nitrate pollution and 25-30% of phosphorus pollution. Runoff from intensive poultry units is one contributor to that wider pollution burden. Last year councillors in Norfolk rejected plans by the food producer Cranswick to build what would have been one of Europe’s biggest chicken farms, which would have housed nearly 900,000 birds at a time. Planning officers said the company failed “to demonstrate that the development would not result in significant adverse effects on protected sites”. In a briefing for a livestock industry roundtable with the then Defra minister Daniel Zeichner in June last year, the BPC argued for early intervention by the Planning Inspectorate to minimise delays. It said:

“Having centralised oversight would also bring objectivity into a system where naysayers, particularly via social media, have a disproportionate sway in the decisionmaking process, but have little or no responsibility to provide evidence or justification.”

Communities Against Factory Farming has said the proposed planning regime “risks embedding decades of industrial livestock land use in rural and green belt locations without adequate scrutiny”. Maya Pardo, the lead campaigner for the group, said: “By directing decisionmakers to give ‘substantial weight’ to the economic benefits of livestock intensification, the proposal will effectively give a green light to megafarm expansion, despite well-documented damage to rivers, air quality and rural communities.” A government spokesperson said: “We reject that our NPPF proposals are linked to lobbying – we have carefully considered how we can support all sectors whilst reflecting wider government priorities such as food security and safeguarding the environment.

## Starmer asks for ‘ambitious’ new UK-EU connections as Trump threatens to leave NATO

**Europe:** The UK will seek an even closer co-operation with the EU as a result of the uncertainty caused by Donald Trump’s conflict with Iran, according to Keir Starmer, adding that the time has come for a more ambitious agreement with Brussels to bolster trade and defence. His remarks came as the US president reiterated his intention to withdraw from NATO, which he referred to as a “paper tiger”. Trump has regularly chastised the United Kingdom and European nations for failing to back US-Israeli assaults on Iran, as well as criticized their armies. In another jab at the prime minister, Trump told the Daily Telegraph that he thought King Charles would have supported his strikes on Iran. The monarch is set to visit the United States later this month and address Congress on April 28. Starmer said at a news conference on Wednesday that rebuilding deeper links with Europe would imply a “partnership for a dangerous world we must navigate together” - his strongest indication yet that he plans to refocus towards Europe and away from the US. He stated that Brexit had caused “deep damage” to the UK economy and that he would take advantage of the opportunity to repair that harm at a new summit in early summer, claiming that Britain’s long-term national interests necessitated a deeper partnership. “The opportunities to strengthen our security and cut the cost of living are simply too big to ignore,” the prime minister said. No date has yet been named for the summit but Starmer said he wanted explicitly to explore closer ties beyond what was agreed at the Lancaster House summit last May. “We want to be more ambitious. Closer economic cooperation, closer security cooperation, a partnership that recognises our shared values, our shared interest and our shared future. A partnership for the dangerous world that we must navigate together.” Starmer said he would not be put under pressure by Trump’s Nato comments, and that he wanted to reassure British people that they would not get “dragged in” to the wider conflict. “Whatever the pressure on me and others, whatever the noise, I’m going to act in the British national interest in the decisions that I make,” he said. Starmer said Britain should strengthen cooperation with the EU on defence, security, energy and the economy. “I’m ambitious that we could do more in relation to the single market, because I think that’s hugely in our economic interests,” he said. “Obviously, this is a matter of negotiation and discussion with the EU but the summit we have this year will not be just a



stocktake summit. It will be a deliberate ambition on our part to go further than that and to co-operate more deeply, including in the economic sphere.” The summit is expected to take place in Brussels in June or July, though talks have stalled on areas that the UK had already agreed in principle with Brussels last year. The EU’s insistence that its citizens get home fees if they attend university in the UK has meant talks on youth mobility are at a standstill, and there have been clashes over a brake clause or cap on numbers for the visa. A sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) deal agreed last May has also made slow progress, though there is a hoped-for announcement to come on emissions trading. One option would be for the UK to pursue something akin to what Switzerland agreed with the EU in early March: a dynamic alignment framework for major sectors including food, energy, health and science. “We want to remove the Tory Brexit barriers that killed growth and hiked prices, replacing the paperwork tax at the border and their ideological fantasy with commonsense economic reality that benefits the continent’s economic resilience,” a government source said. “We won’t let the dogmatic approach favoured by Kemi Badenoch or Nigel Farage ignore the benefits of a pragmatic, ambitious partnership with Europe.” The Cabinet Office has been looking at what more could be done with sectoral regulatory alignment, which could reboot exports for both sides in everything

from medical devices to chemicals. Some areas, such as financial services, were off the table, but sources said there were more areas where British businesses were, in practice, already closely aligned and where a formal agreement would cause minimal disruption and boost economic growth. “Everything is up for contention and we are taking a look at the entire playing field,” the government source said. It is defence where ministers are the most keen to have deeper discussions for the longer term. Specifically about how to bolster collective European defence in a continent where just one nation, France, has an independent nuclear deterrent and the UK’s own nuclear capabilities are deeply dependent on the US. The European Union defence commissioner, Andrius Kubilius, said in January the bloc should consider establishing a standing military force of 100,000 troops and a European security council which would include the UK. A Cabinet Office source said any discussions on this were limited because there were no defined programmes in play that the UK could seek to join in the short term. While some EU states are frustrated with the British government’s use of rhetorical language, which is seen as lacking specifics, the speech was well received by some. A diplomat at one EU embassy said:

“This is the second speech after Rachel Reeves’s a few days ago with very positive tones when it comes to economic cooperation.”

## See how the Ukraine and Iran battles are beginning to collide



**Europe:** The Iran and Ukraine battles are getting increasingly interwoven with each passing week, to the point that some observers believe the two conflicts are merging. It is difficult to anticipate how each battle will impact the course of the other, but it is evident that their interconnectivity is bringing additional nations into both cauldrons, creating an arc of instability across Europe and the Middle East. The relationship is not new in Ukraine. Russia started utilizing Iranian-made Shahed drones in September 2022, seven months into Vladimir Putin’s full-fledged war. What is new is Moscow’s return of favour to Tehran, with a reported transfer of intelligence, targeting, and drones to Iran following the US-Israeli strike on February 28. Volodymyr Zelenskyy’s recent tour of the Middle East has cemented yet another cross-regional link between the two conflicts, with agreements signed to provide drone and anti-drone technology and training to Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar, as well as security talks with Jordan. The two battles are also converging on global energy markets. The first impact of the strike on Iran, combined with Tehran’s response of closing down Gulf commerce via the Strait of Hormuz, benefited Russia by raising oil and gas prices. For Moscow, the spike in demand has given an economic lifeline at a time when the economy was under increasing strain, compelling the Kremlin to abandon plans for budget cuts. To stabilise the market, the Trump administration has eased some restrictions on Russian oil exports that were intended to pressure the Kremlin over its war in Ukraine. Furthermore, Asian countries, particularly those hit by the closure of the strait of Hormuz – including Vietnam, Thailand, the Philippines, Indonesia and Sri Lanka – are now lining up to buy Russian oil. In an effort to limit Russia’s windfall, Ukraine has in recent days intensified strikes on Russian energy infrastructure. A Reuters estimate last week said up to 40% of Russia’s oil export capacity had been halted after mass Ukrainian drone attacks. The conflicts have become so interlocked that what happens in one theatre of war now has a tangible impact on the other – a fact emphasised by European states, anxious to avoid being sucked into a spiralling Middle East conflagration. The UK defence secretary, John Healey, pointed to Putin’s “hidden hand” behind Iran’s drone tactics. “These wars are very much interlinked,” said the EU foreign policy chief, Kaja Kallas. “So if America wants the war in the Middle East to stop – Iran to stop attacking them

– they should also put the pressure on Russia so that they are not able to help them.” The Trump administration has been reluctant to acknowledge the linkage, maintaining preferential treatment of Moscow, easing sanctions, allowing a Russian shipment of oil to break the US blockade on Cuba even as ever stronger evidence emerged of Russian assistance to Iran in the midst of the war. The US secretary of state, Marco Rubio, insisted Russia’s role in Iran was not “impeding or affecting” US operations. “The Americans don’t want to interlink the two wars and punish Russia,” said Hanna Notte, the director for Eurasia at the James Martin Centre for Nonproliferation Studies. There are signs that the US is putting more pressure on Kyiv for its attacks on Russian oil facilities, keeping the oil price high, than on Moscow for supplying lethal weaponry to Iran to fire at US and allied targets. The Financial Times reported on Wednesday that Trump had threatened to cut off weapon supplies to Ukraine if European allies did not help reopen the Hormuz strait. Speaking to reporters on Monday, Zelenskyy said Kyiv had received “signals” from partners urging it to scale back strikes on Russian energy facilities. He insisted that the strikes would continue as long as Russian attacks targeted Ukraine’s own energy infrastructure. Russia’s deepening involvement in Iran’s defence, however, will put new pressure on Trump’s pro-Russian inclinations. For the Kremlin, support to Iran offers a chance to rebuild its geopolitical standing after a series of setbacks. Dragged down by its war in Ukraine, the Kremlin was forced to stand largely on the sidelines as key allies fell – including the toppled Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad and Venezuela’s Nicolás Maduro, who was captured in a US operation and removed from power. “Once it became clear that the US was struggling to convert military superiority into political gains, Russia saw an opportunity to expose American weakness,” Notte said. “It is in their interests to give the Americans a bloody nose and prolong the war.” Zelenskyy has alleged that Moscow provided Iran with intelligence based on satellite imagery in the run-up to an Iranian drone and missile strike on US planes and personnel at the Prince Sultan airbase in Saudi Arabia on Friday, injuring 12 Americans.

