

First ever fci Foodgrain cargo train arrives at Sairang railway station in Mizoram



Guwahati, Mar 05: In a significant historic milestone, the first-ever Food Corporation of India (FCI) foodgrain cargo train arrived at Sairang Railway Station in Mizoram on Tuesday, an official statement issued here on Thursday said. The cargo train comprised 42 wagons carrying around 25,900 quintals of rice from Punjab. This marks

an important step in strengthening rail-based freight connectivity in the state and improving the supply chain of essential commodities. The FCI rake was received at the station by B. Lalchhanzova, Minister for Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs, Government of Mizoram, along with Rajya Sabha MP, K. Vanlalvena and other dignitaries. The successful unloading of the inward FCI food grain rake at Sairang signifies the growing operational capability of the station and highlights the expanding role of railway infrastructure in supporting Mizoram’s logistics and food distribution network. With the introduction of passenger and freight train services, Mizoram has experienced a significant transformation in both passenger transportation and the movement of goods across the state. This development has not only improved connectivity but has also contributed to economic growth and further strengthened tourism in the region. It may be mentioned that the inauguration of the 51.38 km Bairabi-Sairang railway line on September 13, 2025 by the Prime Minister, marked a historic milestone for the people of Mizoram. This major infrastructure project has brought Aizawl onto India’s railway map by directly linking the state to the national railway network. Beyond improving transportation, the new rail line is expected to create

significant opportunities for economic growth and promote tourism development across the region. The newly opened railway line in Mizoram has given a boost to tourism, with the state witnessing a steady increase in the number of visitors over the past six months. Railway services in Mizoram reached a new milestone with the arrival of the Bharat Gaurav Deluxe AC Tourist Train at Sairang Railway Station for the very first time on February 12, 2026 under the “North East Discovery” circuit. This premium tourist train, carrying 81 tourists from different parts of India as well as other nations such as the United States and Nepal, underscores Since the commencement of train services on the Bairabi – Sairang route in September 2025, public response has been overwhelming. The Sairang-Anand Vihar Rajdhani Express has recorded occupancy exceeding 150 percent in both directions. The Sairang-Guwahati Express and Sairang-Kolkata Express have similarly registered strong occupancy levels of over 100 percent, clearly reflecting robust demand and strong public acceptance of railway services from Sairang.

In Brief

Rajya Sabha polls

Guwahati: Two BJP-nominated candidates – Cabinet Minister and Mahmora MLA Jogen Mohan and Duliagan MLA Terash Gowalla – along with UPPL chief Pramod Boro on Thursday filed their nominations for the biennial Rajya Sabha elections to be held on March 16. All the three candidates are set to win unopposed as no Opposition or Independent candidates have filed their nominations for three vacant seats. After the completion of the nomination process and verification of the nomination papers, the candidates will be officially declared elected unopposed to the Upper House of Parliament. The elections are being held to fill the seats of three Rajya Sabha members from Assam – Ajit Kumar Bhuyan (Independent), Bhubaneswar Kalita (BJP) and Sarbananda Sonowal (BJP) – whose terms end next month.

Rajior Dal releases first list of 11 candidates for Assam polls

Guwahati: Rajior Dal today announced its first list of candidates for the upcoming 2026 Assam Assembly elections. The list was released after the party’s election committee finalised the names of candidates who will contest the polls on the Rajior Dal ticket. The announcement was made by party president Akhil Gogoi on his Facebook page. Akhil Gogoi congratulated the selected candidates and expressed hope that the people of Assam would extend their support to them in the upcoming elections. In the statement, Gogoi said the candidates were chosen after discussions within the party’s election committee.

Heroin seized

Aizawl: Four persons, including one Myanmar national, have been arrested with drugs worth Rs 31 crore in separate operations conducted near the Indo-Myanmar border in Mizoram. The operations were carried out by the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) along with State Intelligence Bureau (SIB) Mizoram and State Excise and Narcotics Department. During the operation, 36.434 kg of methamphetamine and 905 gram of heroin in three coordinated operations at different locations along the Myanmar border.

AIUDF suspends 2 MLAs over alleged anti-party activities

Guwahati: In another political development ahead of the state elections in Assam, Opposition party All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) has suspended two of its legislators for six years over alleged anti-party activities, while one of them has already announced his decision to quit the party. According to a directive by the party’s central committee, AIUDF MLA from Badarpur constituency, Abdul Aziz, and MLA as well as party vice-president Karim Uddin Barbhuiya have been suspended from the party for a period of six years. The party stated that the activities of both leaders had been under close monitoring and were found to be controversial and detrimental to the interests of the organisation.

Assam DGP’s fake video surfaces

Guwahati: Cyber criminals have misused the photograph of Assam DGP Harmeet Singh to create an AI-generated video, pretending to be a fake ‘IPS Sonu Sharma’. After it came to light, the Assam Police on Thursday initiated legal action against the unidentified scammers behind this crime. The police urged citizens not to fall for such scam videos and to report suspicious content immediately. ‘Deepfake Alert! Scammers are misusing the image of the DGP to create an AI-generated video, pretending to be a fake ‘IPS Sonu Sharma’,’ the Assam police said in a social media post. ‘The video is fake and part of an online scam.’

CM inaugurates 1.05-km flyover in Guwahati

Guwahati, Mar 05: In a step towards easing traffic congestion in Guwahati, Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma inaugurated the newly constructed Dinesh Goswami Flyover at Bharalumukh area of the city on late Wednesday evening. The Chief Minister also inaugurated the Saraighat War Memorial at Panbazar and laid the foundation stone for the expansion project of the Brahmaputra Riverfront Park. It may be noted that the flyover, constructed at a cost of Rs. 99 crore with joint participation of the State and Central Governments, has a total length of 1.05 kilometres.

Assam CM says Akhil Gogoi ‘victim of Congress blackmail politics’, predicts alliance ahead of Assam polls

Guwahati, Mar 05: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma today launched a sharp political attack on Rajior Dal chief Akhil Gogoi, alleging that the Sivasagar MLA has become a “victim of blackmail politics” by the Congress party and may eventually have to align with it ahead of the upcoming Assam Assembly elections. Speaking to reporters, Sarma claimed that Akhil Gogoi’s political survival largely depends on retaining the Sivasagar Assembly constituency. According to the Chief Minister, this dependency has placed the Rajior Dal leader in a vulnerable position during the ongoing discussions over possible opposition alliances in the state. “I think Akhil Gogoi will surrender to Congress because he has to win the Sivasagar seat. That is why I will not say he will fight with Congress over seat-sharing arrangements. He is bargaining, but his entire political future depends on Sivasagar,” Sarma said while speaking to reporters. The Chief Minister suggested that the Congress party holds significant leverage in the political equation. He said that if Congress decides to field its own candidate in the Sivasagar constituency, it could make the electoral contest difficult for Akhil Gogoi. “That is why Congress is blackmailing him. Outside, you may see Akhil Gogoi as a big leader, but currently he is a victim of blackmail. In the end, he will follow Congress’s direction because he does not have the strength to win the Sivasagar seat on his own,” Sarma alleged. Sarma also claimed that both the Congress and Rajior Dal are currently exerting pressure on each other during negotiations, but he maintained that an alliance between the two parties appears almost certain.

Rajior Dal releases first list of 11 candidates for Assam polls

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the candidates were chosen after discussions within the party’s election committee. He also said the party hopes that the people of Assam will welcome the Rajior Dal candidates and support them in the political fight against what he described as communal forces like the BJP. The first list includes candidates from different constituencies across the state.

Myanmar national among 4 held with methamphetamine, heroin

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The operations were carried out by the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) along with

State Intelligence Bureau (SIB) Mizoram and State Excise and Narcotics Department.

During the operation, 36.434 kg of methamphetamine and 905 gram of



heroin in three coordinated operations at different locations along the Myanmar border. The NCB has urged citizens to report narcot-

leaders.

Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had on Wednesday informed mediapersons that the three legislators would formally be inducted to the ruling party on Thursday morning.

Speaking to the media, Kamalakhya Dey Purkayastha stated that the timing of their induction was strategically decided by the chief minister, particularly in view of the Rajya Sabha elections and related political considerations. He affirmed his commitment to work “as a soldier of the BJP” for the party’s organisational and

electoral objectives. Notably, former Assam PCC chief and veteran Congress leader Bhupen Kumar Borah had recently joined the BJP after serving the Opposition party for over three decades. The back-to-back defections are expected to further consolidate the BJP’s legislative strength in Assam while deepening the internal crisis within the Congress ahead of crucial electoral contests. More exits from the principal Opposition party are anticipated, signalling deepening turmoil within the state Congress ranks ahead of key political contests.

Rajya Sabha polls: two BJP candidates; UPPL Chief file nominations

Guwahati, Mar 05: Two BJP-nominated candidates – Cabinet Minister and Mahmora MLA Jogen Mohan and Duliagan MLA Terash Gowalla – along with UPPL chief Pramod Boro on Thursday filed their nominations for the biennial Rajya Sabha elections to be held on March 16.

All the three candidates are set to win unopposed as no Opposition or Independent candidates have filed their nominations for three vacant seats.

After the completion of the nomination process and verification of the nomination papers, the candidates will be officially declared elected unopposed to the Upper House of Parliament.

The elections are being held to fill the seats of three Rajya Sabha members from Assam – Ajit Kumar Bhuyan (Independent), Bhubaneswar Kalita (BJP) and Sarbananda Sonowal (BJP) – whose terms end next month.

Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had on Tuesday congratulated both Mohan (who is an MLA from Mahmora constituency) and Gowalla for securing the party’s nomination for the Rajya Sabha elections.

“Both these outstanding leaders – hailing from the grassroots – have a demonstrated track record of public service, and I am confident they will make valuable contributions to enriching our parliamentary processes,” Sarma said. The chief minister clarified that the BJP would neither contest nor oppose a candidate fielded by the UPPL for the third seat. “UPPL has informed about the possibility of the party nominating a candidate for the Rajya Sabha election, even as the final decision has not been conveyed yet. The BJP cannot win the third seat as it does not have the numerical strength. So, we are okay if UPPL chief Pramod Boro decides to contest the third seat,” Sarma said.

Governor celebrates Holi with Assam rifles jawans in Silchar

Guwahati, Mar 05: Assam Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya on Wednesday joined the jawans and officers of the 38th Battalion of the Assam Rifles at Srikona, Silchar, to celebrate the festival of Holi in an atmosphere filled with pride and patriotic fervour.

Interacting with the jawans, the Governor conveyed his heartfelt greetings and expressed deep appreciation for their exemplary service to the nation.

He said that being among the soldiers on a festival symbolising joy and unity was a moment of personal honour and emotional connection. Their discipline, resilience and quiet determination, he noted, stand as a source of inspiration for every citizen.

The Governor underlined that the Assam Rifles has consistently played a pivotal role in maintaining peace and fostering confidence



across the Northeast.

He observed that beyond guarding the nation’s frontiers, the force has built enduring bonds with local communities, reinforcing trust and stability in remote and sensitive areas. Highlighting the deeper significance of the festival, he said that Holi represents renewal, reconciliation and the victory of righteousness. The courage displayed

daily by the jawans in challenging terrains and demanding operational environments reflects these very values of perseverance and moral strength.

The Governor also commended the wide range of civic action initiatives undertaken by the Assam Rifles, including medical outreach, educational assistance and relief efforts during emergencies.

Such initiatives, he said, have strengthened the bond between the force and the people, making the Assam Rifles a trusted partner in the region’s progress.

He acknowledged with gratitude the support of the soldiers’ families, describing them as silent contributors to national security. Their sacrifices and encouragement, he said, provide the emotional foundation that enables the jawans to discharge their duties with steadfast commitment. Referring to the ongoing transformation of the Northeast, the Governor noted that improved infrastructure, enhanced connectivity and expanding economic opportunities are ushering in a new chapter of growth. He emphasised that sustained peace and security remain the cornerstone of this progress, and the Assam Rifles continues to play an indispensable role in ensuring a stable environment for development.

NE/EAST

Meghalaya IAS officer celebrates Holi by painting house of PMAY beneficiary

Shillong, Mar 05: In a heartwarming Holi gesture, an IAS officer set aside festive revelry to help paint the newly built home of a woman beneficiary of the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana in remote Myrkhon village of Meghalaya.

Swapnil Tembe, who holds charge as secretary of the finance department, was joined by his mother, friends, and colleagues, turning the festival of colours into a moment of shared labour and quiet joy for the beneficiary family.

“On the occasion of Holi 2026, went to Myrkhon Village to paint the house of a PMAY beneficiary. #HappyHoli,” the officer said in a brief message on his social media handle.

“Let us bring colours to people’s lives. That is how I like to celebrate Holi. Thank you @emi_daka for co-sponsoring the paints !” he added. Villagers joined in the effort, bringing brushes, colours and festive cheer as the fresh walls of the house slowly came alive. For the beneficiary, the day marked more than just the finishing touches on a new house; it was a moment that reflected community participation and the promise of a dignified home. The Pradhan



Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) aims to provide affordable housing to poor and vulnerable families across India. So far, over 23,600 houses

sanctioned under PMAY (Urban and Gramin) have been completed out of more than 25,000 units approved in the state.

Nagaland team participated in farmers' exposure visit at ICAR

Dimapur, Mar 05: A 10-member team from Nagaland, representing five districts, participated in a three-day Farmers’ Exposure Visit-cum-Field Training Programme at the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)–Indian Institute of Pulses Research (IIPR), Kanpur, from February 24 to 26. The team comprised three farmers from Peren, two from Kohima, and one each from Phek, Mon and Mokokchung districts, along with two Ph.D. scholars from the Department of Botany, Kohima Science College, Jotsoma (KSCJ). Organised by the Department of Botany, KSCJ under the guidance of Dr. Samadanga Ao, the programme was sponsored by ICAR–IIPR, Kanpur under the initiative “Promotion of Pulses in Northeast Hill Region–Nagaland.” During the visit, the team was guided by Dr. D.P. Patel (Nodal Officer, NER) and Dr. Anup Chandra (Co-Nodal Officer, NER). Participants toured research farms of chickpea, lentil, field pea, pigeon pea and rajma grown under different experimental conditions. Dr. Patel explained crop improvement programmes, varietal testing, disease and pest resistance, drought toler-



ance, and diverse cropping systems and management practices.

Six scientists delivered presentations on improved varieties of chickpea, pigeon pea and field pea, rabi pulse pest and disease management, and chickpea-based start-ups. The team also interacted with IIPR Director Dr. G.P. Dixit and discussed the potential and challenges of rabi pulse cultivation in Nagaland. The participants further visited the Agri-Engineering Division and the Agri-Business Incubation Centre, where engineers and scientists demonstrated advanced farm machinery, drones and various start-up products supported by the institute. The exposure visit concluded with a tour of the historic Taj Mahal in Agra.

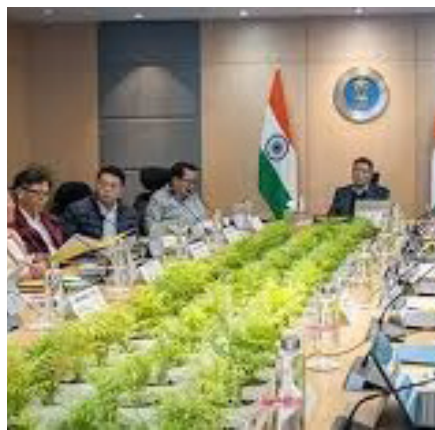
Cabinet clears education reforms, transfer Bill

Itanagar, Mar 05: The Arunachal Pradesh Cabinet, chaired by Chief Minister Pema Khandu, on Monday approved a series of decisions focusing on education reforms, strengthening of financial and health administration, employee welfare, and climate action, besides clearing key recruitment and pay-related proposals across departments. The highlight of the meeting was the approval of five major agendas concerning the education department, including proposals to regulate teacher transfers through legislation, grant professorship to college teachers, amend recruitment rules for principals, frame rules for Physical Education Teachers, and revise the state’s seat reservation policy for diploma

and allied courses. The Cabinet also approved placing the Arunachal Pradesh Transfer and Posting of Employees of Education Department (Regulation & Management) Bill, 2026, in the ensuing Assembly session beginning March 6, an official statement said. The proposed law seeks to replace the existing policy-based transfer system with a statutory, transparent and technology-enabled mechanism linked to a fully automated Teachers’ Registry Portal. Recruitment rules for physical education teachers under the secondary education department were also approved to ensure transparent and systematic appointments in government schools. In higher education, the Cabinet approved grant-

ing professorship to government college teachers under the Career Advancement Scheme in line with UGC Regulations, 2018, to promote quality research and academic excellence. It also cleared amendments to the recruitment rules for the post of principal in government colleges to align with updated APST candidates have been de-reserved and brought under open quota, while 80 per cent seats will remain reserved for APST candidates. In administrative matters, the Cabinet approved creation of 15 posts under the Arunachal Pradesh Finance and Accounts Service Cadre, including five senior finance and accounts officers and ten finance and accounts officers/treasury officers, to strength-

en financial administration. Grade pay upgrade for the post of charge-man in the civil aviation department and pay parity for inspectors (JICS/JACS and SICS/SACS) in the cooperation department were cleared based on recommendations of the high-level standing committee on pay anomalies. To strengthen public health regulation, the Cabinet approved notification of recruitment rules for deputy drugs controller (Group-A) and framing of recruitment rules for senior food safety officer in the Health and Family Welfare department, aligning them with the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 and 7th Central Pay Commission norms.



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A one-time relaxation in the recruitment rules for superintending engineer, 2014, in the power department was also approved to meet administrative requirements. The Cabinet additionally launched the Pakke Declaration Implementation Report-2025, reviewing progress of the Pakke Tiger Reserve-2047 Declaration on climate-resilient development adopted in November 2021. According to the report, out of 410 action lines under 75 climate-resilient strategies being implemented by 23 departments, 246 have been completed, 70 are ongoing and 94 are at the initiation stage.