Russia is also suspected of sending drones, perhaps including Gerans, Moscow’s own update on the Shahed, in road shipments disguised as humanitarian convoys. Ukraine’s bloodily earned experience of Shaheds and Gerans made Zelenskyy a sought-after

guest in Gulf capitals. He has seized the opening, offering to export low-cost, battlefield-tested technologies to help address local shortages of weapons, while showcasing a new global role for Ukraine: no longer just a recipient of aid, but a supplier. Kyiv is not just selling interceptors, but also software, electronic warfare systems and maritime drones. “We are taking a systemic approach to this,” Zelenskyy said. Orysia Lutsevych, the head of the Ukraine Forum at the Chatham House thinktank, said Ukraine’s new security network in the Gulf gives the country more clout with Washington – a riposte to Trump’s repeated jibe that Kyiv has “no cards” in its battle with Russia. “Ukraine is trying to show that our cards are about being a very robust, agile, fast-adapting and producing economy that can both defend against Russia and also defend other countries through weapons system sales,” Lutsevych said. She added that the security relationships cultivated in the Gulf could provide a vital alternative source of desperately needed finance for Ukraine’s arms industry, at a time when EU funds have been blocked by Hungary. “Ukraine has production capabilities but not enough investment. It can produce more, but it doesn’t have enough orders or capital,” Lutsevych said. “So this actually comes as a great opportunity to use these production facilities.”

The interconnected regional conflicts are still some way off from becoming a world war, argued William Spaniel, an associate political science professor at the University of Pittsburgh, “but it is further connecting the battlefield outcomes, and it will have longer lasting implications for how the battle lines are divided”. Fiona Hill, a former Russia adviser in the first Trump administration, argued that if modern forms of warfare such as cyber, hybrid and other grey zone operations are taken into account, a world war has been under way for some time and has been brought closer to a boil by the Iran war. “I think it meets that threshold for a system-changing war,” Hill, now at the Brookings Institution, said.

“There’ll be all kinds of new configurations of countries that will have sprung up.” She pointed to the unpredictable impact on global stability of oil and fertiliser shortages, giving a wide array of other states motives to become involved in the Middle East, and the question of whether China would take advantage of Washington’s distraction to take action against Taiwan. “We’ve got a ‘four horses of the apocalypse’ going here ... and I just feel that people are sleepwalking into it.”

# The egg flight trend: Tim Dowling ranks 10 boiled egg appetisers - from perfect to never again

Generally speaking, the more TikTok trends you allow to pass you by in a year, the better. But some trends refuse to cease, and the egg flight is turning out to be one of them. The egg flight, in all its many forms, persists. Simply put, an egg flight is to hard-boiled eggs what a wine flight is to wine – a varietal sampling, presented in one sitting. Unlike devilled eggs, where the yolk is scooped out, mashed with mayonnaise and spices and piped back into its former cavity, the egg flight is just some eggs – most commonly three, in six upturned halves – with different stuff piled on top. The result is meant to be a quick but still fancy appetiser range, destined to impress your guests, your family, or at least the rest of TikTok. The originator and chief populariser of the egg flight (or #eggflight) is an American cookery blogger and TikTokker called Alice Choi (AKA @hipfoodiemom1). She has been doing them for years, but her egg demonstrations first went viral this time last year, and egg-flight TikTok posts now number in the thousands. All over the world, people are still getting excited about their egg flights. Would-be egg-flight makers are encouraged to get creative and try new things, but in practice the discipline seems to involve a lot of imitation, in keeping with the average TikTokker’s overarching definition of originality: the exact same thing, but with me doing it. In that same spirit, here are 10 popular variations, dutifully copied and ranked. A quick note: my eggs were boiled for just under 11 minutes, plunged into ice water,



then carefully peeled and halved. Before you begin, I recommend putting a small blob of mayonnaise on the plate beneath each egg half to stop it rocking back and forth while you dress it.

**1. The Classic.** In one of her viral tutorials, @hipfoodiemom1 offers the closest thing we may ever have to an Egg Flight Theory: the ideal egg requires something creamy, topped by something tangy, topped by something sour and/or crunchy. The Classic is the most basic combo to follow that formula and it’s easily the best: mayo, dijon mustard and a slice of dill pickle. That’s it – stop there. It’s essentially a lazy person’s devilled egg, and,

honestly, it cannot be improved upon.

**2. Kimchi.** Another of Choi’s creamy/tangy/sour stacks, with a mayo-mustard base and fermented cabbage at its apex. Overall this may be your best bet, since it’s easier to buy good kimchi in the UK than it is to find a decent dill pickle.

**3. Smoked salmon.** A popular school of thought in egg-flight circles involves treating the egg as if it were some other foodstuff – in this case, a bagel layered with cream cheese, smoked salmon, capers, dill and possibly some poppy or sesame seeds. This sort of variation often flounders on its implicit unfulfilled promise – a hard-boiled

egg is not a bagel, after all – but it works here because all the ingredients share a general breakfast vibe.

**4. Caprese.** Mozzarella, tomato, a single, appropriately sized basil leaf and a drizzle of balsamic vinegar. By now you will have noticed a key drawback to the egg flight: you need a huge variety of ingredients – in very small amounts – to produce six completely different eggs. There is ultimately more shopping



than cooking involved. The caprese salad egg is a nice idea, but at this point the notion of not bothering is also beginning to take hold.

**5. Mexican.** Across TikTok, you will find egg halves piled with a selection of some, if not all, of the following: guacamole, taco meat, tortilla slivers or crumbs, onion, tomato, sour cream, hot sauce, coriander, jalapeño. Of course that’s way too many things – I strongly advise you to

stick with a maximum of four. Anyway, these ingredients are not the problem. The problem is the hard-boiled egg at the bottom: it doesn’t belong.

**6. Pickled onion.** Again, the rule of smooth-tangy-sour applies here – you need all three to offset the rubbery blandness of the egg. Choi pickles her own onions with rosemary and cinnamon and always has a jar on hand, but you can easily manage a quick

pickle – thinly sliced onion steeped in salt and rice vinegar for half an hour. Or, in an emergency, you can just use mayo, mustard and raw onion, although I can’t really imagine the set of circumstances that would lead to an egg-flight emergency.

**7. Tzatziki.** My only original contribution to the egg-flight canon, because I found that I had some tzatziki on hand – Greek yoghurt mixed with grated cucumber, minced garlic

and chopped mint, with a sprinkling of paprika on top. I don’t mean to blow my own horn, but this works better than perhaps it should. I have since seen other people on TikTok spooning tzatziki on eggs, and then pushing chickpeas into it. I cannot condone this.

**8. BLT.** You get the idea: bacon, lettuce, tomato, mayo. An enduring combination let down by the fact that the whole mouthful is still going to be 80% egg by weight – a flavour imbalance that simply cannot be corrected. It is possibly a little late in the game for me to confess that I don’t really care for hard-boiled eggs, and I’ve already consumed more of them in an afternoon than I normally would in a year.

**9. Caesar salad.** Even if you love hard-boiled eggs – and I’ve made my position clear – you must eventually accept that the egg flight is a steeply descending staircase: the law of diminishing returns comes into effect once you’ve passed half a dozen variations. When you start making a caesar salad on top of an egg – lettuce, miniature croutons, dressing, parmesan shavings – you’ve taken things too far. It looks better in a photograph than it’s ever going to taste.

**10. Burger egg.** Given my ambivalence toward the hard-boiled egg – which has long since curdled into full-blown hostility – the last variation I tried to make was always going to rank the lowest. This really was a disappointment, however: idiotically sized mini-burger, cheese square, tomato, ketchup. It’s not a burger and it is not a fitting topping for an egg. Null points, and never again.

## Vegan recipe for Sichuan-style braised aubergines with tofu



With spring in the air, I want a dish that’s the equivalent of turning the key in the ignition, firing up the engine and riding off into the sun. In short: something with a bit of va-va-voom. That dish, for me, is these Sichuan aubergines, a take on the classic “fish fragrant aubergines” (so called because the same aromatics are often used to cook fish). Creamy to begin with, they’re layered with flavour by way of ginger, garlic, spring onion and, finally, laced with delight and good times owing to the bright chilli bean sauce and vinegar.

**Sichuan-style braised aubergines with tofu**

Chilli bean sauce (doubanjiang) can be found in big supermarkets, specialist Asian food stores and online. To use the whole spring onion, wash them properly to remove any grit by slicing, covering with water and scooping out into a colander (rather than drain-

ing).

Prep 10 min  
Cook 35 min  
Serves 4  
3 aubergines (1kg), each cut lengthways into eighths  
Rapeseed oil  
Fine sea salt  
280g extra-firm tofu, drained  
2cm x 2cm piece fresh ginger, peeled and minced  
4 garlic cloves, peeled and minced  
100g spring onions, whites and greens separated and finely sliced  
Steamed rice, to serve  
For the sauce  
1 tbsp cornflour  
4 tbsp doubanjiang – I like Lee Kum Kee  
2 tbsp light soy sauce  
2 tbsp rice vinegar  
½ tbsp dark brown sugar  
Heat the oven to 220C (200C fan)/425F/gas 7, and line a large baking tray.  
Rub the aubergines all over with four tablespoons of oil

and a teaspoon of salt, then arrange them on their sides on the lined tray. Roast for 20-25 minutes, turning once halfway, until golden brown. Remove and put to one side.

Meanwhile, make the sauce. In a small bowl, mix the cornflour with two tablespoons of water, then stir in the doubanjiang, soy sauce, rice vinegar, sugar and 300ml water.

Squash the tofu with the back of a knife into a rough mince. In a frying pan, heat four more tablespoons of oil on a medium to high heat. Add the ginger, garlic and spring onion whites, stir-fry for four minutes, until the garlic and ginger no longer smell raw, then add the tofu and cook, stirring, until it’s browned.

Add the aubergines and the sauce mixture, bring to a simmer and leave to thicken. Sprinkle over the spring onion greens and serve with steamed rice.

## Thomasina Miers’ recipes for aromatic chicken one-pot and salted caramel banana cake

Sunday best: Thomasina Miers’ recipes for aromatic chicken one-pot and salted caramel banana cake

It’s wild garlic time again! Try this pesto with an aromatic chicken, fennel and potato stew, then dive into a fudgy banana cake with a tantalisingly crunchy top

Thomasina Miers  
Sat 4 Apr 2026 10.00 BST  
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4

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I love Mexican chillies for the subtle flavour they give to cooking. Take the ancho, with its sweet, earthy notes of chocolate and plum. That adds immense depth to dishes traditional and avant garde alike, and is now readily available online and in shops. In today’s one-pot, which is a near-perfect way to cook a whole chicken, the ancho adds character to a classic sofrito, while in the pudding the savoury notes and touch of heat complement the dark caramel, helping to create a banana cake that is anything but bland. If you can’t find ancho, try any other medium-heat chilli flake in its place (nora, aleppo), or simply leave it out. The results will be delicious either way.

**Chicken pot-au-feu with wild garlic pesto**

Wild garlic tends to be very strong at the start of the season, so I prefer to cut it with parsley; and if you can’t find wild garlic, go all-out parsley with a peeled garlic clove. This pesto is also magic on a jacket spud, pasta or a toasted



cheese sandwich, but it really comes into its own when stirred through these sublime chicken juices.

Prep 10 min  
Cook 2 hr  
Serves 4-5  
1 tbsp olive oil  
150g smoky bacon lardons  
1 medium chicken (about 1½kg)  
1 head garlic  
4 banana shallots, peeled and halved  
4 celery stalks, washed and trimmed  
2 heads fennel, chopped into large chunks  
2-3 rosemary sprigs  
2 bay leaves  
Salt  
1 tbsp fennel seeds  
1 tsp black peppercorns  
1 tsp ancho chilli flakes (optional)  
500g new potatoes, halved  
180ml white wine  
For the pesto  
50g pine nuts  
40g wild garlic  
30g parsley  
1 tsp salt  
150ml olive oil  
Heat the oven to 190C (170C fan)/375F/gas 5. Put the oil in a large casserole on a medium high-heat, saute the lardons for five or six minutes, until golden, then transfer to a small plate. In the same pan,

brown the chicken in the bacon fat, turning it with two wooden spoons so it browns all over. Once browned, transfer the chicken to a second plate. Break open the garlic head, then bash the cloves to release their papery skins, which you can chuck away. Put the shallots, celery, fennel and garlic in the casserole, add all the fresh herbs, season generously with salt, then turn down the heat to medium and saute for eight to 10 minutes.

While the vegetables are cooking, lightly crush the fennel seeds and peppercorns, then stir them into the vegetables, add the ancho flakes, if using, and let the mix catch and caramelise lightly. Once the vegetables are looking wonderfully glossy and golden, return the lardons and chicken to the pan and add the halved potatoes. Pour in the wine and 300ml water and bring to a simmer. Cover with a tight-fitting lid, pop in the oven, and cook for about 90 minutes, until the chicken is cooked through and falling off the bone and the potatoes are tender. Meanwhile, make the pesto by blitzing all the ingredients in a blender until green and vibrant. Serve the aromatic chicken drizzled with the pesto.



**Salted caramel, chocolate and banana cake with crunchy sesame topping**

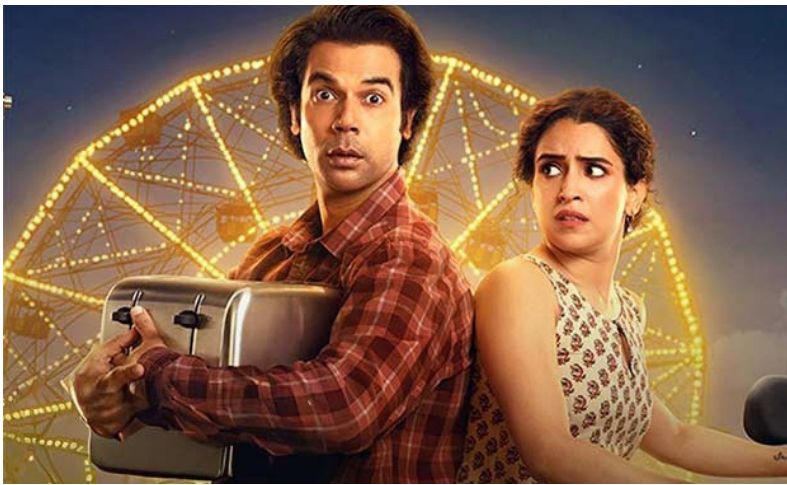
A rich, delicious fudgy cake that manages to be at once decadent and wholesome. Perfect with Greek yoghurt, but you could no doubt whip up a burnt caramel buttercream if you wanted more of that naughtiness.

Prep 15 min  
Cook 1 hr 20 min  
Serves 6-8  
270g golden caster sugar  
180g room-temperature unsalted butter, cubed  
480g ripe bananas, peeled and sliced  
1 tsp vanilla essence  
2 large eggs, beaten  
290g flour – I used a mix of white and wholemeal spelt  
1 tsp baking powder  
1 tsp bicarbonate of soda  
½ tsp salt  
90g dark chocolate, roughly chopped  
Greek yoghurt or cream, to serve  
For the topping  
2 tbsp sesame seeds  
3 tbsp demerara sugar  
1 tsp ancho chilli flakes (optional)  
½ tsp salt  
½ tsp ground cinnamon

Start by making the caramel. Put the sugar and three tablespoons of water in a light-coloured, stainless-steel pan (this will help you gauge the colour of the caramel later) and put it on a medium-high heat, stirring to help the sugar dissolve. Cook, swirling the pan occasionally, until the caramel turns a deep, dark colour, then take off the heat and whisk in the butter. Keep warm over a very low heat. Blitz the bananas in a food processor, then pour in the warm caramel, blitz again and pour into a large bowl. At this point, heat the oven to 200C (180C fan)/390F/gas 6 and line a 24cm cake tin with greaseproof paper. Add the vanilla essence to the banana bowl, then slowly beat in the eggs one at a time. Start on the topping. Lightly toast the sesame seeds in a frying pan, then tip into a mortar and bash lightly. Add the demerara sugar, ancho chilli flakes (if using), salt and cinnamon to the sesame seed mix and toss to combine. Back to the batter: sift the flour, baking powder, bicarb and salt into a second bowl. Make a well in the centre of the banana batter, then tip in the flour mix and whisk to combine. Stir in the chopped chocolate, then pour the cake batter into the lined tin and sprinkle with the sesame topping. Bake in the middle of the oven for 35-45 minutes, until a skewer inserted into the centre comes out clean. Leave to cool in the tin for 10-15 minutes before turning out, then cut into fat slices and serve with thick yoghurt or cream.