An investment of Rs 802.6 crore has been mobilised for the initiatives. The state government reiterated its commitment to good governance, transparency, human resource development and sustainable growth through the approved measures.

Manipur Chief Minister allocates portfolios to council of ministers

Imphal, Mar 05: A month after taking oath as chief minister of Manipur, Yumnam Khemchand Singh on Wednesday allocated portfolios to his council of ministers, ending the much-speculated expansion of the council of ministers. As per the allocation, Singh kept most of the key departments but gave the home department to Konthoujam Govindas Singh, while two departments each were allocated to the two deputy chief ministers. As per an official notification issued by state confidential and cabinet department and signed by chief secretary Dr Puneet Kumar Goel, deputy chief minister Nemcha Kipgen has been entrusted with the rural development & panchayati raj department and the tribal affairs & hills department. Deputy chief minister Losii Dikho has been allotted the charge of the public health engineering department along with the forest, environment & climate change department. Konthoujam Govindas Singh who took oath as cabinet minister has been given charge of the home department as well as youth affairs & sports department. Another cabinet minister Khurajam Loken Singh has been assigned the charge of arts & culture department and tourism department. The notification was issued under Rule 6(1) of the Rules of Business of the Government of Manipur, which states that the chief minister will look after any department not allocated specifically. The Manipur Governor allocated the portfolios to the ministers on the advice of the chief minister, the



notification added. Notably, the allocation of the portfolios to the members of the council of ministers came a month after the BJP-led elected government was installed. However, the chief minister did not allocate portfolios to be handled by the ministers, including the chief minister himself, apart from non-expansion of his council of ministers which many expected induction of more ministers till date. As per constitutional provisions, Manipur can have up to 12 ministers including the chief minister. This allows Singh to induct at least seven more ministers into his council. A month after the swearing-in, the portfolio distribution had taken place but expansion of the cabinet was yet to take place, leaving political circles speculating about the delay.

Arunachal Cabinet clears reforms, transfer Bill

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It also cleared amendments to the recruitment rules for the post of principal in government colleges to align with updated UGC norms. Further, the Cabinet approved the amendment of the existing reservation policy for diploma, PCM, PCB and allied seats. Under the revised policy, 20 per cent seats earlier reserved for non-APST candidates have been de-reserved and brought under open quota, while 80 per cent seats will remain reserved for APST candidates.

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NLA Session: Governor demands enduring peace and inclusive development

Kohima, Mar 05: Nagaland Governor, Ajay Kumar Bhalla, on Monday delivered his maiden address since assuming office in August 2025 at the Eighth Session of the 14th Nagaland Legislative Assembly (NLA), outlining the State government’s policy direction, achievements and development roadmap across sectors.

Extending greetings to members, the Governor expressed confidence that the session would witness constructive deliberations on issues of public importance while upholding democratic traditions. He noted that the present government was nearing completion of three years in office and had strived to honour the mandate of the people, conveying gratitude for continued public and legislative support.

Naga political issue: Reaffirming commitment to an early, peaceful and honourable settlement, he informed the House that the Political Affairs Committee (PAC)—comprising ministers, legislators from all tribes, political party leaders and Members of Parliament—has been actively reviewing developments. A sub-committee has been constituted to streamline engagement. He disclosed that the chief minister, along with cabinet colleagues and PAC members, recently met Union home minister Amit Shah, urging appointment of an interlocutor at the political or ministerial level to expedite talks.

The Governor also highlighted the Memorandum of Agreement signed on February 5, 2026 between the State government, Government of India and Eastern Nagaland Peoples’ Organisation for constitution of the Frontier Nagaland Territorial Authority (FNTA). He described it as a step towards equitable development of eastern Nagaland and said efforts were underway to constitute an interim council and enact special legislation. Census, governance and capacity building: Census 2027 will be conducted in two phases, with House Listing and Housing Census in Nagaland scheduled from July



1 to 30, 2026, and self-enumeration from June 16 to 30. He called for cooperation to ensure accurate data. Governance reforms include intensive capacity-building programmes by the Personnel & Administrative Reforms Department in collaboration with the Administrative Training Institute. An MoU with the Capacity Building Commission, Karmayogi Bharat aims to strengthen institutional capacity. GST collections have surpassed national targets during the current financial year.

Education and youth: School transformation measures through Lighthouse School Complexes and teacher training under the Nagaland Education Project–NECTAR are being implemented in line with NEP 2020. Infrastructure upgrades under PM-USHA are progressing, and a Scholarship Nodal Cell has been set up. Coaching Centres Guidelines 2025 have been notified. The State hosted major sporting events, including the 69th National School Games Taekwondo Championship and the Dr. T. Ao Junior Girls National Football Championship, while

athletes excelled in wrestling, Sepaktakraw and archery.

Health and social welfare: The Chief Minister Health Insurance Scheme has benefited thousands not covered under Ayushman Bharat. The Nagaland State Drugs Testing Laboratory has been operationalised and integrated with national vigilance networks. Child protection under Mission Vatsalya and women-centric schemes such as Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana continue. Rural development and infrastructure: Under Jal Jeevan Mission, over 3.41 lakh household tap connections have been provided, with several villages declared “Har Ghar Jal.” Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen), PMAY-G, MGNREGA and Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana are progressing. Projects under PM-DeVINE aim to boost development in underdeveloped areas. Urban initiatives include infrastructure strengthening and proposed roll-out of PMAY–Urban. Agriculture and allied sectors: Productivity and sustainable farming are being promoted under PM-KISAN and the National

Mission on Natural Farming. Initiatives under the National Food Security Mission and Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture include jute promotion and Golden Kiwifruit cultivation. Livestock, fisheries and sericulture schemes are supporting rural livelihoods.

Economy, startups and IT: Startup promotion has generated over 1,500 jobs, with recognition in national rankings including NITI Aayog’s Export Preparedness Index. Adoption of the Unified Logistics Interface Platform is expected to streamline supply chains. The Information & Public Relations Department has been designated nodal agency for the AVGC-XR sector. The IT & Communication Department is establishing a Nagaland Innovation Hub at Chumoukedima under NE-SIDS-OTRI, while AI Data Labs are being set up in two ITIs under the India AI Mission. He stressed responsible harnessing of petroleum, natural gas and mineral resources. Tourism, environment and disaster management: Tourism remains a priority, with the Hornbill Festival drawing large visitors. Conservation initiatives include works under the Nagaland Forest Management Project and notification of nearly 200 Community Reserves. A new Nagaland Agar Policy is being drafted. Disaster management initiatives include an AI-enabled climate risk analysis system and a weather alert mobile application. Commending the administration, police and civil society for maintaining law and order, the Governor said cybercrime monitoring systems and AI-enabled surveillance infrastructure were being implemented. Aligning with Viksit Bharat 2047, he said preparations were underway for a “Viksit Nagaland @2047” roadmap and expressed hope that the session would strengthen efforts towards a peaceful and prosperous State.

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by the party’s central committee, AIUDF MLA from Badarpur constituency, Abdul Aziz, and MLA as well as party vice-president Karim Uddin Barbhuiya have been suspended from the party for a period of six years.

The party stated that the activities of both leaders had been under close monitoring and were found to be controversial and detrimental to the interests of the organisation.

The suspension orders issued under provisions of the party constitution, and signed by AIUDF General Secretary (administration) Hafiz Bashir Ahmed, noted that their actions were classified as anti-party ac-

tivities that had negatively impacted the party and tarnished its reputation.

The party described the actions of the MLAs as misconduct and a gross violation of party principles.

It further alleged that the two MLAs were extending support to an opposition political party and were preparing to join it.

Meanwhile, Karim Uddin Barbhuiya announced through a social media post that he had decided to quit the AIUDF after consultations with people from different sections of society. His statement comes amid speculation of political realignments in the state ahead of the upcoming electoral cycle.

New milestone in food grain supply chain in Mizoram: 25,900 quintals of rice reach Sairang from Punjab by rail

Aizawl, Mar 05: In a significant milestone, the first-ever Food Corporation of India (FCI) food grain cargo train arrived at Sairang Railway Station in Mizoram on March 3, informed a statement issued by the Railway Ministry on Thursday.

The cargo train comprised 42 wagons carrying around 25,900 quintals of rice from Punjab. This marks an important step in strengthening rail-based freight connectivity in the state and improving the supply chain of essential commodities. The successful unloading of the inward FCI food grain rake at Sairang signifies the growing operational capability of the station and highlights the expanding role of railway infrastructure in supporting Mizoram’s logistics and food distribution network.

According to Railway Ministry, with the introduction of passenger and freight train services, Mizoram has experienced a significant transformation in both passenger transportation and the movement of goods across the state.

This development has not only improved connectivity but has also contributed to economic growth and further strengthened tourism in the



region.

It may be mentioned that the inauguration of the 51.38-km Bairabi-Sairang railway line on September 13, 2025 by the Prime Minister, marked a historic milestone for the people of Mizoram. This major infrastructure project has

brought Aizawl onto India’s railway map by directly linking the state to the national railway network. Beyond improving transportation, the new rail line is expected to create significant opportunities for economic growth and promote tourism development across the region.

North East Conference 2026 Concludes In New Delhi, Highlighting Culture, Development And National Integration

New Delhi, Mar 05: The North East Conference–2026, organized by North East Sanstha, Delhi, concluded successfully at the historic Constitution Club of India, bringing together eminent thinkers, policy experts, academicians, social leaders, and cultural practitioners to deliberate on diverse dimensions of Northeast India. The day-long conference featured engaging thematic sessions focusing on the region’s rich cultural heritage, cus-

tomary traditions, developmental trajectory, policy perspectives, social harmony, and future opportunities. Participants held meaningful discussions highlighting both the historical significance of the Northeastern region and the transformative developments taking place in recent years. In the inaugural session, Madan Prasad Bezbaruah, retired IAS, former Secretary in the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India and a

distinguished administrator from Assam, emphasized the unique sensitivity of the Northeast and its gradual integration and exposure to the rest of the country. Advocate Bikram Banerjee , Additional Solicitor General of India, underlined the distinctiveness of the region’s customary laws and their importance in preserving indigenous identity and maintaining social balance. Narendra Thakur, Akhil Bharatiya Sah Prachar Pramukh of

the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), reflected on the glorious civilizational history of the Northeast, tracing its cultural continuity from the era of the Mahabharata to the present day. Samudragupta Kashyap, Chancellor of Nagaland University and a renowned journalist-scholar from Assam, highlighted the immense contributions of freedom fighters from the region whose sacrifices strengthened India’s national movement.



Assam DGP's fake video surfaces, police initiate legal action

Guwahati, Mar 05: Cyber criminals have misused the photograph of Assam DGP Harmeet Singh to create an AI-generated video, pretending to be a fake ‘IPS Sonu Sharma’.

After it came to light, the Assam Police on Thursday initiated legal action against the unidentified scammers behind this crime.

The police urged citizens not to fall for such scam videos and to report suspicious content immediately.

“Deepfake Alert! Scammers are misusing the image of the DGP to create an AI-generated video, pretending to be a fake ‘IPS Sonu Sharma’,” the Assam police said in a social media post. “The video is fake and part of an online scam. Assam Police is initiating strict legal action against those creating or circulating such digitally manipulated content. Citizens are urged not to fall for such scam videos and to report suspicious content immediately,” police said.

CM inaugurates 1.05-km flyover in Guwahati

Guwahati, Mar 05: In a step towards easing traffic congestion in Guwahati, Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma inaugurated the newly constructed Dinesh Goswami Flyover at Bharalumukh.area of the city on late Wednesday evening.

The Chief Minister also inaugurated the Saraighat War Memorial at Panbazar and laid the foundation stone for the expansion project of the Brahmaputra Riverfront Park.

It may be noted that the flyover, constructed at a cost of Rs. 99 crore with joint participation of the State and Central Governments, has a total length of 1.05 kilometres. The flyover will enable uninterrupted vehicular movement over the railway line at Bharalumukh, reduce accidents caused by railway crossings, and significantly ease traffic congestion at the Bharalumukh traffic confluence. The flyover has been named after former Union Minister Late Dinesh Goswami.

Meanwhile, as a new addition to the beautification of the city, and blending nature and modernity, the third phase of the Brahmaputra Riverfront Park project; spread across approximately 2.5 acres, features a pond with a musical fountain as its main attraction was launched. Adjacent to the pond, a memorial has been erected in honour of the brave warriors who fought alongside Lachit Borphukan against the Mughals in the Battle of Saraighat. The design of the memorial follows the traditional Ahom architectural style of Upper Assam. The names of 132 martyrs of the Battle of Saraighat have been inscribed on the memorial to pay tribute to their supreme sacrifice.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Minister further informed that there are plans to preserve the former official residence of the Chief Justice of the Gauhati High Court as a heritage site and develop a textile museum there.

Alliance of ULFA(I), Bangladeshi PCJSS (Santu) and Rohingya Groups May Disrupt Assam Assembly Elections, Says CNEISS

Guwahati, Mar 05: The Centre for North East India Security Studies (CNEISS), a security-focused think tank, has warned that an alleged alliance involving the United Liberation Front of Asom (Independent), the Bangladeshi tribal armed group Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti (PCJSS–Santu faction), and Rohingya militant organisations could pose a threat to peace during the upcoming Assam Assembly elections.

In a press statement issued on Thursday, CNEISS claimed that representatives of the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), Rohingya Solidarity Organisation (RSO), ULFA(I), and the PCJSS (Santu faction) reportedly attended a two-day meeting held from December 9 to 11, 2025, in Cox’s Bazar. The meeting was allegedly organised by Bangladesh’s Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI) and Pakistan’s

Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI).

According to the statement, arms are allegedly being routed through Rohingya militant groups and members of the PCJSS. A PCJSS representative based in Cox’s Bazar, identified as Bidhayak Chakma, reportedly procured around 50 sophisticated weapons on February 26, 2026, which could be used to create disturbances in parts of Northeast India. The organisation also claimed that rocket fuel sourced through channels in Chittagong may be supplied to insurgent groups, which could potentially be used in attacks on infrastructure such as bridges.

CNEISS spokesperson Swapan Debbarma further pointed to several arrests of PCJSS cadres in Tripura. According to him, Tripura Police and the Border Security Force apprehended a few armed PCJSS (Santu faction) members, including Samaj Priyo Chakma, with a 9 mm pistol

in Agartala on January 21, 2025. Additionally, 13 cadres were arrested in Agartala on June 4, 2025, while another individual, Apollo Chakma, was arrested on February 23, 2026. Debbarma also referred to a judgment delivered by the Gauhati High Court on September 5, 2024, in Criminal Appeal No. 1/2019 (National Investigation Agency vs. Rohmingliana), relating to the seizure of a large cache of arms and ammunition in Mizoram on March 7, 2013. The seized items included 31 AK-47 rifles, one light machine gun, one Browning Automatic Rifle and hundreds of rounds of ammunition. The court described the PCJSS as a terrorist organisation in its observations.

The think tank further claimed that security responses have not been sufficient to counter the alleged network involving the PCJSS (Santu faction). Debbarma alleged that the group has

attempted to influence Chakma communities in India through financial support, citing issues surrounding citizenship and alleged discrimination faced by Chakma populations in certain northeastern states. He also referred to protests in Tripura during July and August 2025 following a drug seizure worth Rs 10.43 crore by the Assam Rifles on June 19, 2025. The drugs were allegedly recovered from Sapna Chakma and Punyasur Chakma, who were described as associates of Bidhayak Chakma. Debbarma further claimed that the current situation in Bangladesh’s Chittagong Hill Tracts could increase regional security risks. He noted that PCJSS (Santu faction) chief Santu Larma, who has served as chairman of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional Council since the signing of the CHT Accord, may face political uncertainty under the present government in Bangladesh.

Meghalaya Development: The ₹285 Cr Payout



Shillong, Mar 05: Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma distributed cheques worth ₹2,849.9 crore to beneficiaries of the three C&RD Blocks of East Garo Hills Samanda, Songsak, and Dambo-Rongjeng under the Green Meghalaya and FOCUS+ schemes. The event was held at the Williamnagar Police Parade Ground

and attended by Marcuise N. Marak, Minister for Soil and Water Conservation, PHE, and Housing; Nihim D. Shira, Co-Chairman of Meghalaya State Planning Board; Deputy Commissioner RP Marak; Superintendent of Police Stephen A. Rynjah; government officials, public leaders, Nokmas, and other dignitaries.

In his address, Chief Min-

ister Sangma highlighted the state’s infrastructural and economic progress over the past eight years. He thanked the Central Government and Prime Minister Narendra Modi for support and noted that Meghalaya ranks second in economic development after Tamil Nadu. He emphasized the government’s focus on sustainable, all-

round development and encouraged community participation. Sangma also stated that over ₹150 crore had been spent under the FOCUS scheme in the last five years. He announced that the registration period for FOCUS+ benefits would be extended by another two years to support more beneficiaries. Minister Marcuise N. Marak noted that under “Our Magnificent Meghalaya, Vision 2032”, the state has experienced significant infrastructural and economic growth. He shared plans for a new Horti-Agri College at Dawagre in East Garo Hills and said the cabinet had decided to provide government employment to sports personalities achieving state laurels. Deputy Commissioner RP Marak highlighted that more than 900 beneficiaries in East Garo Hills would receive the second installment under FOCUS+, and 150 villages had been covered under Green Meghalaya for payments related to ecosystem services.

22nd sunsilk mega Miss North East 2026 pageant held in Guwahati

Guwahati, Mar 05: Stella Rica Khongsni from Meghalaya, Leimapokpam Ghanapyari Devi from Manipur, and Tenzing Choden Sherpa from Sikkim were crowned winners of the 22nd Sunsilk Mega Miss North East 2026 in the Grand Finale held in Guwahati.

The organisers said that In keeping with the pageant’s progressive format, the three winners would share equal honours and responsibilities as titleholders.

The 22nd edition followed an extensive eight-state audition process conducted both on-ground and online, drawing participation from hundreds of young women across the Northeast.