# In a comedy, Rajkummar Rao portrays a kanjoos makhichoos

**Mumbai:** The trailer for Toaster, Rajkummar Rao’s upcoming movie, is currently available. On April 15, the movie, which also stars Sanya Malhotra, will be available immediately on Netflix. In the film, Rajkummar plays a frugal man whose wife suffers as a result of his penny-pinching tendencies. She is frustrated because he keeps track of every rupee spent. But when they purchase a toaster as a wedding present for someone, things go out of hand. This toaster is so unique that practically everyone in the city starts chasing after it. Archana Puran Singh, Abhishek Banerjee, Farah Khan, Upendra Limaye, Vinod Rawat, Jitendra Joshi, and Seema Pahwa are among the ensemble cast members of Toaster, which is directed by Vivek Das Chaudhary and produced by Patralekhaa under Kampa Film. The trailer didn’t do well on the internet. Someone said, “I now understand why this movie was unsold for almost two years.” Another person remarked, “I haven’t laughed in seven days, and today is day eight.” Another wrote, “Ghuma fir ke wahi same roles me fasa hua hai ye banda (this guy is caught in the same kind of roles).” Some also believed that the film had potential. Rajkummar Rao expressed his opinions about the movie, saying, “This is a special one for me as it marks our first film under our production house, Kampa Film and



produced by Patralekhaa.” I can’t wait to tell this story to audiences. I was particularly drawn to Toaster because of the way something so insignificant can take up someone’s thoughts. Ramakant is a person who sincerely thinks he is acting morally. He views his acts as pragmatic rather than radical. However, that’s precisely what makes the trip so erratic. The video is captivating and fascinating because it depicts a story that originates from a very real place and shows how sincerity can turn into turmoil. Working with such a talented cast, which truly made this universe come to life, was also a pleasure. Working with Netflix once more feels fantastic. It’s thrilling to be working behind and in front of

the camera this time, since they have always supported fresh narratives and storytellers. According to a statement, Patralekhaa discussed going into production, saying, “Starting this journey with Netflix, who have consistently championed distinctive and unconventional stories, makes it even more special.” As soon as we read Toaster, we knew it was a story we wanted to bring to life since it finds humor in the most unexpected places. The fact that this is our first movie makes the experience even more intimate for us. It has been incredibly thrilling to have such a fantastic group come together for this adventure, and we are eager for audiences to embark on this thrilling and unpredictable journey,” she continued.

# Anupam Kher commended Ranveer Singh and Vicky Kaushal for their talent and commitment



**Mumbai:** Numerous Bollywood celebs attended the star-studded celebration of NMACC’s third anniversary. The event happened in Mumbai on April 4. Anupam Kher quipped that he felt like a stranger among Vicky Kaushal and Ranveer Singh in a photo he posted of the occasion. In a charming way, he went on to say that he always supports them. “What a joy it is to see their energy, their dedication, and their constant hunger to grow,” he wrote, adding that he is constantly cheering them on. makes me feel confident, proud, and, yes, a little competitive! It was a pleasure to

meet these two yesterday. I adore them, respect them, and am constantly cheering them on! “Jai Ho!” “You are an inspiration, Sir, for all of us,” Vicky said in response to his message. When Vicky, Ranveer, and Anupam appeared in the same frame, fans were likewise unable to remain composed. “Volcano of talent in one frame” was one of the remarks. “Sir with two SUPERSTARS. Someone cast them in a movie,” said another. “Acting collection of the whole world together in one frame,” commented a different devotee. “Yeh Naya Bollywood hai (This is new Bollywood)”

wrote another. Ranveer is now experiencing two consecutive victories. His movie Dhurandhar, which made over ₹1,300 crore globally in 2025, shattered box office records and became the highest-grossing Bollywood film. In just three weeks, his most recent film, Dhurandhar: The Revenge, has surpassed the first part’s global receipts and is currently dominating the box office. With almost ₹1,500 crore so far, the movie is getting closer to surpassing the record set by S. S. Rajamouli’s Baahubali 2: The Conclusion (₹1,788 crore). Chhava, starring Vicky Kaushal,

became a global box office success in 2025, earning over ₹800 crore. The movie, which also starred Akshaye Khanna, Divya Dutta, and Rashmika Mandanna, became the third-highest grossing picture of 2025. Right now, Vicky is working hard on his next movie, Love & War. Ranbir Kapoor and Alia Bhatt play key parts in the film, which is directed by Sanjay Leela Bhansali. However, Ranveer’s next appearance is in Pralay. According to reports, Kalyani Priyadarshan plays the female protagonist in the zombie drama, which is directed by Jai Mehta. Anupam Kher is looking forward to the release of Khosla Ka Ghosla 2. The film is produced by Bhushan Kumar, Krishan Kumar, Savita Raj Hiremath, and Raj Hiremath under the direction of Prashant Bhargia. It is a follow-up to the 2006 release of the cult favorite Khosla Ka Ghosla. Boman Irani, Ranvir Shorey, Tara Sharma, Parvin Dabas, and Kiran Juneja, among others, play significant parts in the sequel. On August 28, 2026, it is slated to open in theaters.

# Aditya Dhar was urged by numerous actresses to pair them with Ranveer in Dhurandhar



**Mumbai:** The movie office has been dominated by Aditya Dhar’s spy thrillers, first Dhurandhar and now Dhurandhar: The Revenge. In addition to R. Madhavan, Akshaye Khanna, and Ranveer Singh, Sara Arjun is also getting a lot of love and admiration for her portrayal of Yalina. Casting director Mukesh Chhabra explained why Sara was chosen over another prominent female protagonist in a recent interview with Bollywood Hungama. In response to a question concerning Sara’s casting, Mukesh stated, “Many people were messaging Aditya too, saying they wanted to be cast opposite Ranveer.” I was also receiving messages. However, I made it very clear to Aditya that we needed a face that didn’t have any prior baggage and actually looked like she belonged there. Because his character is traveling to Pakistan and meeting her, a new face would be more effective than any actor who has worked with Ranveer on two movies. “Toh completely fresh face hona chahiye tha,” he continued. Sara had acted in movies as a child, but she

had never played full-fledged parts in Bollywood productions. We were certain that hum uss duniya main jaa rah hain, toh ekdum surprise hona chahiye kj ladki kaun hai. Hume itne auditions kiya, 1200-1300 auditions kiye, and Sara ko final audition kiya. It had to be a brand-new face since we were likewise itching for something new. Sara had performed in movies as a child, but she had never played full-fledged parts in Bollywood productions. We knew that if we were going to enter that environment, it had to be a total surprise—people should be curious in this girl. After holding a total of 1,200–1,300 auditions, we eventually had Sara try out. We were also itching for a fresh face. Sara plays Yalina, the daughter of politician Jameel Jamali in Aditya Dhar’s film, who marries Ranveer Singh after falling in love with him. As Yalina learns the truth about his origin, the second section depicts the increasing strain in their marriage. Sanjay Dutt, R. Madhavan, Arjun Rampal, Akshaye Khanna, and others have significant roles in the two-part movie. While Dhurandhar made ₹1,300 crore at the box office worldwide, Dhurandhar: The Revenge has made over ₹1,500 crore and is getting near to exceeding Baahubali 2’s lifetime total of ₹1,788.06 crore. Blockbusters like KGF: Chapter 2 (₹859.70 crore), RRR (₹782.20 crore), and Kalki 2898 AD (₹646 crore) have never made as much money as the film, which had a huge start at the box office with ₹145 crore and has since made ₹959 crore net in India. At the box office, the movie still has a lot of momentum.

# Amidst the success of Dhurandhar 2, Ranveer Singh attends the NMACC gala

**New Delhi:** Ranveer Singh is enjoying the success of his most recent two films, Dhurandhar and Dhurandhar The Revenge. With a global box office receipt of ₹1300 crore, the debut movie exceeded all expectations and lit up the box office. In India, the sequel, which debuted last month, is almost at ₹1000 crore. The actor went out to attend the Nita Mukesh Ambani Cultural Centre’s (NMACC) third anniversary festivities in Mumbai, despite not participating in any promotions for either movie. His appearance was adored by fans, who left comments on social media. Ranveer looked stylish in what appeared to be a bandhgala suit for the occasion. His ensemble was made more sophisticated with a light-colored pocket square. He added tinted spectacles and a stud earring to finish the ensemble. He grinned and posed for the photographers before entering the venue. Salman Khan, Kiara Advani, Ananya Panday, Sidharth Malhotra, and Jackie Shroff were among

# According to Abhishek Bachchan, his union with Aishwarya Rai has always been about “partnership”

**Mumbai:** After over 20 years of marriage, Abhishek Bachchan has talked candidly about his relationship with Aishwarya Rai. The couple has a daughter named Aaradhya and has acted in a number of films. In a recent interview with Lilly Singh, Abhishek revealed that from the start of their relationship, there was no rivalry between them about their careers or who was more successful. “When my parents got married, my mother was the much bigger star than my father was,” Abhishek said, reflecting on his career and marriage. Therefore, it wasn’t abnormal. I wasn’t raised to believe that dominance was necessary; instead, it was always about teamwork. Since the beginning of my career, I have known Aishwarya. She is the only actress I have worked with the most, and we collaborated on the second movie. Back then, we weren’t dating; instead, we were friends and comrades. “It was always about a partnership when we did finally come together through our courtship, engagement, and then marriage,” he went on. There has never been a conversation like, “You take care of the house, and I’ll bring the food.” It flows so naturally that it isn’t even discussed. But in my opinion, that



stems from a serious ego. I don’t want to win because you walked over after someone else laid down. I was brought up to think that victories are earned. I was not launched by my father, and he hasn’t yet produced a movie for me. I actually made a movie for him. I’m happy. I can say that I am who I am today because of my own efforts. I say ego because I’ve never been the type of person who needs to quit up or stop running in order for me to win a race. After meeting in the early 2000s, Abhishek and Aishwarya worked together on movies including Guru and Dhoom 2. Aaradhya, their

daughter, was born in 2011 after they were married in April 2007. The pair has mostly kept their personal life private over the years, only sporadically responding to rumors. Mani Ratnam’s Ponniyin Selvan: II (2023) was Aishwarya’s most recent movie. Her next project has not yet been revealed. The last time we saw Abhishek was in Madhumita’s Kaalidhar Laapata. Daivik Bhagela and Mohammed Zeeshan Ayyub also starred in the movie. He will soon be seen with Shah Rukh Khan, Suhana Khan, and others in Siddharth Anand’s King.

# The casting director of Dhurandhar claims that three actors turned down the role of Rehman Dakait



**Mumbai:** Since its March 19 release, Aditya Dhar’s Dhurandhar: The Revenge has been one of the year’s biggest box office triumphs. New details about the casting process of the Ranveer Singh-led spy thriller have surfaced, despite the film’s continued dominance at the box office worldwide. Casting director Mukesh Chhabra discussed the scope and difficulties of putting together the film’s ensemble cast in a recent interview with Bollywood Hungama. “I was narrated the story for four hours,” he remarked, recalling his initial response to the screenplay. I was stunned after that. I didn’t even take a break or relocate. We were completely unaware of the

passing of time. Even though I had previously been cast in a lot of movies, I was initially afraid. It was a massive movie, so I had to locate a lot of new characters. He clarified that because of its vast plot and numerous characters, the movie required a lot of preparation. “I had to cast about 400 people if I combined both parts,” he revealed. I assembled a six-person team and began the hunt. Aditya asked me to think as broadly as possible and given me complete freedom. He aimed to take people by surprise. He already thought that every role in the movie would receive a lot of affection and that it would smash every record.” Ranveer Singh was always the first and only

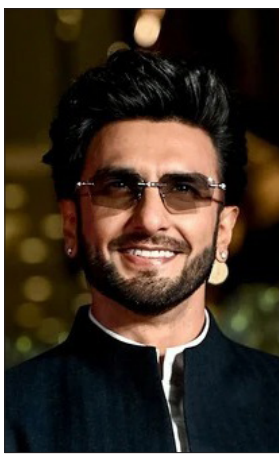
option for the main part, according to Chhabra. “Many people turned down different roles during the process, but Aditya remained composed and asked me to find other actors,” he revealed. Casting the performers and conducting the research took us about two years. We began in early 2024. We’ve always known that Ranveer Singh will play Hamza. He was also waiting for the proper movie, so he promptly consented. The adversary Rehman Dakait, who was finally portrayed by Akshaye Khanna, was one of the more unexpected reveals. Before Khanna joined the cast, Chhabra revealed that a number of stars had turned down the part. “I can’t give names, but

two or three actors turned down his part. They undoubtedly regret that choice now. Two Bollywood actors and a South African actor provided extremely bizarre reasoning. They said that the movie is actually directed by Ranveer and has an ensemble cast, but Aditya swiftly gets over his negative ideas.” Yalina Jamali, portrayed by Sara Arjun, was also cast after a thorough search. Numerous actors had applied for the part, according to Chhabra. “I was being solicited for the position, as was Aditya. I explained to him that a fresh face would be preferable because we would need someone without any past baggage. Everyone ought to think that this is just Yalina. I intended to cast the role and keep it a secret. For her part, we held more than a thousand auditions,” he said. Sanjay Dutt, R. Madhavan, Arjun Rampal, Rakesh Bedi, and Danish Pandor are among the ensemble cast members in addition to Ranveer Singh. Dhurandhar: The Revenge has now surpassed Rs 1500 crore globally, solidifying its status as a significant box office hit because to its enormous scope, drawn-out casting procedure, and enthusiastic audience response.

# A new date has been announced for Honey Singh's Pune concert

**New Delhi:** Due to unforeseen inclement weather, rapper and singer Honey Singh has canceled his planned show in Pune. Honey Singh posted a letter on his Instagram account on his planned concert in Pune, stating that he and the organizers had opted to postpone it because to “anticipated rain and thunderstorms” in the city, per a government alert. The exhibition will now take place on April 18 instead of tomorrow in Pune. “Fans!!!” he wrote. Due to expected rain and thunderstorms, we have to reschedule the event to April 18, 2026, even though it was fully booked for Saturday, April 4, 2026. Since my followers’ safety is still my top priority, this decision was made in accordance with the government advice.” “All tickets purchased will remain valid for the new date (18.04.2026),” he continued. I’ll see you in two weeks, Pune!” Honey Singh has already performed in Delhi

and Mumbai as part of his current concert tour. He was spotted performing on stage alongside actress Soundarya Sharma in recordings from his gigs that went viral. In the meantime, the Delhi High Court ordered the Central Government on Thursday to remove singer and rapper Honey Singh’s song Volume 1 from all social media and sharing platforms. According to the Delhi High Court, the song is filthy, profane, and disparaging of women. In the interest of artistic freedom as well as freedom of speech and expression, this is unacceptable. Honey Singh and Badshah released the song in 2006. In response to a plea filed by the Hindu Shakti Dal and others, Justice Purushendra Kumar Kaurav gave the Central Government instructions. Singers Honey Singh and Badshah have also received notice from the high court, which has scheduled a hearing on May 7.



the celebs present. Ranveer came alone to the occasion. Deepika Padukone, his actress wife, was not present at the function. Reacting to Ranveer’s look, a fan commented, “Bollywood ka Dhurandhar!” Another said, “He is looking so handsome!” A second fan wrote, “The smile on his face is sooo sooo wholesome to watch. Glow of success on his face clearly seems to be.” A comment read, “He deserves all the success for Dhurandhar. What a performance!” In the first movie, Ranveer Singh played an Indian spy

who climbs the ranks of Pakistan’s underworld while infiltrating gangs in Lyari to destroy a terror network that targets India. It focused on clandestine intelligence operations against the backdrop of terror and geopolitical events such as the 26/11 Mumbai assaults, the 2001 Parliament Attack, and the hijacking of the Kandahar airliner. The popular 2025 film Dhurandhar, which debuted in December of last year, has a sequel called Dhurandhar 2. In order to dismantle a terror group, the movie depicted how Hamza infiltrates a Baloch gang in Lyari, Pakistan. The narrative of how Jaskirat becomes Hamza as a result of his circumstances is explored in the sequel. Ranveer Singh, Sara Arjun, Arjun Rampal, R. Madhavan, Rakesh Bedi, Danish Pandor, and other actors reprised their roles in the film, which centers on the psychological and physical metamorphosis of Ranveer Singh’s character Jaskirat Singh Ranghi into the spy Hamza Ali Mazari.

# Vaibhav Sooryavanshi warns GT and sends a Jofra Archer to cleaners in nets

**New Delhi:** The renowned Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad will host the Rajasthan Royals’ IPL 2026 matchup against the Gujarat Titans on Saturday. The Gujarat Titans, headed by Shubman Gill, lost against Punjab Kings by three wickets to start the season. GT’s middle-order batting collapsed completely, limiting them to a chasable total of 162/6 in 20 overs. Cooper Connolly remained undefeated at 72, but Punjab Kings ultimately secured the victory despite bowler Prasidh Krishna providing some hope with three rapid wickets.

In the meantime, the Rajasthan Royals defeated the five-time winners Chennai Super Kings by a commanding eight wickets to start their IPL 2026



campaign. Thanks to a spectacular innings from batting prodigy Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, who hammered 52 off only 17 balls, RR chased down the goal in just 12.1 overs after bowling CSK out for just 127. The 15-year-old Sooryavanshi, who is well-known for his powerful batting style, once again shown his abilities during a practice

session prior to the match against GT. The hitter, who was born in Bihar, defeated England’s fiery bowler Jofra Archer in the nets. Sooryavanshi was seen making a number of strong shots off Archer’s fast pace in a video that the Rajasthan Royals posted on X (previously Twitter). Despite some discomfort from a few deliveries aimed at his rib

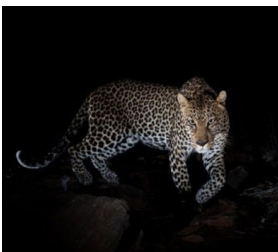
cage, the child was still able to connect neatly with many shots.

The Gujarat Titans bowlers, who have a tough past against Sooryavanshi, were strongly cautioned by the video. For background, the teenager, who made his IPL debut in 2025, reached the milestone against GT in just 35 balls, smashing the fastest IPL century by an Indian. Mohammed Siraj, Prasidh Krishna, and Kagiso Rabada, among others, would be keen to exact revenge for last year’s humiliation and restrain Sooryavanshi this season. In order to get their campaign back on track and achieve their first victory of the season, Shubman Gill and his team will also be desperate.