Following a rigorous selection process, the shortlisted finalists underwent an intensive grooming and mentorship programme in Guwahati, culminating in a high-voltage finale that evaluated contestants on poise, intelligence, personality, confidence, and stage presence.

Conceptualised by fashion entrepreneur Abhijeet Singha, the pageant is produced by Mega Entertainment and marketed by Mega Activation, continuing its longstanding vision of empowering women from the region and “Taking India to the World Stage.”

Congratulating the winners, Singha said, “Twenty-two years of Sunsilk Mega Miss North East is a testament to the resilience, ambition, and global readiness of young women from our region. Stella, Ghanapyari and Tenzing represent not just beauty, but strength of character and cultural pride. Over the years, our winners have carried the Northeast to international platforms with distinction, and I am confident that this year’s titleholders will embrace the global opportunities ahead and continue that legacy.”

The newly crowned winners will receive professional representation, advanced grooming, brand endorsements, public relations advisory, and national-level exposure. They will also be considered for international pageant representation and global fashion platforms, reinforcing the



pageant’s established track record of enabling contestants to compete at prestigious international competitions and modelling circuits abroad.

In addition to the main titles, several special awards were presented recognising individual excellence across distinct categories.

The Grand Finale brought together fashion, performance, and celebration of regional diversity, reaffirming Sunsilk Mega Miss North East as one of the most influential women-centric platforms in the region.

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The Value of Lifelong Learning

Learning is often associated with formal education during childhood and youth. However, in a rapidly changing world, learning cannot end with graduation. Lifelong learning has become essential for personal growth and professional relevance. Technological advancements constantly reshape industries and professions. Skills that were valuable a decade ago may become outdated today. Individuals who continue to learn and adapt remain better prepared for changing opportunities. Lifelong learning is not limited to professional development. It also includes gaining knowledge about culture, society, and personal interests. Reading, attending workshops, or learning new skills enriches intellectual life and keeps the mind active. For older adults, continuous learning contributes to mental well-being and a sense of purpose. Engaging in educational activities prevents stagnation and encourages curiosity. Governments and institutions can promote lifelong learning by offering accessible training programmes and online courses. Flexible educational systems enable people to upgrade their skills while continuing their careers. However, the most important factor in lifelong learning is personal attitude. Curiosity and openness to new ideas motivate individuals to explore beyond their comfort zones. A society that values continuous learning becomes more innovative and adaptable. Knowledge should not be confined to classrooms but should remain a lifelong journey of discovery and growth.

The dangerous normalisation of brutality in Bangladesh

A society does not wake up one morning and discover that it has become violent. It drifts into that state gradually, much like how dampness spreads inside walls. By the time the cracks become visible, the foundation has already weakened. In recent weeks, we have witnessed a series of brutal crimes across the country that have shaken even those accustomed to reading crime reports over their morning tea: a severed hand and leg recovered from the busiest quarters of the capital; limbs scattered in areas which thousands frequent daily for work and prayer. In Ishwardi, Pabna, a grandmother and her granddaughter were found in the yard and mustard field, respectively, their screams swallowed by the night. In Narsingdi's Madhabadi, a teenage girl was abducted, tortured, and killed after her family dared to seek justice for her alleged rape. In Dhanbari, Tangail, the body of a third-grade child was discovered in a sack. In some of these cases, the accused themselves are teenagers. These are not isolated incidents or random deviations in an otherwise healthy social body.

The question is not only who committed these crimes, but what kind of soil nourishes such cruelty. When a severed limb lies in a crowded commercial district, the shock is not limited to the act itself. It punctures our sense of civic security. The city is supposed to be impersonal but predictable. We accept congestion, noise, and dust. We do not accept dismemberment on the pavement. When violence intrudes into the most public spaces, it sends a message that no place is immune from it. The social contract then feels fragile. In rural fields, the horror reflects a different texture. Villages once symbolised collective vigilance, the unspoken assurance that neighbours watch over one another. The erosion of that protective instinct reveals a deeper moral fatigue. When an elderly woman dies resisting, when a teenage girl is strangled after possible sexual assault, we are forced to confront a painful question: at what point



did the defence of honour become a fatal burden borne alone?

The case of the murdered child in Dhanbari exposes another layer of anxiety. The alleged perpetrators are teenagers. Violence, it appears, is not only being committed against the young but by the young. This is perhaps the most alarming development. Crime has always existed. What changes over time is the moral age at which it begins to take root. If adolescents are now participating in acts of calculated brutality, then the failure is generational. One common thread in these incidents is the normalisation of violence. Bloody images circulate freely on social media. Videos of assault are shared, commented upon, and "memeified." The line between documentation and entertainment blurs. Repeated exposure dulls the senses. A society that consumes violence as content eventually begins to process it as routine. The extraordinary becomes ordinary.

The abnormal becomes tolerable. At the same time, everyday language has grown harsher. Conversations are peppered with threats, with casual references to revenge. Anger is worn as a badge of authenticity. Patience is mocked as weakness. The psy-

chological climate grows hostile. People lose the capacity to pause, and immediate reaction overrides reflection. In such an environment, the step from verbal aggression towards physical violence becomes smaller. There is also the question of justice. When ordinary citizens perceive that justice is uncertain, delayed, or influenced, two dangerous reactions emerge. One group withdraws into frustration and silence. They stop believing in institutional remedies. The other group grows impatient and seeks to deliver justice themselves. Both responses corrode the rule of law. A silent majority loses faith, while a reckless minority gains confidence.

Law enforcement agencies have promised speedy investigation and arrest in several of the aforementioned cases. Swift action is essential and certainty of punishment is one of the strongest deterrents against crime. Yet, prevention is not dependent on policing alone. Law is a remedy applied after harm has occurred. Moral formation is the only vaccine. The family is the first classroom. If children do not learn empathy, restraint, and respect for bodily autonomy at home, no penal code can fully compensate for this lack of education. Schools can teach formulas and grammar, but do they consistently teach

emotional regulation and ethical reasoning? Religious institutions speak of compassion and dignity, but are these values translated into daily practice or merely confined to ritual? For generations, our culture portrayed protective values. Responsibility for one's neighbour was not an abstract slogan. Social shame functioned as a powerful deterrent. Protecting the weak was a shared expectation. Those values have lost power. Urban anonymity, economic pressures, and digital distractions have thinned the threads of communal accountability. We know more people virtually, yet feel less responsible for those physically around us.

Spectacular violence often overshadows the quieter, everyday humiliations that precede it. Harassment dismissed as harmless teasing. Domestic aggression justified as discipline. Online bullying excused as humour. Each tolerated act chips away at collective empathy. By the time a murder occurs, the moral descent has long been underway. We must also examine the cultural narratives that shape young minds. The hero in a film or game often achieves justice through force. Dialogues celebrate dominance. Without critical guidance, impressionable viewers internalise the idea that power equals violence. None of this absolves an individual criminal of responsibility.

Moral decay is not destiny as many young people grow up in the same environment and choose restraint. But when brutality becomes more frequent and more extreme, it indicates that structural and psychological factors are converging. The measure of civilisation is not technological sophistication or the heights of buildings. It is measured by the sense of safety felt by the weakest person in a community. If we do not act now, the tide will continue to rise. One day, we may find that news of murder no longer unsettles us. That numbness would be the true collapse. For when a society loses its capacity for moral shock, it loses the last defence against its own disintegration.

How garment makers can manage the Middle East logistics shock

Bangladesh's garment exporters are facing a fresh logistics shock as the escalating Iran crisis is now leading to operational restrictions by ocean carriers and airlines. On March 3, Denmark's shipping and logistics company Maersk confirmed it has suspended all new bookings between the Indian subcontinent, including Bangladesh and the Upper Gulf markets, with immediate effect, citing the "evolving situation" in the Middle East. The suspension covers the UAE, Bahrain, Qatar, Iraq, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia's Dammam and Jubail. This move is one of the clearest signs yet that the crisis is now disrupting commercial cargo flows, not just raising risk premiums.

At the same time, shipping and insurance markets are reacting to rising threats around the Strait of Hormuz after Iran issued warnings to vessels and multiple ships reported damage in the wider area. Reuters said at least 150 ships were stranded around the strait till Monday, while major marine insurers moved to cancel war risk cover effective from March 5 in parts of the Gulf. This is sharply pushing logistics costs higher. For Bangladesh's exporters, the crisis splits into two problems. The first is the disruption to direct trade to Gulf destinations, including the UAE, which functions as both a consumer market and a regional distribution hub for apparel. The second is a wider network disruption. Even if a shipment is bound

for Europe or North America, carrier rerouting, higher fuel costs, reduced schedule reliability, and container equipment imbalances can still feed into longer lead times and higher costs.

I believe Maersk's wording is important. It is suspending "new bookings" for the corridor, which means exporters may still be moving previously accepted cargo, but with a higher risk of delays and schedule changes as networks adjust. Maersk also separately flagged restrictions on certain cargo types, including "reefer, dangerous or special cargo acceptance" in and out of multiple Gulf countries, which might affect garment accessory supply chains. Exporters selling into the Gulf should assume that even when a carrier continues to "accept cargo," space may be limited, routing may change at short notice, and surcharges can be introduced with little notice.

However, Bangladesh's biggest apparel volumes head to Europe and the US, not the Gulf. And the Iran crisis arrives amid an already fragile Red Sea. Container lines had been tentatively assessing a return to the Suez Canal corridor, but new security concerns are pushing carriers back towards longer routings around the Cape of Good Hope. The Wall Street Journal says the Middle East crisis has significantly delayed the return of container shipping to Suez, reinforcing the industry shift back to diversions around



Africa. In practice, that means longer and less predictable transits between Asia and Europe.

For Bangladesh, exporters should plan for possible delays, even where the scheduled transit time is unchanged. When ocean schedules become volatile, brands often push urgent top-ups by air or at least move samples and approvals by air. But air is also being hit. Widespread regional airspace disruption is reported, with key hubs including Dubai and Doha affected, and airlines resuming only limited operations, including select cargo and moving flights.

Bangladeshi exporters that route urgent cargo through Gulf hubs should not assume air capacity is available at normal notice periods or normal prices. Where air freight is unavoidable, exporters may need to secure uplift earlier, accept longer routings, or use alternative hubs outside the most disrupted air corridors.

The crisis is also feeding directly into shipping costs via insurance and security surcharges. Reports suggest war risk insurance is being withdrawn or repriced rapidly, and we are seeing sharp increases in premiums within

days as risk assessments change. There are also concerning reports of major insurers cancelling war risk cover in the Gulf starting March 5, with freight rates on some lanes jumping sharply over the weekend. Separately, rising oil prices are critical for apparel logistics because bunker costs tend to flow through into carrier fuel mechanisms. The combined effect is that Bangladeshi exporters may face both higher freight bills and a higher probability of "unplanned" cost items appearing after contracts are signed, including emergency surcharges and

insurance-related fees. While our garment exporters cannot control geopolitics, they can prepare and communicate. The most practical response is to treat the next few weeks as a lead time management exercise.

Exporters can start with mapping exposure by shipping lane rather than by customer. If they supply the Gulf directly, they should identify which orders are on the Maersk-affected corridor, which are already gated in, and which are still in production. They would also be wise to assume that new bookings to the listed Upper Gulf markets may need alternative carriers, alternative routings, or revised delivery dates. As for shipping to Europe, buyers will still judge manufacturers on whether orders arrive on time. But right now, the bigger problem is that shipping times are unpredictable. Manufacturers should allow extra time between finishing production and booking the shipment, especially for ranges where a two-to-three-week delay would cause real commercial damage.

If the schedule is already tight, manufacturers should start producing the most time-critical styles first, so they are ready earlier. Manufacturers should also talk to their forwarder and carrier representative now, even if they are not shipping this week. They should ask which services are being rerouted, which transshipment hubs are under pressure, and where equipment shortages may

emerge. Where possible, they should lock space earlier than usual and confirm cut-off times in writing.

They may also need to revisit commercial terms for surcharges. Some exporters will be able to pass certain surcharges through to the buyer under contract terms. Others will not. Either way, they should get clarity early and document what is agreed. If unsure, take legal advice before relying on force majeure or similar clauses. Many problems arise because buyers hear about delays too late. Manufacturers should update buyers early with a clear explanation that this is a fast-moving security and logistics issue, and that carriers are already restricting bookings on certain Middle East corridors.

The shipping industry is reacting in real time. When insurers change cover terms, carriers often respond immediately with new safety rules, booking restrictions, or surcharges. What we are now seeing is how quickly those decisions can hit Bangladesh directly, even when Dhaka is not at the centre of the conflict. The key point for buyers and manufacturers is that you can't plan logistics around one "normal" route right now. Both parties should plan for different outcomes instead, and should also expect occasional restrictions, last-minute changes in space and services, and ongoing swings in insurance and fuel costs until the situation calms down.

Geopolitical threats to Assam's traditional tea exports

The ongoing US-Israel war with Iran and growing conflict in the Middle East region have overshadowed Assam's orthodox tea export market. The uncertainty over the fast-developing geopolitical situation in Iran and Middle East region has exposed the export-related vulnerabilities of the state's orthodox tea production. Promoting domestic consumption of orthodox tea is critical for absorbing such geopolitical shocks in the long term.

The industry's apprehension that the state's orthodox market may suffer export bottlenecks if the ongoing conflict stretches until March-April, when the next large-scale tea production is due, stems from real risks, as the global war has US president Donald Trump warning that the war could last over a month. Iran consumes around 50% of Assam's orthodox production, and if the conflict is dragged on for a longer period, then it will have a cascading impact on ortho-

dox production and export. Official data shows that the export of orthodox tea has registered a substantial increase of 40 million kg in the 2025-26 financial year, which encouraged the state government to increase the orthodox tea production subsidy from Rs 10 to Rs 15 per kilogram with the aim of making orthodox tea half of total exports.

The incentive encouraged a number of CTC producers to transition to orthodox production as the demand for Assam orthodox surged in global markets; it fetched premium prices and increased profitability. Implementation of the "Tea Development & Promotion Scheme (TDPS)", which aims to increase the production and productivity of tea, improve the quality of tea entering the markets, and enhance exports and help Small Tea Growers (STG) to move up the value chain, remains crucial for sustaining the overall growth momentum. The central

government informed the Lok Sabha in December that recommendations in an evaluation study of TDPS carried out by the Development Monitoring and Evaluation Office, NITI Aayog included replantation, scaling up of brand promotion efforts, formation of Self Help Groups/ Farmer Producer Organisations of STGs, dissemination of knowledge to farmers on good agriculture practices and capacity building of STGs. These recommendations formed the basis of the finalisation of the TDPS scheme for the period 2023-24 to 2025-26. Under the scheme, out of the Tea Board's overall budget, Rs 152.76 Crore was allocated and Rs 150.20 crore was utilised by the Tea Board for activities specific to Assam during the period 2021-22 to 2025-26, which reflects the sustained efforts by the government under TDPS for tea development, which also has an impact on tea export from the state. Boosting the production

of high-quality orthodox tea in the state is also crucial to strategically positioning Assam to capture the global markets opened by India's new Free Trade Agreements with the UK, EU, and USA as envisaged in the interim Assam budget for 2026-27. Still, quality improvement in CTC production remains essential for mitigating price volatility in the domestic market.

Deficient rainfall and excessive heat affecting overall tea production and affecting quality remain an area of concern, and this calls for adequate mitigation measures to overcome the challenges. Climate change forecasts show that climate-related risks are poised to become more challenging, which the tea industry cannot afford to ignore. The application of artificial intelligence can be explored for assessing the risks and vulnerabilities in domestic as well as export markets on account of geopolitical situations, nat-

ural disasters, price volatility, and other factors. The supply-demand imbalance caused by export bottlenecks can be offset by increasing per capita consumption of tea in the domestic market. Promotion of tea's health benefits among youth, who are more health conscious, can help boost domestic production. The younger generation is also concerned about quality, food safety, and transparency during the manufacturing and distribution processes. This priority of the young generation calls for strict adherence to food safety standards in the tea manufacturing process. In competitive markets, branding and labelling play a vital role in marketing, promoting products, and boosting customer confidence. Even though tea consumption in the domestic market is far larger than coffee, which primarily dominates southern states, aggressive branding has not just led to steady growth in coffee consumption across states but

has also fetched higher prices for some varieties compared to most premium teas. The declaration of tea as a national drink, which has been a long-standing demand of the Assam tea industry, can help increase tea consumption in the country, but quality and branding remain the core of marketing strategies for steady growth in domestic consumption.

Currently, CTC dominates the mass domestic consumption, and orthodox tea consumption in the domestic market is quite small. Growing preference for premium tea among urban consumers can be leveraged for promoting orthodox tea consumption in the domestic market. The industry's current export-centric production of orthodox tea needs a renewed marketing strategy. A strategic marketing shift to unlock the domestic consumption potential of orthodox tea can be beneficial in absorbing supply-demand imbalance shocks due to the geopolitical situation.

IT companies shift to big deals driven by AI

Mumbai: As concerns rise over how generative artificial intelligence could disrupt traditional outsourcing models, mid-tier IT services companies are sharpening their focus on AI-led transformation deals. Over the past few weeks, firms such as Coforge, LTMindtree and Zensar Technologies have announced a series of large, multi-year contracts, signalling that demand for complex digital and AI-driven work is increasingly extending beyond the largest IT services players. Separately, the company has also secured a seven-year engagement with the Central Board of Direct Taxes to deploy AI infrastructure to modernise tax analytics, in partnership with Nvidia. While the contract value, at about Rs 3,000 crore or roughly \$33 million, is significantly smaller, it underscores the growing role of AI systems in large public-sector digital programmes. Coforge, meanwhile, has announced multiple deals in quick succession. On February 25, the company disclosed a \$158 million contract with a UK-based client for five years starting April. “AI-led conversations focused on driving innovation, improving governance and resiliency are helping drive a material increase in both the number and the median size of large deals across Europe,” said John Speight, president of Coforge and Europe business leader. A day later, Coforge said it had entered into a strategic partnership with US-based VHC Health, under which it will support end-to-end transformation across infrastructure, cloud, digital workplace and cybersecurity. While the deal value was not disclosed, CEO and Executive Director Sudhir Singh said the engagement reflects how clients are moving beyond pilots. “Providers are now seeking measurable improvements in clinician experience, operational resilience and security, with AI embedded into core digital foundations,” he said.