# A 4-year-old girl was killed by a leopard attack Within Uttarakhand

**New Delhi, Apr 04:** According to officials on Friday, a leopard attack in the Pauri district of Uttarakhand killed a four-year-old girl.

The youngster, Drishiti Rawat, was eating with her sister and grandmother close to her home on Thursday at around nine o’clock at night in Bhatkot hamlet in the Pokhra district. They claimed that a leopard abruptly grabbed her and ran off into the jungle. The child’s mangled body was



eventually found about two kilometers from the house after the villagers conducted a search after the occurrence. Teams from the forest department and police arrived at the scene, but irate villagers

protested, calling for high officials to be there, and at first stopped the authorities from taking the body. When Divisional Forest Officer Mahatim Yadav and Chaubattakhal Sub-Divisional Magistrate Rekha Arya arrived in the village on Friday morning, a post-mortem was performed close to the house and the body was given to the family. In accordance with customs, Yadav met the girl’s family and promised them all the help he could provide. The

forest service has put in place extensive precautions to keep an eye on the leopard and guarantee the residents’ safety. A precautionary holiday has been issued for schools in the Pokhra and Bironkhal districts due to the leopard’s threat. According to Block Education Officer Manoj Kumar Joshi, schools in the impacted areas will remain closed on April 4 and 6 in order to protect pupils, per District Magistrate Swati S Bhadauria’s orders.

# In Arunachal woods, three new species of rove beetles were found

**New Delhi, Apr 04:** Three hitherto unidentified rove beetle species have been found in Arunachal Pradesh, underscoring the state’s enormous but little-known insect diversity. Three new species under the genus Megalopinus were identified in the study, which was just published in the journal “Soil Organisms”: Megalopinus arunachalensis, Megalopinus mithun, and Megalopinus micros. The results came from a joint study by researchers from the University of Tübingen in Germany and Rajiv Gandhi University (RGU) in Doimukh, close to Itanagar. In addition to Professor Oliver Betz and Tobias Mainda from the German institution, the research team comprised Hiren Gogoi, Tagam Dobiam, and Sonu Singh from RGU. The study detected the recently described species in forest environments, specifically in damp leaf litter and decomposing wood.



Ecologically significant locations like Pakke Tiger Reserve and Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary, both renowned for their abundant biodiversity, are where specimens were found. The researchers emphasized that ongoing conservation efforts are necessary to protect these places’ delicate environments. The study also pointed out that Arunachal Pradesh is still one of the areas with the least amount of research done on insect diversity, indicating that more scientific

investigation may uncover a large number of previously undiscovered species. Documenting such organisms is essential for comprehending ecological dynamics and bolstering biodiversity protection in the Eastern Himalayan region, according to the researchers. On April 1, the research article became accessible online. Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein responded to the discovery by saying it once again highlights the state’s exceptional natural richness. Another example of Arunachal’s remarkable biodiversity is a new species of rove beetle found in our forest environments. In a post on X, Mein stated, “These beetles, which are members of the Staphylinidae family, play an important role as natural predators and decomposers.” Such discoveries highlight the significance of preserving the state’s natural forests, the deputy chief minister continued.

# The entire PBKS team is reprimanded after Shreyas Iyer violates the code of conduct once more

**New Delhi:** As the Punjab Kings (PBKS) trounced the Chennai Super Kings (CSK) in Chepauk on Friday, captain Shreyas Iyer was found guilty of violating the Indian Premier League (IPL) Code of Conduct for the second straight game. In the previous game against the Gujarat Titans (GT), Iyer was penalized for sustaining a slow over-rate; this time, he did the same against CSK. The Punjab captain was consequently given a harsher punishment by the IPL Governing Coun-

cil. In actuality, the organizers penalized every other member of the PBKS team, including the Impact Player. “Punjab Kings Captain Shreyas Iyer has been fined after his team maintained a slow over-rate during Match No. 7 of the TATA Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026 against Chennai Super Kings at the MA Chidambaram Stadium, Chennai,” the IPL said in a statement following the CSK vs. PBKS game. Iyer was fined INR 24 lakhs because this was his team’s sec-

ond offense of the season under Article 2.22 of the IPL’s Code of Conduct, which deals with minimum over-rate offenses. The Impact Player and the other members of the playing XI shall be fined INR 6 lakhs or 25% of their individual match fees, whichever is lower. PBKS defeated CSK by five wickets in the game, with captain Shreyas Iyer’s half-century at the center of the run chase. The Chennai Super Kings scored 209 for five, with young batsman Ayush Mha-

tre leading the way with a 43-ball 73. PBKS won their second straight game of the season after reaching 210 for 5 in 18.4 overs. Iyer got 50 off of 29 balls. Mhatre and Ruturaj Gaikwad (28 off 22 balls) combined for 96 runs for the second wicket earlier when CSK was called into bat first, setting the stage for a competitive total at Chepauk. Shivam Dube struck an undefeated 45 in 27 balls, while Sarfaraz Khan played some brilliant smashes to reach 32 off just 12 balls.

# Father Yograj Singh and Yuvraj Singh disagree on a significant “Arjun Tendulkar” remark

**New Delhi:** The son of renowned batsman Sachin Tendulkar, Arjun Tendulkar, has received accolades from former India all-rounder Yuvraj Singh for his dedication and diligence in continuing to improve. As a member of the Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) team for the current IPL 2026, Arjun has spent a lot of time training under the close supervision of Yuvraj, his idol, and Yograj Singh, the latter’s father. When Yuvraj thought back on tutoring Arjun, he called it a “full-circle” event and expressed his

happiness at sharing the lessons he learned from Sachin, his idol. Yuvraj stated that Arjun works harder than he did in the past during a conversation on Sports Tak. “That’s incredible because I’ve learnt a lot from his father—mental, physical, and technical struggles. Arjun is receiving the same information from me. It’s wonderful that he is picking up knowledge from me. He is a pleasant youngster who picks things up quickly and with great intelligence. I wish I could work as hard as

he does. He adores the game. I think his father is the best player I’ve ever seen. “Arjun’s levels of commitment are fascinating,” Yuvraj remarked. Yograj, Yuvraj’s father, who has also supervised Arjun’s training sessions at his academy, recently stated that the 26-year-old’s batting prowess should be considered in addition to his bowling qualifications. Yuvraj took a slightly different stance on his father’s assertion, arguing that Arjun is primarily a bowler who can contribute with the bat

and still has a lot to learn as a hitter. “Arjun was a better bowler when he first started playing cricket. As a batter, he is still learning. He will undoubtedly get better if he keeps working on that. I have a feeling that he will eventually admit, “I’m not sure if I am strong with my bowling or batting.” However, I continue to believe that he is a bowler with batting ability. I could bowl in addition to being a batter. His hitting will undoubtedly get better if I continue to work with him,” he continued.

# The Delhi High Court’s “Deep Roots” in India Order in the International Child Custody Case



**New Delhi, Apr 04:** The Delhi High Court ruled that although foreign court rulings should be respected, they cannot be the “sole determining factor” in child custody disputes, particularly where the kid has “deep roots” in India. Justices Navin Chawla and Ravinder Dudeja’s bench was considering cross-petitions from divorced parents for custody of their American-born minor daughter. In its April 1 order, the court said, “Merely because the child by birth is a citizen

of the USA or had stayed there for a few years as her parents were there cannot alone be the determining factor for determining the welfare of the child.” The 11-year-old kid has been living and studying in India with her mother for almost four years, the court noted. In 2022, the Superior Court of New Haven granted the mother a divorce. In 2011, the two Indian nationals living in the United States tied the knot. Their daughter is an American citizen by birth as she

was born in the country in 2015. The mother’s 2017 accusations that the father had sexually assaulted their kid on her second birthday are where the conflict began. Following the father’s incarceration, a protective order was issued in 2022. However, in May 2022, the US court granted a divorce and gave a joint parenting arrangement, noting that the mother had been teaching the child against the father and that the accusations of sexual assault were unfounded.

Citing the father’s illness, the mother took the child to India in June 2022. After noticing that the action was not legitimate, the Delhi High Court halted the US court’s judgment in September 2022. Given the child’s existing situation, the High Court ruled that sending her back to the US would essentially force the mother to return as well, with no guarantee of how long she would stay there.

The court dismissed both petitions, noting that the child is now settled in India, and allowed the parents to seek alternative legal remedies for custody and guardianship in compliance with the law.

# Among other things, provisions of the Delhi Police Act decriminalized

**New Delhi, Apr 04:** New Delhi: After Parliament passed the Jan Vishwas Amendment Bill, 2026 on Thursday, minor civic and regulatory infractions in the Capital will now face harsher financial penalties rather than criminal prosecution. Two provisions will be eliminated under the Delhi Police Act. Section 95, which imposes a fine of up to ₹100 on guardians who permit a child under the age of seven to conduct public disturbance, will be removed. Additionally, Section 102(c), which makes it illegal to be caught in any building or vehicle between sunset and morning without a valid reason and carries a maximum three-month jail sentence, will be eliminated. The Act aims to decriminalize a number of minor offenses by substituting administrative action and financial fines for jail time. According to Delhi government offi-

cials who are aware of the development, the goal is to lessen the workload for judges and change the focus of enforcement from punishment to compliance. Stricter rules against unapproved occupancy of public land are also introduced under the Bill. Penalties are now based on the land’s value; during the period of encroachment, fines may be equal to a portion of the property’s annual value. The Delhi Development Act’s modifications have greatly increased the penalties for unapproved development and related infractions. Former laws that permitted harsh imprisonment have been reduced to less severe forms of punishment, including fines of up to ₹50,000 and additional daily penalties for persistent infractions. Additionally, the penalty for attacking or obstructing DDA staff has been raised from ₹1,000 to ₹10,000.

According to an official, “the focus is on deterrence through higher financial penalties rather than incarceration.” The updated framework is anticipated to increase the effectiveness of enforcement in handling building offenses. Commuters on the Delhi Metro will no longer face criminal prosecution in the first instance for offenses like smoking or causing a disturbance on the property. Penalties for offenders will be imposed immediately, often surpassing ₹2,000. Legal action may still be taken against commuters who refuse to pay. According to the authorities, this would allow small offenses to be resolved more quickly without the need for court intervention. Adjudicating officers will have the authority to issue sanctions in place of urgent criminal proceedings, allowing for a quicker settlement and less dependence on the courts.

# After a powerful hailstorm, Bikaner in Rajasthan turns white



**New Delhi, Apr 04:** The meteorological department reported on Friday that a western disturbance had caused hailstorms, gusty winds, and light rain in parts of Rajasthan over the past 24 hours. Padampur in Sri Ganganagar district recorded the highest rainfall at 11.5 mm, while areas like Bikaner also experienced hailstorm activity. A forest officer posted a video on X that showed a field in Arjunsar that was entirely covered in ice following the hailstorm. The field appears to be covered in a white blanket that resembles snow. He wrote: “Not Kashmir. This is Arjunsar in Bikaner district. View after yesterday’s hailstorm. Hope the government will take care of crop insurance.” Bikaner, one of the driest areas in the nation, recorded a maximum temperature of 30 degrees Celsius on Saturday, April 4, with a 31% chance

of rain. More rain and hailstorm activity are expected in the city on Saturday and again on April 7 and 8, according to the local meteorological department. A yellow warning has been issued. Last year, the region recorded a maximum temperature of 40 degrees Celsius on April 3, according to Accuweather. This year’s lower temperatures are accompanied by periods of rain and hailstorms, indicating the effects of climate change. Similar weather conditions, including strong thunderstorms, gusty winds, and hailstorms at isolated locations, are expected on April 4 in parts of the Udaipur, Ajmer, Jaipur, and Bharatpur divisions as well as the Shekhawati region, according to the report. Thunderstorm and rainfall activity is expected to decrease slightly on April 5 and 6, but another strong western disturbance is expected to become active on April 7, which may again trigger intense thunderstorms and rainfall in parts of the state. According to the IMD, isolated hailstorm activity is also expected over Jammu & Kashmir on April 3, 4, 7, and 8; Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, and East Rajasthan on April 3 and 4; Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh on April 4; and West Rajasthan on April 3.



# PSG Wins Thanks to Ousmane Dembele Before Liverpool Ties



**New Delhi:** Paris Saint-Germain defeated Toulouse 3-1 on Friday to secure their top spot in Ligue 1 and prepare for their Champions League quarterfinal matchup with Liverpool. Ousmane Dembele scored twice, including a spectacular first goal on the volley. The Ballon d’Or winner from the previous year scored a spectacular goal to give PSG the lead, and just after the 30-minute mark, he added a second goal from close range. However, Toulouse was given an equalizer due to terrible goalkeeping by home goalkeeper Matvey Safonov. Luis Enrique’s team will end the weekend atop the French table thanks to a late goal from substitute Goncalo Ramos. They currently have a four-point advantage over second-place Lens, who go to Lille on Saturday. In order to give PSG more time to recover between the two legs of their Champions League match against Liverpool, their planned trip to title rivals Lens next weekend has been controversially postponed until May. PSG entered the weekend with a game in hand. Next Wednesday, the defending European champions will host Liverpool in the opening leg of their quarterfinal match. On Tuesday, April 14, they will travel to Anfield for the rematch of their previous season’s last-16 match, which PSG won on penalties. PSG’s top priority is to keep the Champions League championship, but they are still on track to win Ligue 1 for the fifth time in a row and the 12th time in the previous 14 years. Toulouse, on the other hand, sit in mid-table, and the result of their away French Cup semi-final match against Lens on April 21 will now determine the course of their season. Several players, including captain Marquinhos and the Portuguese quartet of Nuno Mendes, Vitinha, and Joao Neves, who had recently returned from lengthy international assignments, were given a break by Luis Enrique at kickoff. Lucas Beraldo, a center back from Brazil who was unexpectedly chosen for central midfield, was one of the players entering the lineup. Dembele, who played a key role in France’s victory over Brazil in the US last week, has only started eight Ligue 1 games this season.

# Arne Slot claims that Liverpool’s Alisson will miss the Manchester City and PSG games

**New Delhi:** Alisson Becker, the goalkeeper for Liverpool, will miss both legs of their Champions League match against Paris Saint-Germain and their FA Cup quarterfinal match against Manchester City, manager Arne Slot announced on Friday. During Liverpool’s victory over Galatasaray in the Champions League last-16 second leg last month, the Brazilian sustained an injury. After visiting Man City on Saturday, the Reds will play PSG, the defending European champions, at the Parc des Princes on Wednesday. The quarterfinal return leg will take place six days later. Slot said reporters, “He will not be part of the Paris Saint-Germain games as well.”He’ll be gone for a little while longer. We anticipate that he will be fit once more by the end of the season.However, after returning to training following a leg break in December, Alexander Isak might be able to play versus City.Giving Isak a lot of minutes will take some time, according to Slot.It’s a great thing to have him



back on the training field, but we will make sure we do the proper thing in terms of building him up in minutes.” It would be even better to have him available for games, that’s for sure.”After hobbling off against Galatasaray and then missing Liverpool’s defeat at Brighton prior to the international break, Mohamed Salah is prepared to play.Last week, the Egyptian said that he will be leaving Anfield at the end of the current campaign.After winning the Premier League the previous season, Liverpool has

had a difficult season and is currently in fifth place, fighting for a Champions League berth for the following year.They will play PSG again after losing to the French champions in a last-16 penalty shootout last year, but they are still vying for a ninth European title. Alisson’s outstanding performance in Liverpool’s 1-0 first-leg triumph in Paris stole the show in that match.Giorgi Mamardashvili, a goalkeeper from Georgia, will fill in for Alisson when Liverpool plays City at the Etihad on Saturday in an attempt to advance to the FA Cup

semifinals for the first time since winning the trophy in 2022.“Incredible milestone”Man City is aiming to make it to a record-extending eighth consecutive FA Cup semi-final and is still in the running to repeat the domestic triple they achieved in 2018–19. Following their victory over Premier League title rivals Arsenal in last month’s League Cup final, Pep Guardiola is urging his team to concentrate on the future. ”It was a long time ago already,” said the City manager of the 2-0 win over the Gunners at Wembley.

# Jessica Pegula’s Most Recent Three-Setter Advances Her to the WTA Charleston Semis

**Daniel Island::** Jessica Pegula, the top seed, defeated Diana Shnaider of Russia 3-6, 6-3, 6-2 on Friday to go to the WTA Charleston Open semifinals after once again overcoming a set deficit. In all three of her matches thus far, defending champion Pegula has dropped the opening set, but she has once again persevered to keep her chances of winning the championship alive. The United States’ fifth-ranked player defeated Shnaider, ranked 19th, in two hours and ten minutes thanks to a strong service game that featured eight aces. Before dropping six straight games, Shnaider fought hard in the first two sets and broke early for a 2-0 lead in the last set.Pegula will take on fourth-seeded fellow American Iva Jovic, who defeated Russian Anna Kalinskaya 6-3, 6-4, in an attempt to win her second tour-



nament of the year following her success in Dubai in February.Pegula has already played nine sets and spent more than seven hours on the court, despite a bye in the first round. This year, she has prevailed in nine out of ten matches that required a decisive third set. In a match between past Charleston champions, fifth-seeded American Madison Keys secured her place in the semifinals by defeating

third-seeded Swiss Belinda Bencic 4-6, 6-3, 6-2.Keys is back in the semifinals for the first time since her own title run in 2019 thanks to her comeback victory over 2022 champion Bencic.In her first WTA semifinal of the year, Keys will compete against Yuliia Starodubtseva of Ukraine to go to the final. American McCartney Kessler was defeated by Starodubtseva 6-4, 6-4.