From Legacy to AI-Native
Pune-based Zensar Technologies said on February 13 that it had secured a \$210

million deal with a large financial services company for a period of 5.5 years. The engagement goes beyond conventional legacy modernisation and is aimed at helping the client evolve into an AI-native enterprise. “This partnership is a landmark as it is not just about technology transformation, but about enabling enterprises to reimagine their operating models using AI,” CEO and MD Manish Tandon said, adding that the work combines technical and professional services with domain expertise in financial services. Traditionally, contracts of this scale have been dominated by large IT services firms. However, mid-sized players such as Coforge, Persistent Systems and Mphasis have, over the past few years, carved out specialised positions that are helping them compete more directly. “These were earlier outliers, but we will now see more competition between midcap and large-cap IT firms for large contracts,” said Pareekh Jain, CEO of EIIRTrend, noting that longer-tenure deals are increasingly central to revenue visibility. Industry executives also point to agility as a key differentiator in AI transformation work. “It’s not about scale of delivery, but speed to value,” said Ashwin Venkatesan, executive research leader for IT services at HFS Research. He added that enterprises are likely to prefer deals in the \$70 million to \$100 million range, structured around phased modernisation and productivity gains, rather than mega contracts. That shift, he said, plays to the strengths of midcap IT firms navigating the AI transition. LTMindtree, which recently re-branded itself as LTM, announced on February 23 that it had won a \$100 million contract from a European medical technology platform focused on hearing solutions. The seven-year deal involves developing and maintaining the client’s hearing instrument brands and private labels, including wearables and a mobile application, through LTM’s digital transformation and innovation platform iNXT.

Medanta leads India in Newsweek’s 2026 global hospital rankings, strengthens market position

Gurugram: Medanta – The Medicity has secured the top position among Indian hospitals in Newsweek’s ‘World’s Best Hospitals 2026’ rankings, prepared in collaboration with Statista Inc.. The recognition marks the seventh consecutive year the institution has featured among leading global healthcare providers, reinforcing its brand equity in the tertiary care segment.

The 2026 survey assessed more than 2,500 hospitals across 32 countries, including the US, UK, Germany, Japan, Australia, Canada and Singapore. Rankings were based on medical expert recommendations, patient experience data, hospital quality metrics and a Patient-Reported Outcome Measures (PROMs) Implementation Survey, reflecting a comprehensive, patient-centric eval-

uation model. Operated by Global Health Limited, Medanta’s performance highlights its sustained investments in advanced infrastructure, artificial intelligence, robotics and automation. The group continues to align digital transformation with clinical innovation to improve outcomes and patient experience. Founded by Dr. Naresh Trehan, a Padma Bhushan, Padma Shri and Dr.

B.C. Roy Award recipient, Global Health Limited operates six hospitals across Gurugram, Indore, Ranchi, Lucknow, Patna and Noida, with 3,579 installed beds as of December 31, 2025. The company has also announced four upcoming facilities in Mumbai, Pitampura (New Delhi), South Delhi and Guwahati, signalling continued expansion in key urban markets.

Nifty 28,000 Why PL Capital is optimistic despite downgrades in EPS selective

New Delhi: Nifty has remained confined within a narrow 5-6 per cent trading band over the past nine months, a noted PL Capital, attributing the long consolidation following a 9-9.5 per cent reduction in Nifty EPS projections for FY26 and FY27. Its latest report highlights that global geopolitical uncertainties and ambiguities surrounding tariffs have also contributed to this consolidation. PL Capital notes encouraging signs emerging from recent trade agreements, particularly with the USA and EU, and observes that a revival in demand is being supported by lower inflation, rationalised GST, and a softer interest rate environment. On the profitability front, auto, building materials, capital goods, NBFCs, oil & gas, and telecom posted over 20 per cent Ebitda growth. Cement, logistics, EMS, and renewables achieved over 30 per cent EBITDA growth, while chemicals, media, education, and travel lagged. There was a near balance in analyst rating changes, with 18 upgrades and 17 downgrades across

industries. Capital goods and oil & gas had four upgrades each, while IT services had two. Oil & gas had three downgrades, and several other sectors saw two downgrades each. Major rating upgrades included Hindustan Petroleum Corporation, Bharat Petroleum Corporation, JSW Steel, Chola mandalam Investment and Finance Company, Ingersoll Rand, Apar Industries, Tech Mahindra, Tata Elxsi, and Torrent Pharma. Downgraded companies included Shree Cement, Vinito Organics, Bajaj Electricals, Hindalco Industries, Oil and Natural Gas Corporation, OIL India, Mahanagar Gas, Lupin, Safari Industries, and Bharat Electronics. PL Capital’s model portfolio remains overweight on banks, diversified financials, healthcare, consumer, auto, and capital goods/defence, while maintaining underweight positions in IT services and commodities. Allocations have increased to capital goods, NBFC, consumer, and metals, and reduced in auto and IT services. PL Capital has added Torrent Pharma to the model portfolio.

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

The 12-month target for Nifty is now 27,958, down from 28,814. For the bull case, Nifty is valued at a PE of 20 times (target: 30,497), while the bear case assumes a 10 times discount to the long-period average (target: 26,486). Trade deals are expected to boost traditional sectors like textiles, gems and jewellery, marine, leather, and handicrafts, putting India as a manufacturing hub for auto components, data centers, defence, aerospace, and consumables it noted. The brokerage remains overweight on banks, diversified

financials, healthcare, consumer, auto, and capital goods/defence as key themes. “We believe renewed thrust on Defence, Data Centers, Infrastructure/Ports, High Speed Rail Corridors, Renewables and Manufacturing ecosystem bodes well for growth in coming years. Next 5-10 years will be driven by asset creation and technology intensive industries which will find favor with markets,”

said PL Capital. PL Capital reports that third-quarter results beat estimates, but Nifty EPS forecasts were trimmed by 0.7-2.9 per cent for FY 26/27/28. Sales, Ebitda and PAT growth for its coverage universe were 9.9 per cent, 16.4 per cent, and 16.7 per cent year-on-year (YoY), respectively. Key sectoral performers included auto, EMS, renewables, NBFCs, hospitals, cement, durables, telecom, logistics, and ports, all of which surpassed 15 per cent sales growth. Capital goods, consumer, metals, and pharma reported between 10-15 per cent sales growth.

Will the NSE and BSE be open or closed on March 3 and 4



New Delhi: “Following a domestic equity market sell-off on Monday fuelled by global geopolitical tensions between the US, Israel, and Iran, both the Sensex and Nifty indices took a hit, declining over 1 per cent each. After this session, some investors are left confused, wondering whether Dalal Street will pause to catch its breath on Tuesday, March 3. According to the stock exchange holidays list, investors can heave a sigh of relief. A trading holiday is officially scheduled for Tuesday, March 3, on the occasion of Holi. So, trading will remain shut today, even though the festival of colours will be mostly celebrated nationwide on Wednesday. There is no holiday on March 4. Meanwhile,

on Monday, the Sensex tumbled 1048.34 points, or 1.29 per cent, to settle at 80,238.85. While the Nifty slipped 312.95 points, or 1.24 per cent, to finish at 24,865.70. March happens to be a month packed with pauses for the stock market. Beyond Holi, the stock exchanges will observe two more trading holidays this month. Trading will be halted on Thursday, March 26, for Shri Ram Navami, and again on Tuesday, March 31, for Shri Mahavir Jayanti. Looking ahead at the official calendar, the months of April and May will witness two stock market holidays each. In April, the markets will be closed for Good Friday on April 3 and Dr Baba Saheb Ambedkar Jayanti on April 14. May follows with Maharashtra Day on May 1 and Bakri Id on May 28. The exchanges will see a single holiday in June, with markets shut for Muharram on June 26. While the equity markets take a break, commodity traders should note that the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX) will be shut for the first half of the day. However, trading will resume in the evening session, from 5 pm to 11 pm. September brings a pause for Ganesh Chaturthi on Monday, September 14. October features a couple of breaks: Mahatma Gandhi Jayanti on Friday, October 2, and Dussehra on Tuesday. Multi Commodity Exchange of India operates only in the evening session. November also packs two holidays, with Dalal Street remaining shut for Diwali Balipratipada on Tuesday, November 10, and Prakash Gurmurb Sri Guru Nanak Dev on Tuesday, November 24. The trading year will wrap up its holiday schedule with Christmas on Friday, December 25.

UPI ATM withdrawals are limited by HDFC Bank’s monthly free transaction regulations

New Delhi: Starting April 1, 2026, HDFC Bank will include UPI-based cash withdrawals at its ATMs within the monthly free transaction limits currently applicable to debit card withdrawals. Once customers exceed the prescribed free limit, a charge of ₹23 per transaction plus applicable taxes will apply. The move aligns UPI cash withdrawals with existing ATM card rules and may influence how customers manage monthly withdrawals.

The revised policy applies to all savings and salary account holders. Customers are entitled to five free ATM transactions per month at HDFC Bank ATMs. For other bank ATMs, the limit remains three free transactions in metro cities and five in non-metro locations.

Beyond these thresholds, the Rs 23 fee plus taxes will be levied per transaction—irrespective of whether the withdrawal is made via debit card or UPI at an HDFC Bank ATM. Domestically, no charges apply for debit card usage at most merchant outlets or online platforms. However, certain transactions—such as bookings via IRCTC—carry a surcharge of 1.8% of the transaction amount. Fuel purchases at government petrol outlets using HDFC Bank swipe machines remain exempt from surcharge.

Frequent cash users Certain current account holders will continue to enjoy unlimited free withdrawals at HDFC Bank ATMs. These include Biz Lite+, Biz Pro+, Biz Ultra+, Biz Elite+, Flexi, Plus, Activ, Ascent, Max Advantage, Max, Profession-



al, Ecomm, Apex, Ultima, Merchant Advantage, Supreme, Startup (Startup Alpha), StartupMax, Startup Growth, and Giga Current Accounts. The revised UPI ATM withdrawal charges primarily affect savings and salary account holders. International ATM and merchant charges

International ATM withdrawals attract separate fees. For cash withdrawals abroad, customers in the non-managed segment are charged ₹125 plus taxes per transaction, along with a 3.5% cross-currency markup. Managed seg-

ment customers pay ₹110 plus taxes, in addition to the same markup. Balance enquiries at overseas ATMs incur charges ranging from ₹15 to ₹25 plus taxes, depending on the account type.

Customers who regularly withdraw cash will need to monitor both card-based and UPI-based ATM usage to avoid additional charges. The policy reflects a broader industry trend of standardising withdrawal rules across channels, effectively narrowing the distinction between UPI-enabled and card-driven ATM transactions.

Gold rate today jumps Rs 5,500, silver price



Mumbai: Gold futures for May delivery rose 3.4 per cent, while silver futures gained 3.6 per cent in MCX trading on Monday, as the ongoing conflict in the Middle East drove safe-haven demand for precious metals. The US President Donald Trump has suggested the conflict could last up to four weeks, further boosting investor caution. At 12.15 pm, gold futures were trading 3.43 per cent higher at Rs 1,67,650 per 10 grams, reaching an intraday peak of Rs 1,67,915. Silver futures rose 3.59 per cent to Rs 2,92,801 per kg, a jump of Rs 10,157, following Iran’s retaliation to US-Israel airstrikes, which heightened global risk-off sentiment

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change. Ponnudi noted that the long-term bullish trend remains intact for gold, supported by global cues and heightened geopolitical tensions. For silver, he said prices continue their upward momentum, with short-term trends turning decisively positive. “Key support is in the Rs 2,50,000–2,70,000 range. Holding above this could trigger further gains toward Rs 3,20,000–3,30,000. Dips toward support levels may provide accumulation opportunities, though a breakdown below these zones could intensify downward pressure.” Ponnudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, said: “MCX Gold futures are trading in the Rs 1,65,000–1,70,000 range after consolidating following the sharp correction from all-time highs near Rs 1,80,000–1,81,000. Strong buying persists in the Rs 1,58,000–1,62,000 zone. A sustained move above Rs 1,65,000 could push prices toward Rs 1,70,000–1,75,000, maintaining a bullish medium-term outlook.” Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst for Commodity and Currency at LKP Securities, said the sharp escalation, with coordinated strikes and retaliatory actions, has increased uncertainty and reduced the likelihood of a swift diplomatic resolution. This elevated geopolitical risk is prompting investors to move into traditional safe-haven assets like gold and silver. “He added that as global equities and other risk assets face pressure, capital often shifts to precious metals, which serve as a hedge against uncertainty.

Putin accused Ukraine of bombing a gas ship, which exploded and sunk off Libya



Putin: Vladimir Putin has accused Ukraine of carrying out a terrorist assault on one of Russia’s liquefied natural gas ships, which exploded and sunk in the Mediterranean Sea near Libya.The Arctic Metagaz had been sanctioned by the United States and the European Union for being part of Moscow’s “shadow fleet” of aging tankers that transport Russian oil and gas across the world while avoiding Western sanctions.The Libyan Maritime Authority reported “sudden explosions, followed by a massive fire” aboard the ship on Tuesday, while it was around 150 miles (240 kilometers) from Sirte. The tanker, which had been carrying 61,000 tons of LNG, “completely sank” between Libya and Malta, a statement said. All 30 crew members were rescued and put on another vessel heading to the Libyan city of Benghazi, it said. “This was a terrorist attack. “This isn’t the first time we’ve seen something like this,” Putin said on Russian state television late Wednesday, accusing Ukraine of responsibility.He

described the act as an attack that “exacerbates the situation on global energy markets, including gas markets”.Russia’s transport ministry has previously stated that the vessel was damaged by Ukrainian sea drones launched from the Libyan coast, but given no other specifics.Ukraine has not commented on the event, although it did say in December that it used airborne drones to target a Russian ship in the Mediterranean, the first such strike acknowledged in the four-year conflict.

Previous Ukrainian attacks on Russian ships in the Mediterranean have reportedly come from the Libyan coast, but Kyiv has not publicly confirmed them.Ukraine’s military has said in the past that it used sea drones to sink Russian vessels in the Black Sea.Ukraine’s state security service unveiled an upgraded sea drone called the Sea Baby in October, which it said had a range of 930 miles and could carry a weapon of up to two tonnes. The Metagaz had sailed from the north-western Russian city

of Murmansk on the Barents Sea and was bound for Port Said in Egypt, the Libyan Maritime Authority said. Its last reported position was in the western Mediterranean off the coast of Malta, according to MarineTraffic, a ship-tracking platform.Putin also suggested on Wednesday that Russia could stop supplying gas to Europe and move to other markets. The European Commission will submit a legal proposal to permanently ban Russian oil imports on 15 April, three days after Hungary’s parliamentary election, according to EU officials and a document seen by Reuters.“And now other markets are opening up,” Putin said.

“And perhaps it would be more profitable for us to stop supplying the European market right now. To move into those markets that are opening up and establish ourselves there.“But this is not a decision, it is, in this case, what is called thinking out loud. I will definitely instruct the government to work on this issue together with our companies.”

US tech corporations commit at the White House to cover the expenses of electricity for data centres

Washington: On Wednesday, Google, Microsoft, Meta, Amazon, and numerous artificial intelligence businesses inked a pact at the White House to cover the costs of new electricity production to power their data centers.The arrangement is intended to help alleviate worries that huge IT datacenters are raising US power rates for homeowners and small companies at a time when Donald Trump’s government is attempting to reduce inflation.“This means that tech companies and datacenters will be able to get the electricity they require without raising electricity prices for consumers,” the president stated at the pledge signing ceremony. “This is a historic win for countless American families and we’ll

also make our electricity grid stronger and more resilient than ever before.” The so-called “Ratepayer Protection Pledge” was initially stated by Trump in his State of the Union speech, and it comes as municipalities and state lawmakers tighten their scrutiny of fast expanding datacenters. Datacenters need massive quantities of electricity to power server racks and cooling systems for the advancement of technologies like artificial intelligence.“Some datacenters were rejected by communities for that, and now I think it’s going to be just the opposite,” Trump added, referring to cancelled or postponed projects across many states in recent months due to local resistance.

Afternoon Canada invites Australia to be’strategic cousins’ Albanese’s Gift to Trump

Mark Carney used a speech to parliament in Canberra to suggest that Canada and Australia will be stronger in dealing with superpowers, including Donald Trump’s America, if they operate as “strategic cousins” rather than competitors.On Thursday, both the Canadian prime minister and Anthony Albanese urged for a de-escalation of US and Israeli assaults on Iran, as well as a cessation of the Iranian regime’s retaliation attacks around the region.

Their statements came as the US-Israel assault on Iran began its sixth day, with US forces apparently prepared to lend air support to Kurdish militants if they join the combat. Follow the Guardian’s live updates here. Five Australian projects have been shortlisted for the Roy-

al Institute of British Architects International Awards, with Candalepas Associates receiving a rare double nomination for two very distinct structures.”The American people want answers on the Epstein files, and so do we.” - Republican Rep. Nancy MaceMace, a vocal opponent of US Attorney General Pam Bondi’s handling of the files, wrote on X after Bondi was subpoenaed as part of the ongoing investigation into Jeffrey Epstein and Ghislaine Maxwell. When the Liberal Party acquired a copy of the critical evaluation of their 2025 election defeat, the federal administration opted to suppress it.