# The BCCI reprimanded Abhishek Sharma and gave him a demerit point for violating the code of conduct

**Kolkata:** Following their encounter against Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) on Thursday, Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) all-rounder Abhishek Sharma received a demerit point and a 25% match-fee fine, as verified by the Indian Premier League (IPL). With four sixes and four fours, Abhishek scored 48 runs off of 21 balls in the match as he quickly returned to form. Fans were captivated by his performance during the game, while the officials were dissatisfied by his behavior. The opening batter admitted to a Level 1 offence under Article 2.3, which deals with the use of audible obscenities during a match, according to the official IPL statement, albeit it did not detail the specific event. ”Abhishek Sharma, All-rounder, Sunrisers Hyderabad, has been fined 25% of his match fees and has accumulated one demerit point for violating the IPL Code of Conduct during his team’s match against Kolkata Knight Riders at Eden Gardens, Kolkata, on Thursday,” the IPL said in an official statement. He acknowledged



the Level 1 offense under Article 2.3 and agreed to the penalty imposed by the match referee. The Match Referee’s ruling is definitive and enforceable for Level 1 violations of the Code of Conduct. Sharma now has a demerit point on his disciplinary record and will forfeit 25% of his match earnings as a result of the punishment. Even though Level 1 infractions are the least serious in the IPL’s disciplinary system, repeated violations may result in harsher sanctions, such as suspensions. How SRH defeated KKROn the pitch, Heinrich Klaasen struck a fluent half-century as SRH defeated KKR by 65 runs at the iconic Eden Gardens. After being sent in to bat, Travis Head

(46) and Abhishek Sharma (48) shared an explosive 82-run opening stand off just 34 balls to set a strong platform. Klaasen (52) and Nitish Kumar Reddy (39) then provided a late surge, helping SRH post a formidable total of 226 for 8.In response, KKR were bowled out for 161 in 16 overs, with Angkrish Raghuvanshi top-scoring with a 29-ball 52. For KKR, Blessing Muzarabani (4/41), Vaibhav Arora (2/47), Kartik Tyagi (1/48), and Anukul Roy (1/16) were amongst the wickets. The SRH bowling attack was led by Jaydev Unadkat (3/21), while Nitish Kumar Reddy (2/17) and Eshan Malinga (2/14) picked up two wickets each to secure a convincing victory.

# Mikel Arteta Wants Arsenal's Season Run-In to Be “Fueled” by a League Cup Loss

**New Delhi :** LAs they pursue a domestic Premier League and FA Cup double as well as the Champions League, Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta has been encouraging his team to use their League Cup final loss as “fuel” for the rest of the season. Arsenal leads Manchester City, who defeated them 2-0 at Wembley, by nine points in the Premier League standings. They play Sporting Lisbon in the Champions League last eight the following week after traveling to Southampton in the FA Cup quarterfinals on Saturday. ”When you didn’t manage to win that final, what you have to take on board is: ‘Okay, how is this going to make us stronger for the final push of the season?’,” said Arteta on Friday.

# The Reason MI Captain Hardik Pandya Was Excluded From The Delhi Capitals Match

**New Delhi:**Axar Patel, the captain of the Delhi Capitals (DC), chose to bowl against the Mumbai Indians in their IPL 2026 match on Saturday after winning the toss. Due to Hardik Pandya’s illness, Suryakumar Yadav was named captain of the five-time champion Mumbai Indians (MI). MI made several lineup adjustments in Hardik’s absence, substituting the star all-rounder with Deepak Chahar. In addition, the five-time champions replaced Trent Boult and Allah Ghazanfar in the starting lineup with Corbin Bosch and Mitchell Santner. Hardik’s illness prevented him from being in the starting lineup versus DC, according to Suryakumar. He wasn’t suited for the game today since he wasn’t feeling well and didn’t look good. Speaking on Hardik’s predicament, Suryakumar remarked, “So just putting yourself in his shoes



today.” Additionally, Suryakumar revealed that the squad made a tactical choice in selecting Bosch and Santner over Boult and Ghazanfar.Many modifications. Hardik is replaced by Deepak Chahar. Boultly is replaced by

Corbin Bosch, which is a tactical shift. In the most recent match at Wankhede, Boultly played well. And Allah Ghazanfar is replaced with Mitch Santner,” Suryakumar remarked.

# PSG Wins Thanks to Ousmane Dembele Before Liverpool Ties



**France:** Paris Saint-Germain defeated Toulouse 3-1 on Friday to secure their top spot in Ligue 1 and prepare for their Champions League quarterfinal matchup with Liverpool. Ousmane Dembele scored twice, including a spectacular first goal on the volley. The Ballon d’Or winner from the previous year scored a spectacular goal to give PSG the lead, and just after the 30-minute mark, he added a second goal from close range. However, Toulouse was given an equalizer due to terrible goalkeeping by home goalkeeper Matvey Safonov. Luis Enrique’s team will end the weekend atop the French table thanks to a late goal from substitute Goncalo Ramos. They currently have a four-point advantage over

second-place Lens, who go to Lille on Saturday.In order to give PSG more time to recover between the two legs of their Champions League match against Liverpool, their planned trip to title rivals Lens next weekend has been controversially postponed until May. PSG entered the weekend with a game in hand. Next Wednesday, the defending European champions will host Liverpool in the opening leg of their quarterfinal match. On Tuesday, April 14, they will travel to Anfield for the rematch of their previous season’s last-16 match, which PSG won on penalties.PSG’s top priority is to keep the Champions League championship, but they are still on track to win Ligue 1 for the fifth time in a row

and the 12th time in the previous 14 years.Toulouse, on the other hand, sit in mid-table, and the result of their away French Cup semi-final match against Lens on April 21 will now determine the course of their season. Luis Enrique gave a rest at kick-off to several players who had just returned from long trips away on international duty, including captain Marquinhos and the Portugal trio of Nuno Mendes, Vitorinha and Joao Neves. Among the players coming into the line-up was Brazilian centre-back Lucas Beraldo, who was surprisingly selected in central midfield.Dembele, who starred in the France side that beat Brazil in the United States last week, started a Ligue 1 game for just the eighth time this sea-

son.He marked it in style with his strike to give PSG the lead midway through the first half, nonchalantly swinging out his left leg on the edge of the box to meet a Mark McKenzie clearance and send the ball soaring into the top corner.Toulouse nevertheless drew level only four minutes later after a disastrous sequence of play by Safonov. The Russian initially came racing out of his box to attempt a headed clearance, only to be completely caught out by the bounce of the ball. His defense spared him by giving up a corner, but Safonov was unable to hold onto the ensuing delivery, and Nicolaisen, a Danish defender, graciously headed in for Toulouse.Khvicha Kvaratskhelia nodded down a corner on minute thirty-three, but Dembele quickly saved Safonov’s blushes with an easy close-range finish.With 14 goals in all competitions, including four against Toulouse in Ligue 1, Dembele is currently PSG’s top scorer this season. Before Ramos scored his team’s third goal in injury time with a low shot from outside the area, the second half was nearly completely boring. The Portuguese striker has now scored 12 goals in all competitions for his club this season, despite having started only 12 times.

# “Those Who Made Personal Remarks Can’t Sit With Us” Big Bombshell Dropped by Yuvraj Singh

**New Delhi :** Yuvraj Singh explained why he hasn’t entered the commentary box yet, stating that he doesn’t want to collaborate with people who have “made personal remarks” about him.Yuvraj Singh, a former all-rounder for the Indian cricket team, said why he hasn’t entered the commentary box yet: he doesn’t want to work with those who have “made personal remarks” about him. The former Indian cricket player Yuvraj has been coaching players and playing golf, but he hasn’t tried his hand at live commentary. While many of his colleagues have made that specific career shift after retiring from cricket, Yuvraj made it clear that he does not have any intention of becoming a commentator and even gave a stunning reason behind his decision. ”Now that I’m retired, allow me to discuss the matter. The true problem is the folks who made personal remarks about me rather than comments about



cricket. When you discuss the game, I know what you mean. You always keep that in mind when you get personal,” Yuvraj said to Sports Tak.“I don’t want to sit among those who have made disparaging statements about me. I don’t want to do commentary primarily because of this. A fantastic way to discuss

the game and its evolution is through commentary. I don’t want to do commentary mostly because of that,” he continued. Yuvraj also opened up about his practice sessions with Sanju Samson and how he identified a key technical flaw in the Indian cricket team wicket-keeper batter.“Sanju had reached that stage

where he felt he was not finding a place in the XI. He had scored two hundreds in South Africa, so I felt... the conversation I had with him happened in 2024 when India won that World Cup in Barbados. In that World Cup, Sanju was not playing. I had been watching his batting for 2-3 IPL seasons. I told him we

would speak whenever he had time.”“So my issue with Sanju was, you have to improve your footwork. If you don’t improve your footwork, you will consistently land in trouble. Scoring runs or not is different, but you have to improve your footwork. I gave him some ideas on how to improve it.”