The attempt to conceal it was short-lived, as Anthony Albanese presented the unsettling report to parliament this week.Forget cleavage. A

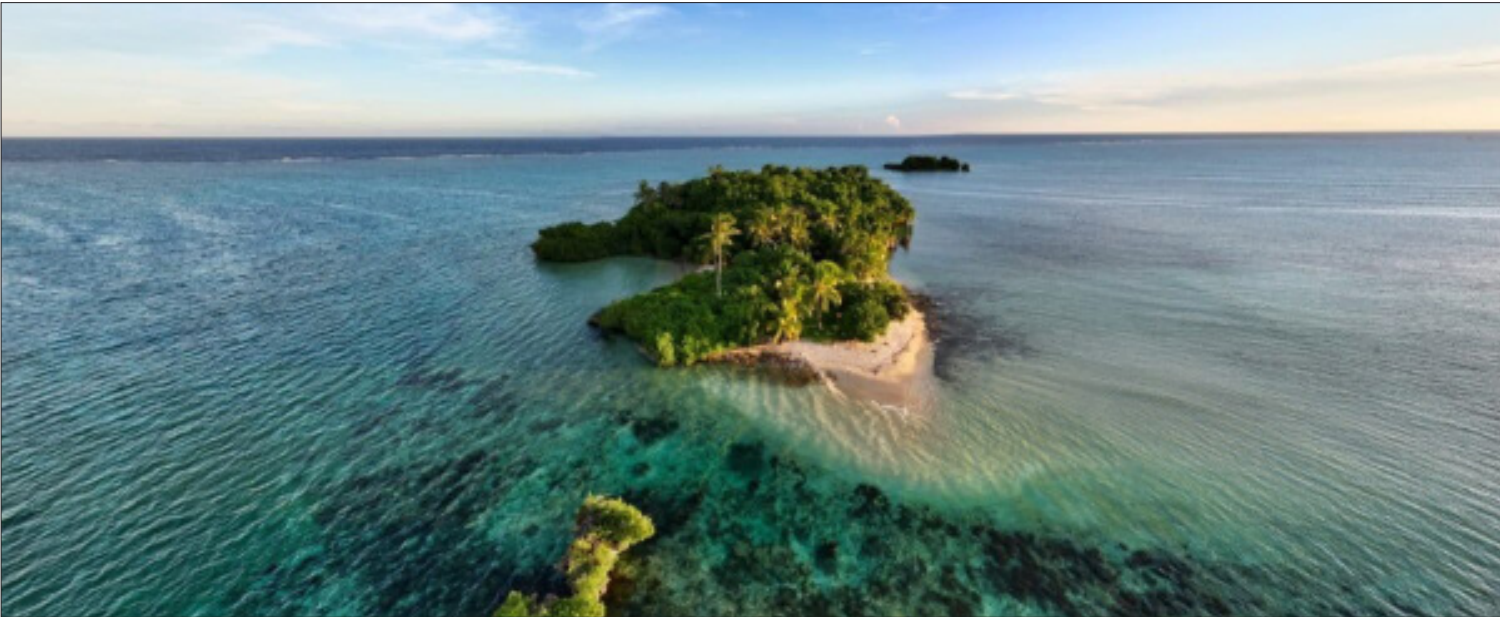


deep V plunging to the waist is the current trend, as seen on Gwyneth Paltrow and many others this year. We are entering the “veavage” era.

Morwenna Ferrier examines why it has suddenly become so popular.If you want to receive this Afternoon Update in your inbox every weekday,

sign up here, or start your day with our Morning Mail newsletter, which provides a curated analysis of the essential stories you should know.

Research reveals that inadequate modeling has led to an underestimation of global sea levels



Oceans: Sea levels throughout the world have been underestimated due to incorrect modeling, with studies indicating that ocean levels are far greater than previously thought.The findings might have a substantial impact on future evaluations of global warming’s implications on coastal towns.Globally, the study discovered that ocean levels are 30cm higher than previously assumed, but in some parts of the global south, such as Southeast Asia and the Indo-Pacific, they may be 100-150cm higher. Rising sea levels pose a significant hazard to coastal towns worldwide, with the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) estimating a 28-100cm rise by 2100.

The most recent study, published in Nature, coupled an examination of 385 peer-reviewed

scientific papers published between 2009 and 2025 with estimations of the discrepancy between generally expected and actual recorded coastal sea levels.Scientists warn that sea level rise would bring “catastrophic inland migration”.Dr. Philip Minderhoud of Wageningen University in the Netherlands and PhD researcher Katharina Seeger discovered that over 90% of these studies used land elevation measurements referenced against global geoid models, rather than direct local measurements of sea levels.

Geoid models predict worldwide sea levels based on the Earth’s gravity and spin.As a result, sea levels were underestimated by an average of 24-27cm, depending on the geoid model utilized, with some anomalies reaching

550-760cm.Minderhoud elaborated: “In reality, sea level is influenced by additional factors such as winds, ocean currents, seawater temperature and salinity.” According to the latest estimations, a 1 meter relative sea level increase will result in 37% more coastal regions falling below sea level, affecting up to 132 million people.“If sea level is higher for your particular island or coastal city than was previously assumed, the impacts from sea level rise will happen sooner than projected before,” according to Minderhoud. The scientists describe the disparity as a “interdisciplinary blind spot” and are worried that a considerable number of the papers reviewed in their research, which they feel are erroneous, are mentioned in the IPCC’s most recent climate change reports.

Airstrikes target Iran-Iraq border as US-Israeli strategy to mobilize Kurds gains traction

Iran: Intense bombings have struck dozens of military outposts, frontier posts, and police stations along Iran’s northern border with Iraq, indicating that the US and Israel are preparing for a new front in their war.A US person familiar with the conversations between Washington and Kurdish authorities stated that the US was prepared to give air assistance if Kurdish peshmerga forces crossed the border from northern Iraq.According to an Israeli military official, the air force has been “heavily operating in western Iran to degrade Iranian capabilities there and to open up a way to Tehran and create freedom of operations there”.

Kurdish authorities informed the Associated Press that Kurdish Iranian dissident organizations in northern Iraq were preparing for a possible cross-border military action in Iran, and the US had requested Iraqi Kurds to back them.Khalil Nadiri, an official with the Kurdistan Freedom Party, or PAK, headquartered in northern Iraq’s semi-autonomous Kurdish region, said on Wednesday that some of their fighters had gone to regions near the Iranian border in Sulaymaniyah province and were on alert. He stated that US authorities had approached Kurdish resistance group commanders about a planned operation, but provided no further specifics. Meanwhile, local officials report that Baloch terrorist groups opposing the Tehran administration have crossed the border into Iran from distant mountain camps in Pakistan.Experts feared that supporting armed organizations from Iran’s ethnic communities would “open



up a hornet’s nest,” exacerbating divides within the varied country and raising the likelihood of a catastrophic civil war if the current system falls.Donald Trump spoke with two leaders of Iranian Kurdish forces in northern Iraq earlier this week and has shown an interest in aiding individuals prepared to take up guns to overthrow the regime, according to US media reports. According to former intelligence and defense officials in Israel.

the United States, and other regions, clandestine activities in northwestern Iran, where Kurdish populations are most numerous, were “ramped up” during Iran’s short war with Israel last summer.In January, rumors surfaced of battles between Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and parties of Kurdish peshmerga rebels who had infiltrated Iran via Turkey and Iraq.

Five opposing Iranian Kurdish groups, led by the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (KDPI), created a new alliance two weeks ago with the goal of overturning the Tehran regime.“Getting your groups aligned and united is the first play in the playbook,” stated a former US defense officer with expertise in covert operations. A KDPI spokeswoman would neither confirm or deny that its head, Mustafa Hijri, was one of the two Iranian Kurdish leaders Trump summoned, but claimed it was the responsibility of “free, democratic societies around the world to help [Iranian Kurds] win freedom”.“We think that the regime is in a deeply weak situation ... and will soon see its end days,” a spokeswoman told CNN. Hijri called on Iranian military personnel on Wednesday to abandon their posts and “return to their families”.

“A big burden for farmers” Gulf shipping turmoil risks food price shock

Iran: The worldwide fertiliser supply chain might be significantly disrupted if Iran’s effective shutdown of the Strait of Hormuz continues, raising worries about crop productivity and food security.Passage in the channel, located off Iran’s southern coast, has mostly ceased since the United States and Israel commenced their assaults over the weekend.

The strait transports between a quarter and a third of world fertilizer commerce, as well as one-fifth of seaborne crude oil and gas.The strait’s de facto closure has an impact on the transfer of ammonia and nitrogen, two crucial constituents in many synthetic fertilizer products. Approximately half of worldwide food production is dependent on synthetic nitrogen, and crop yields would plummet without fertilizer. The consequent shortages would raise the prices of household essentials like bread, pasta, and potatoes, as well as increase the cost of animal feed. The Gulf is home to some of the world’s largest fertilizer industrial facilities, and a lengthy transportation blockade might hamper output and increase expenses.After Rus-



sia, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia, Iran is the world’s fourth-largest exporter of urea, the most extensively used nitrogen fertilizer.The availability of raw materials and the growing cost of energy utilized in manufacturing have an impact on fertilizer output. Fossil gas accounts for 60% to 80% of nitrogen fertilizer manufacturing costs. Shutting down natural gas facilities in the Gulf is projected to further reduce global nitrogen supplies. Following a drone assault, Qatar shutdown its largest factory.Fertilizer costs have already risen, bringing back memories of the gas and fer-

tiliser price increases experienced in early 2022 following Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine.Egyptian urea prices, a benchmark, have increased by more than 25%. They have reached \$625 (£467) per metric tonne, up from \$484-\$490 last week, according to CRU Group, a company that studies commodities prices. According “While there are many parallels to 2022, the supply and demand implications of the conflict in the Middle East have the potential to be much more severe and wide ranging, particularly if the strait of Hormuz is restricted for longer than two

weeks.”A container ship was hit by a missile in the strait on Wednesday, resulting in a fire in its engine room, according to UK maritime trade operations. It is the most recent vessel to be assaulted, after events in which at least two crew members perished. Concerns regarding fertiliser supplies come at a difficult time for farmers in the United Kingdom, Europe, and North America, who are starting to grow spring crops. While most producers will have adequate fertilizer for the year ahead, they will normally be seeking to buy for the following year.

JFK Jr and Carolyn Bessette Kennedy: how the 1990s power couple became today’s biggest style icons

When images taken on the set of the Disney+ series Love Story: John F Kennedy Jr & Carolyn Bessette were teased on social media in June, fans were adamant that the show had got the styling wrong. The fictionalised drama details the relationship between John F Kennedy Jr, then the world’s most eligible bachelor, and the fashion publicist Carolyn Bessette Kennedy, tracing their courtship and marriage, which was lived out under the scrutiny of the press. “This is fashion murder,” wrote one user underneath a picture of Sarah Pidgeon, who plays Bessette Kennedy, and Paul Anthony Kelly, who depicts Kennedy Jr. Such was the outrage that the executive producer Ryan Murphy was forced to defend the styling as “a work in progress”, which led to him hiring a new costume designer, Rudy Mance, to focus on the historical precision. Nine months later, the internet has done a U-turn, with fans now rushing to emulate the couple’s on-screen and off-screen 90s looks. In the past week alone, searches for “Carolyn Bessette style” have increased by 150% on Google. Here are nine trends that the fans are championing.

Flip it and reverse it
Stroll down any high street and you’ll see the Love

Story effect in action, with a noticeable rise in men wearing baseball caps backwards. It is the quickest and cheapest way to emulate Kennedy Jr, who was rarely seen without a Yankees cap or a Kangol flat cap purposefully styled backwards over his mop of black hair. On TikTok, there are photo montages dedicated to Kennedy Jr’s headwear, while users are documenting how they are transforming their partner’s style with the simple flip of a cap. “Fully support this journey,” reads a comment under a video that has been watched more than 1m times. “This is every boy I went to college with in 1994,” says another.

The white shirt
While attending a gala at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York in 1999, Bessette Kennedy eschewed the traditional ballgown for a crisp white shirt tucked into a long black silk skirt. Twenty-seven years later, photos of that look are plastered all over Pinterest mood boards. A simple white button-down was also favoured by Kennedy Jr – and now male viewers trying to echo his look are snapping up similar cotton versions from preppy brands such as Ralph Lauren to wear with casual chinos or tailored trousers. They’re even starching their shirts to achieve his neat look – quite a feat, considering that three in 10 young adults don’t own an iron.

Rich people hair
Despite Bessette Kennedy’s former hair colourist describing Pidgeon’s blond hair as “too 2024”, salons are reporting more requests for “Love Story blond”. Harriet Muldoon, a blond-hair specialist at Larry King salon in London says that “soft, expensive-looking blond” is in demand, with customers bringing in reference photos of the fictional and the real Bessette Kennedy. Muldoon describes the colour as “a warm, creamy, high-impact blond with a polished finish”, explaining that it is “glossy, dimensional and looks intentionally bright, rather than naturally sun-kissed”. She suggests asking a colourist for “a creamy, neutral-to-warm blond with brightness around the hairline, often called a face frame, and soft dimension through the lengths”. For those who already have blond hair and who would like to try a DIY approach, try a toner such as Glaze Supergloss in pearl blonde.

Bootcut Levi’s
Forget skinny or low-slung baggy jeans, the Bessette Kennedy clan are championing Levi’s vintage 517 style. The resale site Depop says that searches for the fit are up 67% month on month. Introduced as part of the brand’s menswear offering in 1969, the jeans are cut to be slim through the hips, with a distinctive 18.25in bootcut leg



opening. The closest Levi’s match in womenswear is its “wedgie” bootcut jean, but most Bessette Kennedy fans are snapping up the original menswear’s version. Made of stiff denim, they have no stretch, so good luck sitting down.

The pharmacy headband
In the show, Bessette Kennedy is depicted flicking her long hair dramatically from side to side as she toils away in the Calvin Klein office. In real life, she regularly wore it scraped back in a

low ponytail and topped off with a tortoiseshell headband. Measuring 1.375in, it didn’t take long for internet sleuths to track down an exact match. Bessette Kennedy’s band is from Charles Wahba, a New York accessories brand that she used to buy from the apothecary CO Bigelow in Greenwich Village and Zitomer, a 76-year-old pharmacy on Madison Avenue. Charles Wahba doesn’t have a website, which has led to a surge of TikTokers documenting their pharmacy pilgrimages to secure the £30 accessory. For those outside the US, shopping platforms such as Etsy offer dupes.

Size-matters sunglasses
While Bessette Kennedy favoured the Aldo sunglasses from the New York eyewear brand Selima Optique, devout Love Story viewers have spotted that, in the show, Pidgeon wears the brand’s Carolyn style. The Aldo lenses measure 42mm, while the Carolyn’s are 48mm; according to Selima

Optique, they were created thanks to “many Aldo fans asking for a slightly larger frame”. The sunglasses are handmade in New York and cost £398, but the brand is refusing to create a waiting list, despite record demand. Instead, customers have to wait up to three weeks to receive their order. Slow luxury and all that jazz.

The Walkman walks again
Kennedy Jr, who was rarely seen without his trusted portable cassette player and spongy headphones as he cycled or rollerbladed around New York, now has young people rooting around their parents’ cupboards trying to track down Sony Walkmans. The trend coincides with a rise in analogue hobbies, with sales of cassette tapes at their highest level since 2003.

Knot a bad idea
While neck ties have been making a comeback on the catwalk and the red carpet over the past year or so, Love Story has supercharged the trend. Now, gen Z is attempting the four-in-hand knot, while millennials are trying to re-familiarise themselves with an accessory that was once almost mandatory in the workplace. Ditching open collars, fans are channeling Kennedy Jr by scouring vintage and secondhand shops for 90s silk ties in deep colours such as russet and navy.

Office etiquette
Former Calvin Klein employees have taken to social media to confirm that, yes, as the show suggests, the fashion designer would only allow staff – including Bessette Kennedy – to use black paperclips. Cue the death of the silver paperclip. Stationery-cupboard fans are also getting excited over the fact that paperwork had to be presented in dark grey folders – but will a generation more accustomed to PDFs be able to use a printer?

Why Belly Fat Matters: Doctors Explain The Link Between Visceral Fat And Cancer Risk

For years, conversations about obesity focused largely on body weight or the number on the scale. But doctors now say that where fat is stored in the body may matter far more than how much someone weighs. Increasingly, research shows that abdominal or visceral fat, the deep fat surrounding internal organs is strongly linked with cancer risk, sometimes more so than overall body weight. Doctors across India say the pattern is becoming increasingly visible in clinical practice. “In busy Indian hospitals we are seeing more obesity-linked cancers every day,” says Dr Husain Gheewala, Colorectal Surgeon at Saifee Hospital, Mumbai. According to him, excess body fat has now emerged as one of the leading preventable causes of cancer globally. The World Health Organization estimates that obesity contributes to around 4–8% of all cancers worldwide. People with obesity, defined as a Body Mass Index (BMI) above 30 have 1.5 to 2.5 times higher risk of developing at least 13 types of cancer. Among the cancers most strongly associated with obesity are endometrial (uterine) cancer, esophageal cancer and colorectal cancer. “Endometrial cancer risk can rise up to seven times in people with obesity, while the risk of esophageal cancer can increase four to five times. Bowel cancer risk is also estimated to be about 30–50% higher,” explains Dr Gheewala. Other cancers closely linked to excess weight include post-menopausal breast cancer, kidney cancer, pancreatic cancer and liver cancer. The problem is particularly concerning in urban India. Health reports suggest that over 30% of adults in cities like Mumbai are obese, placing increasing pressure on healthcare systems and cancer care services.

Why Abdominal Fat Is



More Dangerous While BMI remains a commonly used indicator of obesity, oncologists say it does not always capture the most dangerous form of fat. “It’s no longer just about the number on the scale, but about where fat lives and how long it has been there,” explains Dr Rakesh Kumar Sharma, Senior Consultant Medical Oncologist at MOC Cancer Care and Research Centre, Gurugram. According to Dr Sharma, visceral fat, the fat stored deep inside the abdomen around vital organs is metabolically active and behaves almost like a separate organ in the body. Unlike subcutaneous fat, which sits just beneath the skin and can be pinched, visceral fat releases inflammatory chemicals and hormones that can trigger cancer development. “Visceral fat pumps out inflammatory proteins and hormones such as estrogen and insulin. This chronic inflammation and hormonal imbalance can damage DNA and create conditions that allow cancer cells

to grow,” says Dr Sharma. This biological environment is particularly associated with cancers of the colon, pancreas and breast. One challenge, he adds, is that BMI cannot distinguish between muscle mass and visceral fat, meaning someone with a “normal” weight but a large waist circumference may still face significant cancer risk. Medical guidelines increasingly consider waist circumference a critical warning sign. A waist measurement of more than 35 inches (88 cm) in women and 40 inches (102 cm) in men is often considered a stronger indicator of health risk than weight alone.

The Biological Chain Reaction Inside the Body
Doctors often describe belly fat as an active biological driver of disease rather than a passive energy store. Dr Gheewala explains that abdominal fat acts like a “troublemaker factory” in the body. “It releases inflammatory chemicals such as IL-6 and TNF-alpha that cause chronic, low-grade

inflammation throughout the body,” he says. This constant inflammatory state can damage cells and create conditions that help tumors grow and develop their own blood supply. For colorectal cancer, the effect can be particularly pronounced. Persistent inflammation in the digestive tract may accelerate the transformation of normal cells into cancerous ones.

Fat tissue also disrupts the body’s hormonal balance.
It can convert male hormones into estrogen, which can fuel cancers such as breast and uterine cancer. At the same time, obesity is often associated with high blood sugar and insulin levels, which stimulate cell growth signals in the body. “Think of it as revving a car engine constantly,” says Dr Gheewala. “Cells receive signals to keep dividing, increasing the likelihood of genetic mistakes that can lead to cancer.” Fat cells also release leptin, a hormone that encourages cell growth, while reducing levels of adiponectin, a hormone that normally helps suppress tumor development.

Why Early Obesity Raises Lifetime Cancer Risk
Another growing concern among oncologists is the rise of early-onset cancers, particularly in younger adults. “Today’s younger generations are developing obesity and metabolic dysfunction much earlier in life,” says Dr Sharma. Conditions such as chronic inflammation, insulin resistance and hormonal imbalance may therefore affect the body for decades. “This cumulative exposure to metabolic stress creates an environment where tumors can develop much earlier than they did in previous generations,” he explains. Recent data has shown a sharp increase in cancers diagnosed before age 50, particularly colorectal cancer, a trend many researchers now link to long-term obesity and lifestyle changes beginning in childhood or early adulthood.

The Good News: Risk Can Be Reduced
Despite the growing concern, doctors emphasize that weight management can significantly reduce cancer risk. Research shows that losing weight can cut the risk of endometrial cancer by nearly half, while also improving metabolic health and lowering inflammation. Even small lifestyle changes including maintaining a healthy waistline, regular physical activity and balanced nutrition can make a meaningful difference. “Prevention remains our strongest tool,” says Dr Gheewala. “Taking steps today to reduce excess body fat can help avoid serious health complications later.” As doctors increasingly understand the complex relationship between metabolism, inflammation and cancer, one message is becoming clear: when it comes to cancer risk, the waistline may tell a more important story than the weighing scale.

Summer Skincare For Indian Weather: Expert Guide To Ingredients, Sunscreen And Treatments

Indian summers are intense, humid, and often unforgiving on the skin. With soaring temperatures, increased UV exposure, sweat, pollution, and humidity, the skin barrier is constantly under stress. “As a practicing skin expert in Faridabad, I frequently see a rise in concerns such as tanning, pigmentation, acne breakouts, dullness, and dehydration during this season. The key to healthy summer skin lies in building a routine that is protective, lightweight, and ingredient-conscious,” says Dr Akshita Bhan, MBBS, Skin & Aesthetics Expert at Studio 1915 Luxury Aesthetic Clinic. Dr Bhan shares a guide to creating a summer-proof skincare regimen tailored to Indian weather conditions.

1. Start with a Gentle, Balancing Cleanser
Cleansing is the foundation of any effective skincare routine. During summer, excess sweat and oil can clog pores and trigger acne. However, over-cleansing or using harsh face washes can strip the skin barrier, leading to irritation and rebound oil production. Look for: Gel-based or foaming cleansers for oily and combination skin
Mild, sulfate-free cleansers for dry or sensitive skin
Ingredients like salicylic acid (for acne-prone skin) or niacinamide (for oil regulation)
Cleanse twice daily, morning and night to maintain a fresh, balanced base.

2. Prioritize Antioxidants in the Morning
Sun exposure and pollution increase oxidative stress, accelerating pigmentation and premature ageing. Incorporating antioxidants into your morning routine creates an added layer of defence.
Key ingredients:
Vitamin C for brightening

and photoprotection
Niacinamide for oil control and barrier repair
Ferulic acid for enhanced antioxidant stability
A lightweight antioxidant serum applied before sunscreen helps combat tanning and dullness commonly seen during Indian summers.

3. Never Skip Broad-Spectrum Sunscreen
Sunscreen is non-negotiable, especially in tropical climates. UV radiation is the leading cause of pigmentation, melasma flare-ups, and early ageing. Choose:
SPF 30 or higher (preferably SPF 50 for the intensity of the Indian sun)
Broad-spectrum protection (UVA + UVB)
Gel-based or matte formulations for humid weather
Reapply every 2–3 hours if outdoors. Even indoor exposure near windows can contribute to tanning and pigmentation.

4. Switch to Lightweight Moisturizers
A common misconception is that moisturizers are unnecessary in summer. In reality, skipping moisturization can disrupt the skin barrier and increase oil production. Opt for:
Oil-free, non-comedogenic gel moisturizers
Hyaluronic acid for hydration without heaviness
Ceramides for barrier support
Hydration keeps the skin resilient against heat-induced inflammation and sensitivity.

5. Address Pigmentation and Acne Strategically
Summer often worsens pigmentation disorders and acne. Instead of experimenting with harsh treatments, focus on targeted ingredients.
For pigmentation:
Alpha arbutin
Kojic acid
Tranexamic acid

For acne:
Salicylic acid
Benzoyl peroxide (under supervision)
Retinoids (preferably used at night and with caution)
Professional guidance is essential before starting active ingredients, as improper use can cause irritation in hot weather.

6. Consider Preventive In-Clinic Treatments
Beyond home care, certain dermatologist-supervised treatments can strengthen your summer skincare strategy. Popular summer-safe treatments include:
Hydrating medi-facials for deep cleansing and glow
Chemical peels tailored for pigmentation and acne
Laser toning for tanning and uneven skin tone
When performed with appropriate protocols, these treatments are safe even in summer and help maintain clarity and radiance.

7. Internal Hydration and Lifestyle Matter
Skincare is not only topical. Adequate water intake, seasonal fruits rich in antioxidants, and reduced consumption of oily and sugary foods significantly impact skin health. Wearing protective clothing, sunglasses, and avoiding peak sun hours (12 pm–4 pm) further reduces UV damage. Indian summers demand a proactive and adaptive skincare approach. A balanced routine that focuses on gentle cleansing, antioxidant protection, consistent sunscreen use, lightweight hydration, and professional guidance can help prevent common seasonal concerns. Healthy skin in summer is not about using more products; it is about using the right ingredients wisely and consistently. With expert-backed choices and mindful habits, glowing, resilient skin is achievable even in the harshest heat.

At Arjun Tendulkar and Saaniya Chandhok’s wedding, Aishwarya Rai and Abhishek Bachchan arrive in style

Mumbai: Several prominent figures from the film business attended Arjun Tendulkar and Saaniya Chandhok’s wedding on Thursday in Mumbai. Aishwarya Rai Bachchan and Abhishek Bachchan were among them; they arrived together and took quick pictures before going inside. Jaya Bachchan and Amitabh Bachchan were also present at the wedding. Abhishek wore a black kurta and white pants, while Aishwarya chose a blue anarkali outfit.

The stunning couple posed together as well. Amitabh Bachchan and Jaya Bachchan were previously seen attending the event while wearing traditional



attire. Saaniya Chandhok and Arjun Tendulkar are from families that have known one another for a long time. The relationship between the families has been strengthened by Sachin Tendulkar’s long-standing acquaintance with Saaniya’s grandfather,

Ravi Ghai. Arjun has been concentrating on developing his cricket career.

He plays local cricket for Mumbai and Assam and has appeared in a few IPL games for the Mumbai Indians. Saaniya, on the other hand, has made a name for herself as an en-

trepreneur with a profitable pet spa. Only close friends and family were present at the exclusive engagement ceremony held at the Ghai house in Mumbai on August 13, 2025. Much later, Sachin Tendulkar confirmed the engagement in a Reddit exchange.

It is said that Arjun’s sister, Sara Tendulkar, introduced Arjun to Saaniya. Arjun and Saaniya spent more time together as a result of her many invitations to her close friend Saaniya to join her for Pilates lessons, brunches, and holidays. What began as informal get-togethers eventually turned into a friendship and then a romantic partnership.

Mohanlal’s stylist confirmed Shah Rukh Khan’s appearance in Rajinikanth’s Jailer 2



New Delhi: It’s official: Nelson Dilipkumar’s Jailer 2 will feature Bollywood star Shah Rukh Khan and Tamil icon Rajinikanth together for the first time. Mohanlal’s stylist confirmed the news on his Instagram stories, causing fans to go crazy. This follows months of speculation that Shah Rukh will appear in the follow-up, even though the producers have not yet made an announcement. Mohanlal will reprise his role as Rajinikanth’s Muthuvel Pandian IPS, also known as Tiger’s friend Mathew, from the 2023 blockbuster Jailer. An AI-generated image of a grey-haired Shah Rukh driving while Mohanlal sat next to

him and Rajinikanth and Shiva Rajkumar in the back seat was posted on his Instagram stories by his stylist, Jishad Shamsudeen. Fans are anticipating a frame similar to this from Jailer 2, according to the picture’s caption. Jishad re-shared the post and remarked, “Kandippa irukkum (for sure),” which seemed to corroborate both Shah Rukh’s cameo and the fact that all of them would appear in a sequence in Jailer 2.

Mithun Chakraborty discussed his part in Jailer 2 with Siti Cinema in December of last year. He stated, “My next is Jailer 2, where everybody is against me,” revealing Shah Rukh’s brief appearance. The characters of Rajinikanth, Mohanlal, Shah Rukh Khan, Ramya Krishna, and Shiva Rajkumar are all against me. While saying this, he also appeared to reveal that he plays the adversary in the movie. At first, there were rumors that Balakrishna might also star in the project. He appears to have left, though, as Shiva Rajkumar and Mohanlal are back as Mathew and Narasimha. It is also anticipated that Vijay Sethupathi will appear. Rajinikanth and Shah Rukh will appear together on film for the first time in Jailer 2. Ra, directed by Anubhav Sinha in 2011. In one, Rajinikanth played Chitti from Shankar’s Enthiran (2010). But in May of last year, actor Suresh Menon stated to Digital Commentary, “There were rumors that Rajinikanth Saab himself would come for the cameo.” I believe I can now talk about it. He wasn’t that person. The industry is aware that he wasn’t doing well at the time. The song “Lungi Dance” honors Rajinikanth in Rohit Shetty’s 2013 film Chennai Express. This summer, Jailer 2 is anticipated to open in theaters.

Shah Rukh Khan’s father in Devdas, played by Vijay Crishna, passes away at age 81



New Delhi: On Wednesday, veteran actor Vijay Crishna passed away. He was eighty-one. On her Instagram, actor Lillite Dubey verified the actor’s passing. Vijay portrayed Shah Rukh Khan’s father in Sanjay Leela Bhansali’s Devdas, and Lillite remembers him with fondness as a “brilliant actor.” posting a picture of Vijay, Lillite wrote, “Heartbroken.. our dearest Vijay Crishna .. part of our theatre family & “Dance like a Man” for over 25 years ..

has passed away.. a man of many parts .. a brilliant actor, handsome, charming, bright with his dry tongue in cheek trademark humour, he was much loved & cherished by us all .. so many memories flood the heart & mind & overwhelm me.” She continued, “RIP my Jairaj .. you will never be forgotten.. May you entertain the angels as you did us all here .. love & prayers for his lovely wife Smita, girls Nyrika & Freyan & the whole family.” “That is so so sad. Om shan-

ti!” Anupam Kher tweeted in response to the post. Saba, the sister of Saif Ali Khan, wrote, “That’s terrible news. My deepest sympathies to his family and everyone who knew or worked with him. I hope he finds peace.” “This is very sad news,” director Nupur Asthana said. My sincere sympathies.” The actor’s family has not yet revealed the cause of his death. For more than twenty years, Vijay Crishna was a well-known figure in Indian theater. The 2004 English film Dance Like a Man, which was based on a play by Mahesh Dattani, won him accolades.

His most well-known role was as Shah Rukh Khan’s father in the 2002 movie Devdas. Madhuri Dixit and Aishwarya Rai also starred in the Sanjay Leela Bhansali movie.

Govinda: Salman Khan “Got Operated, Started Exercising” Following His Guidance



Mumbai: When they co-starred in Partner, Salman Khan and Govinda lit up the screen. The David Dhanwan movie spoke to Indian moviegoers on a different level even though it was

At the Hyderabad reception, Rashmika Mandanna and Vijay Deverakonda share romantic moments

Hyderabad: Social media has been overtaken by behind-the-scenes pictures from Rashmika Mandanna and Vijay Deverakonda’s Hyderabad wedding reception, with admirers raving over their chemistry. The newlyweds can be seen holding hands and grinning at one another in one photo.

In another, they smile at the cameras while posing side by side. They may be seen enjoying the big occasion together in a third candid shot when they exchange a gentle smile. The lavish reception, which took place in Hyderabad, was a glittering assembly of prominent politicians and movie stars. Walking hand in hand and grinning broadly at the cameras who were waiting, Rashmika and Vijay made a dramatic entry. The pair was blessed as they started this new chapter of their lives on Wednesday by visitors from the film and political industries.

Both dressed traditionally for the event, reflecting their history. In a gorgeous crimson Mysore silk saree by JADE by MK, Rashmika exuded royalty. The Madhurya weavers cre-



ated the saree by hand. The ensemble included the Gandabherunda pattern, a symbol of Karnataka and a legendary two-headed bird from South Indian history, as a nod to her heritage.

It stands for power, command, and alertness.

She wore her hair in a beautiful braid adorned with fresh flowers, and she accessorized her ensemble with

sophisticated gold jewelry. Her sandoor and bindi accentuated her delicate, elegant makeup. Vijay embraced ageless tradition by wearing an ivory silk kurta with a traditional veshti and angavastram.

In front of close friends and family, Rashmika Mandanna and Vijay Deverakonda tied the knot in Udaipur on February 26.

Ranbir Kapoor Discussed Raj Kapoor’s “Scary” Holi Events

Mumbai: Stories from Bollywood’s heyday start to reappear every year around Holi. Raj Kapoor’s famed Holi parties are among the most talked-about recollections. These events were renowned for their size, color, and unparalleled vitality. Ranbir Kapoor, his grandson, remembers seeing one of those famous festivities as a child years later, and his recollections were anything but serene. Ranbir revealed that when he was very young, he had gone to the Holi event. Many people have nostalgic memories of those events, but he found the experience to be overpowering. “I was really young, so it was a very scary environment for me,” he remarked. Everyone was dressed in black and a variety of other colors, and they were all being put into vehicles. I suppose you have better memories. He was obviously deeply affected by the sight of people being thrown into trucks while entirely covered with color. Rahul Rawail, a filmmaker who witnessed the exchange, concurred with Ranbir’s account. “You were correct about that, sab kaale neele peelee hote the (Everyone used to be drenched in different colors),” he said. It was once a day of festivity. The star presence wasn’t the only thing that made these Holi celebrations unique. Ranbir claims that everyone in the film industry was welcome to attend the festivities. “What I have heard is that not just the actors and actresses, but everyone in the film industry,” he

clarified. Everyone used to gather and rejoice together, including those who worked in production and cameras.

Actors, technicians, production teams, and crew members joined together as one on this unique event. The celebration shifted from being about status to being about joy shared by all. But soon, the events became challenging to manage due to their increasing popularity. Managing the throng was increasingly difficult as more and more individuals started to arrive. “Gradually, those parties stopped because it became too much of a crowd,” Rahul Rawail said in explaining their demise. Everyone used to simply stroll in, making it uncontrollable. The sheer number of attendees caused what had once been a lavish but well-organized celebration to gradually become overbearing. Ranbir has a promising future ahead of him at work. Sanjay Leela Bhansali’s film Love & War will feature him alongside Alia Bhatt and Vicky Kaushal. Additionally, he and Sandeep Reddy Vanga will be working together on an Animal sequel, in which he is anticipated to play two roles.

Nitesh Tiwari’s Ramayana is another eagerly awaited project. Yash will play Ravana, and Ranbir will play Lord Ram in opposition to Sai Pallavi as Sita. One of the most anticipated movies in Indian cinema, the movie is scheduled for release on Diwali in 2026.

Amid the US-Iran conflict, Malaika Arora’s mother is stranded in Dubai

Mumbai: Joyce Arora, the mother of Malaika Arora, traveled to Dubai to celebrate her birthday, but she is currently stuck there due to the continuing US-Iranian crisis. Joyce described her “frightening” experience of witnessing missiles being intercepted in midair. I have to admit that I feel secure here. In reality, I could actually witness the missiles being intercepted in the skies. Although it was terrifying, the Dubai military is performing admirably. My girls know I’m in good care while they’re in Mumbai. We are in frequent communication, with them calling me three or four times a day. “I’m hoping to return to Mumbai soon now that some operations have resumed,” she said. Joyce also mentioned that the suspension of flight services had left her stranded. I came here to celebrate my older sister’s birthday, and we also celebrated mine a few days later. We were informed that our flights had been canceled because of the war, but I was scheduled to return to Mumbai on March 3,” she told the newspaper. Following the suspension of air-

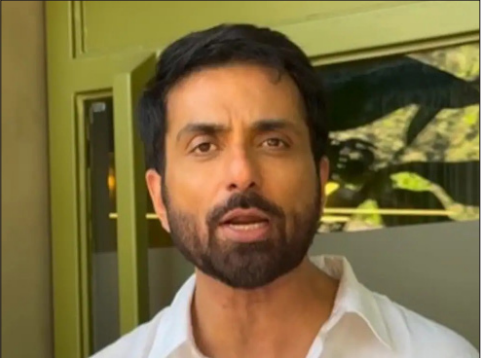
craft services, Sonal Chauhan and Esha Gupta were also stranded in Dubai and Abu Dhabi, respectively.

They have returned home without incident. “Back home in India and feeling deeply grateful,” Sonal Chauhan posted on her Instagram Stories. I sincerely appreciate all of your love, prayers, and messages. They are incredibly meaningful. I’ve returned to India safely. Although the past few days have been difficult, I have also seen Dubai’s unwavering spirit and resiliency, which is a direct result of the people’s faith in their administration. I experienced that assurance this time as well. I want to express my deep gratitude to the Dubai authorities for keeping us all safe and composed throughout this trying period, managing things with such care and responsibility, and ensuring that we all felt safe and protected. War is never the solution, therefore I sincerely hope this ends soon. I wish for peace and an end to it all, and my heart goes out to everyone going through this trying time.”

Sonu Sood provides free lodging to tourists stuck in Dubai due to the US-Iran crisis

New Delhi: Numerous flights were canceled as tensions in the Middle East increased after the US-Iran clash, leaving many travelers stranded in Dubai and unable to return home. Actor Sonu Sood has now encouraged travelers to get in touch with him if they need a place to stay and has announced free lodging for anybody stranded during the crisis. Sonu Sood posted a video message for people stuck in Dubai on Instagram on Thursday. The actor promised to provide free lodging to everyone stuck in the city, regardless of their ethnicity. “We just want to let you know that you have a place to stay if you’re stuck in Dubai due to the ongoing crisis,” he stated. We’ll see to it that you receive lodging at no cost. Sonu added, “Whoever, whether our fellow Indians, or people of any nationality who are stranded in Dubai, please send Dugasta Property a DM or me. We will make sure you get a free stay until you are able to return to your country. Jai Hind. God bless you all.” “War has left many travellers stranded in Dubai,” he tweeted

beside the video message. We are providing free, secure lodging if you or someone you know has someplace to stay. No nationality. No requirements. Only humanity. If you need assistance, DM us on Instagram. @dugastaproperties Please spread the word so that someone in need can see this. Sonu Sood’s idea was praised by fans. “Real hero of Bollywood industry” was one of the comments. “You were raised by wonderful parents,” said someone else. You have my utmost respect. “That takes guts to say any nationality,” said another comment. That demonstrates that humanity comes first. Sonu had previously gained notoriety for assisting migrant workers in returning home amid the lockdowns imposed following the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020–2021. Tensions in the Middle East increased as the United States and Israel conducted coordinated military operations against Iran, which purportedly resulted in serious deaths among Iran’s political and military leadership. Many travelers were left stuck as Iran retaliated



by attacking US bases in the area, causing airline disruptions in Dubai and other Middle Eastern cities. Sonal Chauhan and Esha Gupta were among the actors from India who were stuck in Dubai alongside other Indian citizens. But the performers made a safe return home two days ago, and more Indian citizens are being evacuated as well.

Amit Shah Introduces Mascots for the First Digital Census of India in 2027



New Delhi: On Thursday, Union Home Minister Amit Shah presented two mascots for Census 2027 and soft launched a series of digital portals, signaling the beginning of preparations for the greatest demographic exercise in history.As India strives to become a developed nation by 2047, the mascots Pragati and Vikas, which stand for male and female enumerators, are intended to emphasize the equal participation of men and women in the national exercise. According to officials, the next census will be carried out in two stages and will be the first time that digital technologies will be used for a national exercise. Before the door-to-door survey starts, individuals will have the opportunity to self-enumerate for the first time via a secure web-based platform where they can input their household details online in 16 languages.

The digital tools that will facilitate the nationwide enumeration procedure have been created by the Center for Development of Advanced Computing. During the launch, four important digi-

tal systems were presented. These include the Self Enumeration portal, which allows citizens to submit their information online, the Houselisting Block Creator web application, which enables officials to create houselisting blocks using satellite imagery, the HLO mobile application, which allows enumerators to gather and upload field data via smartphones, and the Census Management and Monitoring System, which will enable authorities to track the exercise’s progress in real time.In a gazette notice published on June 16, 2025, the government formally declared its intention to carry out the next census. There will be two phases to the nationwide exercise. The first stage, called the Houselisting and Housing Census, would collect information on household amenities and housing conditions. This phase will take place between April 1 and September 30, with a 30-day notice time for each state and union territory to conduct the survey. Before the door-to-door survey starts, there will be a 15-day window for self-enumeration.The population will be counted during the second phase, which will record each person’s social, economic, and demographic details. In February 2027, this phase is expected to be implemented nationwide. Due to the weather, the population count will take place earlier in September for the Union Territory of Ladakh and snow-bound regions of Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Jammu & Kashmir. More than 30 lakh enumerators, supervisors, and other workers will be stationed throughout the nation to conduct the census, which will mostly rely on digital monitoring systems and mobile applications to guarantee accuracy and complete coverage, according to officials.

When Nitish declares his candidacy for the Rajya Sabha, rumors about his replacement begin



Patna, Mar 05: Months after the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) surged back to power in the state, Nitish Kumar, 75, revealed on Thursday that he will run for the Rajya Sabha as a Janata Dal (United) nominee. This announcement sparked discussion over who might succeed him as chief minister of Bihar.In a post on X, Kumar thanked the people of Bihar for believing in him for more than 20 years, claiming that their support allowed him to serve the state with commitment.

“Bihar has presented a new dimension of development and dignity thanks to the strength of your faith and support,” Kumar stated. He continued by saying that he had previously thanked the people multiple times. In addition to sitting in both Houses of the state legislature, Kumar claimed that since the start of his parliamentary career, he had cultivated a desire to join both Houses of Parliament. “I want to join the Rajya Sabha in that sequence in this election,” he declared.Despite the relocation, Kumar promised individuals that his relationship with them would not change. He declared that he would keep collaborating with the populace to achieve the objective of creating a developed Bihar. Kumar went on to say that he will give the incoming state administration his full support and direction. For almost 20 years, Kumar has been the main player in Bihar politics. The state’s ruling NDA may change as a result of his move to Delhi.Only once the nomination procedure, election, and oath of office as a member of Parliament are over is Kumar anticipated to resign from his position as chief

minister. It is generally anticipated that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) would be appointed chief minister. Although Kumar continues to hold the top position in Bihar, the BJP has long been the alliance’s dominant partner in terms of organizational strength and electoral results. In preparation of a post-Kumar situation, BJP officials are thought to have started internal conversations and political evaluations. When selecting Kumar’s replacement, the BJP leadership is anticipated to weigh a number of considerations. Seniority, caste representation, coalition stability, and the party’s overall political message will all play a role in the selection.Bihar’s politics are still heavily influenced by caste dynamics, and any change in leadership will take that into consideration. One of the most powerful social groups in the state is the Extremely Backward Classes (EBC). The EBCs have often been perceived as NDA supporters over the years. According to political strategists, the new chief minister will have a social background that will comfort this significant voter base and support the social cohesiveness of the alliance.

Delhi’s Holi is warm as the temperature rises to 33 degrees Celsius

New Delhi, Mar 05: The India Meteorological Department (IMD) said that Wednesday was the hottest day of March so far, with a maximum temperature of 33.2 degrees Celsius, as the city celebrated Holi.The Safdarjung observatory, which is regarded as the city’s base station, recorded a maximum temperature of 33.2 degrees Celsius, which is 1.7 degrees above average, according to the IMD. The lowest recorded temperature was 15.7 degrees Celsius, which is 2.3 degrees more than average.Palam recorded a maximum temperature of 30.7 degrees Celsius, which was 1.3 degrees over average, and a low temperature of 15.2 degrees Celsius, which was 2.6 degrees above average. The lowest temperature on Lodhi Road was 14.2 degrees Celsius, which was 2.2 degrees over average, and the highest temperature was 32.8 degrees Celsius, which was 1.4 degrees above average.The highest recorded temperature in Ridge was 33.0 degrees Celsius, which is 1.5 degrees over average, while the lowest recorded temperature was 16.2 degrees Celsius, which is 2.1 degrees above average.

The highest temperature recorded in Ananagar was 32.9 degrees Celsius, which is 1.3

degrees above average; the lowest temperature was 15.3 degrees Celsius, which is 2.3 degrees above average.According to the IMD, relative humidity was 33% at 5.30 pm and 71% at 8.30 am.Strong surface winds are expected during the day on Thursday, with a minimum temperature of roughly 17 degrees Celsius and a maximum temperature of roughly 33 degrees Celsius, according to the weather office. According to data from the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), the 24-hour average Air Quality Index (AQI) was 161 on Wednesday, placing it in the “moderate” category.Four stations fell into the “poor” category, one into the “very poor” category, and forty into the “moderate” category in the evening, according to statistics from the CPCB’s SAMEER app. At 320, Punjabi Bagh had the highest AQI and was classified as “very poor.”

The CPCB classifies an AQI between 0 and 50 as “good,” 51 to 100 as “satisfactory,” 101 to 200 as “moderate,” 201 to 300 as “poor,” 301 to 400 as “very poor,” and 401 to 500 as “severe.”The Delhi Air Quality Early Warning System predicts that the air quality will be in the “moderate” category from Thursday until March 6.

Finn Allen Describes the “India Factor” That Led to His Record 33-Ball Hundred in the T20 World Cup Semifinal

New Delhi: After leading New Zealand to the T20 World Cup final with a nine-wicket victory over South Africa here on Wednesday, explosive opener Finn Allen stated that a five-match series against India on comparable black dirt conditions before to the tournament was crucial. As New Zealand chased down 170 in only 12.5 overs, securing a nine-wicket victory with 43 balls remaining, Allen lit up the Eden Gardens with a spectacular 33-ball 100 not out, toying with the South African attack with towering sixes and excellent boundaries. “It was an extremely impressive start from our bowlers -- they set the game up for us, for sure,” Allen remarked to the media following the game.The hitters’ lives are made much simpler on a surface like that if you can take wickets early and apply pressure.” The daring right-hander emphasized how crucial the pre-tournament India series was.The significance of the India series that the lads played prior to the World Cup is simply demonstrated. You can’t duplicate that kind of prepa-

ration for five games on black soil,” he remarked. “As a team, we rise to the occasion and learn a great deal. We’re willing to scrap and persevere through those crucial games. Today, the boys with the ball in particular set the tone. Allen, who was purchased for Rs 2 crore at the IPL auction, will return to this location as a member of the Kolkata Knight Riders team. “Batting on that wicket a little more frequently makes me quite delighted. I’m playing in Kolkata for the first time. I had a good idea of what to expect after playing India on black soil in the previous game. That was very beneficial before this one. The opener said the learning curve had been challenging but worthwhile. He had scored 80 in the only game he had played for New Zealand in the 1-4 series loss to India. “In international cricket, you pick things up quickly. Even if we didn’t win that series, battling under those circumstances gave us a lot of confidence. Allen also gave opening partner Tim Seifert extra recognition for his 33-ball 58, which prevented South

Africa from regaining control.He simply continued to deal in boundaries; he has done so during the entire competition. He’s in amazing shape. “He’s a fantastic player who is showcasing his abilities to the world,” Allen remarked. “It simplifies things for me. As I watch him go, there are moments when I think I have the best seat in the house. When Timmy is in that frame of mind, batting with him is enjoyable. Allen claimed that although South Africa had defeated New Zealand in the group stage and advanced to the semifinals undefeated, the Kiwis had learned from their defeat in Ahmedabad. “We examined that first game against them in great detail,” he stated.”Throughout the entire tournament, their performances have been fantastic. However, we were able to gain some insight into their plans by playing them earlier, and we made an effort to take advantage of it. “As a country, hopefully everyone gets behind us and rallies around us for Sunday’s final.” Finals are unique because there aren’t many opportunities to compete.

Day 5 of Kashmir’s Security Curbs Following Protests Against Khamenei’s Killing



Srinagar, Mar 05: Security measures are still in place in Kashmir to stop demonstrations against the assassination of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran’s supreme leader. Following protests, internet services in the Valley were restricted, leading to the suspension of prepaid mobile phone service. Shops and business enterprises are also closed due to limitations. Senior officials say the limitations will be in place until Friday. As a precaution to uphold law and

order to stop protests in the city center. There have been allegations of stone-throwing and altercations between demonstrators and police in Srinagar Pattan in the Bara-mulla district yesterday, despite the fact that the rallies’ intensity has mostly been limited. Several people were hurt during the altercations, including a police officer.Omar Abdullah, the chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir, met with lawmakers, civil society organizations, and religious leaders in Srinagar as part of attempts to bring about peace. He emphasized how crucial it is to promote unity and peace. A senior police official stated that they are keeping an eye on the situation and will decide whether to loosen restrictions only after Friday prayers.

Ayatollah Khamenei was the supreme religious authority for Shia Muslims, and

his murder in the US-Israel bombing sparked widespread demonstrations and an outpouring of sorrow and rage. On Sunday, however, there were no protests or processions. Protesters grew violent and threw stones at security personnel on Monday as police forbade them from marching near Lal Chowk. To keep the scene under control, police deployed batons and tear gas rounds.Those who distributed the law and order crisis and those who launched stones have been apprehended by the police. A number of individuals, including Srinagar MP Aga Ruhullah, have been charged with disseminating “misleading content” on social media. Due to security measures put in place to stop protests, universities have postponed exams and the government has shuttered schools and institutions until the weekend.

Varun Chakravarthy receives clear instructions from Anil Kumble

New Delhi: Anil Kumble, a legendary Indian cricket player, has proposed that India’s mystery spinner Varun Chakravarthy move the ball away from a right-hander and then attempt to get it back into the batter. Kumble thinks this will make the ball much more dangerous.

Kumble’s comments were made prior to Thursday’s high-stakes match between India and England in the ICC T20 World Cup 2026 semi-final at Mumbai’s famous Wankhede Stadium. “The analyst might be able to determine how many times a right-hander is truly trying to take the ball away. I haven’t seen a lot. He might be able to accomplish that. According to ESPNcricinfo, Kumble stated, “The ball coming back into the right-hander becomes that much more dangerous.” But Kumble also believes that the batsmen are just waiting for the ball to come into them

and are unable to pick that every time Chakravarthy bowls. Even though the batters are unable to pick it every time he bowls, it appears that they are now merely anticipating the ball to come into them and playing him that way instead of sort of looking for it. Therefore, it might be necessary for him to mix a few balls that are out of the right-hander’s reach before bringing them back in,” Kumble continued. In the 2026 T20 World Cup, Chakaravarthy has taken the most wickets for India. The mystery spinner has taken 12 wickets at an average of 15.33 in seven games.

After defeating the West Indies in the Super 8 match at Eden Gardens, the reigning champions advanced to the semi-finals.The Men in Blue won by five wickets thanks to Sanju Samson’s powerful, undefeated 97-run knock off 50 balls, which included 12 fours and four sixes.

Toulouse eliminates Marseille in the French Cup quarterfinals

Paris: After a 2-2 draw in which they led twice, Marseille was eliminated from the French Cup quarterfinals on penalties on Wednesday after Ethan Nwaneri missed the crucial penalty kick. At the Velodrome, Marseille took the lead thanks to a penalty kick from Mason Greenwood in the second minute, but Toulouse quickly equalized with to a goal from Yann Gboho.

Early in the second half, Charlie Cresswell scored a header from a corner to tie the score for Toulouse, but Igor Paixao’s superb curling finish gave the hosts the lead again. The club’s hopes of winning the cup for the first time since 1989 were dashed when Arsenal loanee Nwaneri blasted his attempt over and Marseille captain Leonardo Balerdi had his penalty saved during the shootout.

Our level of disappointment

is equal to our level of hope. A final was just two games away. “We must confront and accept this disappointment,” Marseille coach Habib Beye stated.We must acknowledge the supporters’ grief and rage.” season, Beye’s club was ousted from the French Cup for the second time. When Marseille defeated Rennes in the round of 16 at the beginning of February, he was in control of the team.

Toulouse, along with Nice and Strasbourg, go to the semi-finals after winning the competition three years prior. After a goalless draw in Brittany, where the hosts played more than half the game with ten men after Pablo Pagis was sent off just before halftime, Nice defeated Lorient 6-5 on penalties.

On Tuesday, Strasbourg defeated Reims, the runners-up from the previous season, 2-1.

A Message From Dinesh Karthik To Gautam Gambhir

New Delhi: The controversy around the top order composition has kept supporters guessing as India gets ready for their crucial T20 World Cup 2026 semi-final matchup with England at the Wankhede. Former India wicketkeeper Dinesh Karthik has urged the Gautam Gambhir-led team management to continue believing in the explosive left-hander Abhishek Sharma, who hasn’t been able to replicate his pre-tournament form at the T20 World Cup. India’s campaign has seen a lot of tactical changes. A left-hand-heavy top order at the start of the tournament had a lot of trouble with off-spin, especially during the Powerplay. Ahead of a pivotal Super 8 match against Zimbabwe, this “off-spin nightmare” compelled the team management to reconsider its intentions for the top order. Sanju Samson was elevated to open alongside Abhishek Sharma. Abhishek’s unique form is still a “red flag” for many, even though the move created an instant spark. Despite a valiant 55 against Zimbabwe, the opener suffered three straight ducks in the group stages and was dismissed for just 10 in the crucial match against the West Indies. India might have finished second in the competition and lost out on a semi-final spot if Samson hadn’t scored 97.

The idea of benching Abhishek for the England semi-final was rejected by Karthik. He emphasized that recent individual mistakes are outweighed by the tactical advantage of a left-right opening pair.You have to have faith in the players who have brought you there in a major competition like the World Cup. They should continue with Abhishek, Sanju, and Ishan Kishan, in my opinion. Before the India vs. England second semi-final match in the ICC Men’s T20 World Cup 2026, ICC expert Dinesh Karthik told the media at the JioStar Media Day, “Give themselves the best chance of success on the big day.” While Abhishek is being scrutinized, his teammate Sanju Samson has hushed detractors with what has been called a “Kohli-esque” chase against the West Indies. In addition to securing India’s semi-final spot, his undefeated 97 at Eden Gardens solidified his position as a key player in the country’s quest for an offensive start at the top.

The task at hand is quite difficult. Recalling the 37-ball century the teenage player hammered against them in the pre-World Cup bilateral series, England’s Sam Curran has already acknowledged that the reigning champions are still “wary” of Abhishek’s threat.

Russia claims it is ready to transfer 9.5 million oil barrels to India despite a supply issue

New Delhi, Mar 05: An industry source with direct information told Reuters that Russia is prepared to reroute oil to India in order to counteract supply disruptions in the Middle East. Approximately 9.5 million barrels of Russian crude are aboard ships close to Indian seas and could arrive in a matter of weeks. Although the source did not specify the initial destination of the non-Russian fleet cargoes, they might be delivered to India in a matter of weeks, providing refiners with immediate relief. India is susceptible to supply disruptions since its crude reserves only cover roughly 25 days’ worth of demand, and its refiners have similarly small supplies of gasoline, gasoil, and liquefied petroleum gas.About 40% of India’s crude imports pass through the Strait of Hormuz, the world’s most important oil export route, according to the source, thus the interruption has direct market repercussions. The No. 3 oil consumer has been forced to look for alternatives as a result of the channel’s impending shutdown. Approximately 5.6 million barrels of crude are processed daily

by Indian refiners. Following US and Israeli raids on Iran-based sites that started on Saturday, Iranian attacks on vessels have rendered the Strait inaccessible.Speaking on condition of anonymity, the industry source stated that Russia was prepared to assist India in meeting up to 40% of its needs for crude.As New Delhi sought relief from the US sanctions, India’s imports of Russian crude dropped to roughly 1.1 million barrels per day in January, the lowest since November 2022, bringing Moscow’s proportion of total oil imports down to 21.2%, according to industry figures. According to the source, the percentage increased to about 30% in February. According to two refining sources, Indian refiners regularly communicate with dealers who sell Russian crude, but any rise in intake from Moscow would require government guidance as trade negotiations with the US continue.Last month, US President Donald Trump announced that punitive tariffs imposed on Indian imports due to the country’s purchase of Russian oil will be lifted, citing New Delhi’s

commitment to “stop buying Russian oil.”India has refused to comply, claiming that its approach was to diversify its supply in accordance with market conditions and “evolving international dynamics.” A request for comment regarding any increased purchases from Russia was not immediately answered by India’s foreign and oil ministries or the Russian embassy in New Delhi. Days before the war with Iran, an Indian source said that Indian businesses had not been instructed to avoid Russian energy. Russian oil prices, previously discounted due to the 2022 invasion of Ukraine, are expected to rise as the market shifts to a seller’s advantage.

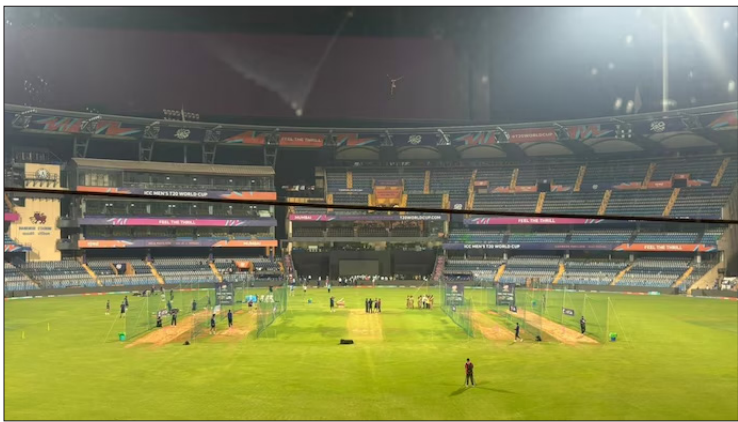
Russia plans to supply liquefied natural gas to India following Qatar’s production halt. Indian companies are managing gas shortages by reducing supplies to industrial customers. While China and India are major crude importers from the Middle East, India has less storage capacity and is more vulnerable to supply disruptions.

Win toss, tame dew, Mumbai semifinal destiny shaped by slippery T20 World Cup conditions

Toss and dew likely decide Mumbai semifinal fate

New Delhi: As the sun sets over the Arabian Sea this Thursday, the floodlights of the Wankhede Stadium will illuminate more than just a high-stakes 2026 T20 World Cup semi-final between Suryakumar Yadav's India and Harry Brook's England. They will also catch the first glints of moisture on the outfield grass — the invisible protagonist that has historically dictated the fate of matches at this iconic venue. In the high-pressure cauldron of a World Cup knockout, the toss is often a matter of tactical preference. At Wankhede, however, it is a matter of geography.

The Wankhede Stadium is effectively a waterfront property. Its proximity to the coast creates a unique atmospheric trap. As evening temperatures drop in Mumbai, the high humidity drifting in from the Arabian Sea reaches its dew point and condenses rapidly onto the playing surface. For the fielding side, this transforms the cricket ball into something resembling a bar of soap. Spinners lose the ability to grip the seam for purchase, while fast bowlers struggle to control their release. Conversely, for the chasing side, the wet grass acts as a lubricant, allowing the ball



To skid off the surface and on to the bat with pace, making strokeplay significantly easier under lights. Historically, the numbers at Wankhede tell a clear story: in T20s overall, the team fielding first has won 123 times compared with 92 victories for sides batting first. However, this T20 World Cup has thrown up a slight anomaly. Contrary to the traditional "chase-to-win" manual, teams batting first have successfully defended totals in three of the seven night games played here so far. In India's tournament opener against the USA, the expected 200-plus fireworks never materialised; instead, the hosts had to grind out 161, a

total that eventually proved sufficient for a 29-run victory. West Indies then successfully defended 196 by 30 runs against England in a night game, before later posting 254 against Zimbabwe to secure a commanding 107-run win. Will dew play a part? Almost certainly, particularly after the 8 pm mark. The Mumbai breeze is expected to bring in the moisture at the end of what promises to be another hot day. Temperatures are forecast to hover around 35 degrees Celsius during the day on Thursday. India's bowling coach, Morne Morkel, remains wary but pragmatic about the conditions. I think the dew is always a

big concern," Morkel noted ahead of the clash. "But that's again something you can't control — the toss. I think here at Wankhede there's always that extra bit of bounce. Guys can trust the bounce and hit through the line. But in saying that, as a bowler, that can also bring you into the game." Morkel highlighted that on a ground this small, the margin for error is razor-thin. "The ball travels. So you just need to be really fighting that over, staying in the moment and competing every ball, because a batter's strength can also become his weakness on this surface." The variables for Thursday have been complicated by a recent spike in heat across Mumbai. To prevent the red-soil pitch from turning into a crumbling dust bowl, curators have left a light layer of grass and ensured rigorous watering.

While a green tinge was visible earlier this week, it is unlikely to survive the final match-day trim. The aim is to produce a surface that offers Wankhede's traditional pace and bounce. Yet the heat remains a double-edged sword: it firms up the pitch for the first innings but also sets the stage for heavier dew once the air cools during the second.

Arsenal widen Premier League lead as Manchester City stumble in title race

London: Premier League leaders Arsenal stretched their lead over Manchester City to seven points on Wednesday with a nervy win at Brighton, while Pep Guardiola's men were held to a costly 2-2 draw by Nottingham Forest. The Gunners have long been favourites to win their first English league crown since 2004 but Pep Guardiola's men have loomed large in their rear-view mirror. On a busy night of action, Arsenal drew first blood in the battle for English title as Bukayo Saka celebrated his 300th Arsenal appearance with a goal in the ninth minute at Brighton's Amex Stadium.

The England man received the ball on the right before cutting in and hitting a shot from the edge of the penalty area which took a deflection off Carlos Baleba before squirming through the legs of goalkeeper Bart Verbruggen. The home side dominated possession and had more shots but Arsenal kept them at bay, digging deep to see out a nerve-jangling 1-0 win. "This was a really difficult one after everything we've



Been through in the last few weeks," Arsenal boss Mikel Arteta told TNT Sports. "Every game in the Premier League offers you different things. Big credit to the boys because the effort they put in is astronomical." Second-placed City, who have a game in hand, appeared to be on course to stay within five points of top spot. But they twice surrendered their lead to relegation-threatened Forest, whose battling performance kept them out of the drop zone, above West Ham on goal difference. January signing Antoine Semenyo volleyed home for City in the first half but Morgan Gibbs-White produced a moment of magic to pull Forest level, backheeling home in the 56th Minute. That sparked a re-

newed sense of urgency from City and they were back in front just six minutes later after the unmarked Rodri headed home Rayan Ait-Nouri's corner.

However, Forest were far from beaten and midfielder Elliot Anderson picked out the bottom corner of the goal with a beautifully crafted finish to claim a precious point for Vitor Pereira's team. "(There are) still many games to play, them (Arsenal) one less," said Guardiola. "Now it's Newcastle (in the FA Cup) and I always think about what's next. "If we analyse then in general it was a good performance and there were many good things. Of course we have things we can improve but in general pretty good.

Liverpool stunned at Wolves

London: Liverpool suffered an embarrassing 2-1 defeat at Wolves as Andre's stoppage-time strike sealed a dramatic victory for the Premier League's bottom club on Tuesday. Arne Slot's side fell behind to Rodrigo Gomes' strike in the closing stages at Molineux. Mohamed Salah hauled Liverpool level with his first goal in 11 top-flight games dating back to November. But Andre's first goal for Wolves inflicted the latest humbling loss in a chastening season for Liverpool. It was the first time the Premier League's bottom club had beaten the reigning champions since Crystal Palace defeated Chelsea in 2017. Liverpool have conceded 14 goals in the last 15 minutes of the second half, including five in the 90th minute or later -- the most by any side in a single season in the Premier League era. The Reds remain fifth but their hopes of qualifying for next season's Champions League have been hurt by a defeat that means sixth-placed Chelsea will go above them if they beat Aston Villa on Wednesday. Liverpool's first defeat in five games in all competitions will raise fresh questions about Slot's Anfield future. Bad result," Slot said. "We are losing far too many football games and dropping points. Was it again in extra (added) time that we conceded? The three times we lost in the last 22 games were all in extra time." This was the first of Liverpool's two trips to Molineux in the space of four days, with an immediate chance for revenge in the FA Cup fifth round on Friday. Slot this week said he no longer finds Premier League matches a "joy to watch" due to the rise in set-piece goals, and Liverpool supporters took no pleasure from this dismal performance. Wolves and Liverpool fans joined in a sustained round of applause on 18 minutes in memory of Diogo Jota, who wore that shirt number during his time at Molineux before joining the Reds. Portugal forward Jota died in a car crash in Spain last year. Liverpool were punished for their lethargic performance in the 78th minute.

Austrian women's hockey team arrives in Hyderabad For crucial FIH World Cup 2026 qualifiers campaign



Hyderabad : The Austrian women's hockey team touched down in Hyderabad ahead of the FIH Hockey Women's World Cup 2026 Qualifiers, Hyderabad, Telangana, as per a release from Hockey India. The tournament will witness eight nations compete for three crucial qualification spots for the marquee event

In Belgium and the Netherlands in August later this year. Austria have a rich history at the FIH Hockey Women's World Cup, having appeared in three of the first four editions of the competition. However, they haven't qualified for the premier event since 1981. Led by Johanna Czech, Austria will compete

Against England, Italy and Korea in Pool A, as they look to script history and secure a qualification spot for the first time in 45 years. Looking forward to the competition, the Captain stated, " This is the first time in India for all of us. So, we are excited and we want to play really good hockey. Our preparation

ahead of the tournament was short - we had only one training session - but we're going to give our best. We've got some training sessions here before our games, and we're going to leave everything on the pitch." Earlier, the Indian Women's Hockey Team also arrived in Hyderabad on Sunday afternoon. The Scotland Women's Hockey Team also touched down in the city on the same day, marking the beginning of their campaign at the eight-nation tournament.

Hyderabad has turned into a hub of international hockey excitement as the Austrian women's hockey team touched down in the city ahead of the FIH Women's Hockey World Cup 2026 Qualifiers. Austria's performance will determine whether they can finally break the long drought and return to the World Cup stage playing in India.

Newcastle defeat United, Chelsea crush Aston Villa in Premier League Clashes



Bournemouth : Newcastle United scored a dramatic late winner to beat Manchester United 2-1 at St James' Park in their Premier League fixture on Thursday. On the other hand, Chelsea registered a dominant 4-1 victory over Aston Villa in their fixture, according to the Premier League website. The Newcastle vs United match came to life in a frantic first half. Newcastle were reduced to 10 men when

Jacob Ramsey was sent off for two yellow cards, the second for simulation. Despite the setback, the hosts took the lead in stoppage time when Anthony Gordon calmly converted a penalty after being fouled by United's Bruno Fernandes. Manchester United responded almost immediately. Fernandes delivered a dangerous free-kick into the box, and Casemiro rose highest to head home the equaliser

just before the break. With a numerical advantage in the second half, United pushed for a winner but were denied several times by Newcastle goalkeeper Aaron Ramsdale, who made impressive saves to stop efforts from Leny Yoro and Joshua Zirkzee. Newcastle struck the decisive blow late, as substitute William Osula scored a sensational 90th-minute winner to seal a memorable victory for the 10-man hosts. The result leaves Manchester United third in the Premier League points table on 51 points, while Newcastle move up to 12th with 39 points. In the Chelsea vs AsTon Villa match. The pressure was on Arsenal to respond after back-to-back draws at Brentford and Wolves had allowed Manchester City to close in at the top. That is about attitude and how you respond to a difficult moment."

Norris hungrier than ever, striving to defend Formula One world title



Melbourne: Lando Norris said Thursday his tense world title triumph last year made him hungrier than ever to win another, with the McLaren ace having no concerns about being the hunted rather than the hunter. The fresh-faced Briton held off teammate Oscar Piastri and Red Bull's Max Verstappen in a thrilling three-way fight that went all the way to the season finale in Abu Dhabi. It made him McLaren's first world champion since Lewis Hamilton secured the first of his seven titles in 2008, with the success also sealing the constructors' crown. Mercedes and Red Bull are seen as the

narrow frontrunners ahead of the season-opening Australian Grand Prix this weekend, but Norris is not worried.

I don't think we're starting on the back foot. You know, even if you're second, third or fourth quickest, I don't think that's on the back foot," he said. "I think that's still a very good position to start. And I think in previous years, where it's been harder to improve over the course of a season, we've certainly proved that you could. And I continue to believe that. It's a long, very long season." The 26-year-old began his championship-winning year with victory at Melbourne, cross-

ing the line ahead of Verstappen and Mercedes' George Russell. He had to wait another seven Grand Prix to top the podium again, as Piastri took control before the championship morphed into a three-man battle. "I guess one of the big learning things from last year is to not get too frustrated with one bad race, two bad races, bad beginning of a year. It can always come back as long as you keep working hard," said Norris. With his championship on the line, Norris has done more training during the off-season than ever before, conscious that he is now the driver with a target on his back.

The night India's World Cup dream died, Wankhede fell silent and hubris finally

Mumbai: When England landed at the Wankhede for the 1987 semi-final, cocky Indian fans raised banners asking them to 'Quit India.' Others held placards with schedules of the next flight to Heathrow. The confidence wasn't without foundation. Four years earlier, those same fans had watched India do the unthinkable and made at least one very distinguished Englishman eat his words. Literally.

Before the 1983 World Cup, David Frith, the celebrated editor of Wisden Cricket Monthly, had surveyed the field and dismissed India as no-hopers. Frith had gone further, writing that if India won the World Cup, he would eat his words. A few days later, at Manchester, when Sandeep Patil dispatched Bob Willis for a four, scoring 51 at a strike rate of 160, England were knocked out.

The stage was set for Frith to shove his words down his throat. So when the Wankhede crowd waved those 'Quit India' banners in November 1987, they did so as champions of the world. History was on their side. The script had already



been written once. Surely it would be written again. 24 hours before the Wankhede contest, the mood across the subcontinent was intoxicating. It was brimming with confidence and something closer to inevitability. India had steamrolled through the tournament, losing just one inconsequential group game. The crowds believed, the bookmakers believed, even the pigeons on the Wankhede pavilion seemed to believe. The dream that pulsed through every Indian household was a final win, an India vs Pakistan final at Eden Gardens, Calcutta, in front of a hundred thousand

roaring souls. The mother of all cricket matches. Pakistan's fans were no less certain. Imran Khan had led his side to five consecutive victories, and the Lahore crowd arrived at Gaddafi Stadium clutching posters reading "IMRAN WE'LL MISS YOU," convinced he would walk off into the Lahore sunset as a World Cup finalist. Their girls had taken it one step further, dancing to RD Burman's irresistible Aa Dekhe Zara, challenging anyone, everyone, the world: "Come, let's see what you've got." Craig McDermott produced the spell of the tournament. Five wick-

ets for 44 runs, dismantling Pakistan's middle and lower order just when Imran and Miandad had threatened to drag their side home. Australia won by 18 runs. The India-Pakistan final was dead. The girls put away Aa Dekhe Zara. The posters for Imran's farewell were folded and forgotten.

In Mumbai the next morning, none of it mattered. India was convinced the Cup was staying home, and England, everyone knew, were already booked on the next flight to Heathrow. The night before the match, vice-captain Dilip Vengsarkar, the world's Not even close.