

In Brief

Mizoram Drug Bust

Aizawl: Mizoram Police seized drugs worth over Rs 25 crore in six operations between March 25 and April 1, recovering heroin and methamphetamine in Aizawl, Saitual, and Khawzawl districts. Notable incidents include the March 25 interception of a truck near Tuirial Bridge, yielding 19.836 kg of methamphetamine valued at Rs 15.87 crore, along with a handgun and ammunition. The driver was arrested, and cases were filed under the NDPS and Arms Acts. Additional arrests included two Myanmar nationals and a juvenile. A series of drug seizures took place in Saitual, where 200 soap cases of suspected heroin weighing 2.298 kg (valued at Rs 4.596 crore) were found in a vehicle driven by 27-year-old Zamchinlam. All incidents have been registered under the NDPS Act at Saitual Police Station.

Arunachal GSDP is expected to increase

Itanagar: Arunachal Pradesh's Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein announced on March 3 that the state's Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) is expected to rise to Rs 50,651 crore in the financial year 2026–27, up from Rs 41,314 crore in 2025–26. This projected increase indicates robust economic growth and fiscal stability, attributed to prudent fiscal management, infrastructure improvements, and sectoral investments. Mein emphasized the government's commitment to inclusive growth, economic resilience, and enhanced livelihood opportunities, supported by higher capital expenditure and improved tax administration.

Assam Rifles Trains CISF Personnel on Drone Threats in Agartala

Agartala: The Assam Rifles held a drone awareness and training session for Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) personnel in Agartala, aiming to enhance readiness against aerial threats. A Defence spokesperson highlighted the initiative's importance for preparedness against technological security challenges. The session included classroom instruction on drone types, capabilities, and security risks, followed by practical training with live drone demonstrations and basic handling techniques. With drones becoming increasingly common across both civilian and security domains, inter-agency training of this kind is designed to ensure that ground-level personnel are not caught off-guard.

Nagaland bags three medals at Khelo India Tribal Games

Kohima: Nagaland concluded its participation in the Khelo India Tribal Games 2026 with three medals: one gold, one silver, and one bronze, showcasing strong athletic performance. Wede T Mero won gold in the men's 10,000 metres, demonstrating endurance and strategy. Rüduolhounuo Rachel Belho secured silver in the women's 100 metres with a fast and consistent run, while Tsuchoi T earned bronze in the women's 5,000 metres after a competitive race. The state sent a 10-member team across various track and field events, reflecting notable progress and competitiveness, which is expected to inspire more athlete participation in future games.

Nitin Nabin criticizes opponents during the Silchar rally in Assam

“Opposition are ‘part-time leaders’”

Guwahati, Apr 05: On April 4, Nitin Nabin, the national president of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), attacked opposition leaders, calling them “part-time” politicians who only show up during elections, while claiming that BJP leaders are dedicated to the people all year long. Nabin stated, “Some part-time leaders have come now that elections are here, so they are roaming around,” while speaking at a public event in Silchar.

BJP leaders are devoted to the people of the region and work full-time. By 2047, he said, the BJP hopes to establish a government that will move Assam closer to becoming a developed state. Meanwhile, Assam Minister Pi-

jush Hazarika expressed confidence that the BJP and its allies will secure a decisive mandate in the upcoming Assembly elections, asserting that voters will reject the Congress. Highlighting the BJP-led government's performance, Hazarika said 16 medical colleges and 32 universities have been established, compared to six hospitals and 12 universities during Congress rule. On the other hand, Congress leaders, including Gaurav Gogoi and Lurinjyoti Gogoi, campaigned in Sarupathar for opposition alliance candidate Jiban Chutia, criticising the BJP government and Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma.

Earlier, Union Home Minister Amit Shah re-



iterated that a third consecutive BJP government would focus on tackling infiltration and boosting de-

velopment, particularly for tribal communities. Assam will go to polls in a single phase on April 9 for all 126

Assembly constituencies, with counting scheduled for May 4. The BJP-led alliance is seeking a third

consecutive term, while the Congress-led bloc is mounting a challenge with a multi-party alliance.

Tripura Police guarantee strict security for the TTAADC elections, according to DGP



Agartala, Apr 05: On March 3, Anurag, the Director General of Police for Tripura, stated that all required steps have been taken to guarantee free, fair, and peaceful elections for the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC). The DGP is interacting with district superintendents of police, commandants of the Tripura State Rifles, and other officials while touring districts throughout the state to assess election readiness.

He visited the Gomati district on Friday and spoke with representatives of the South and Gomati district police administrations on the

security arrangements. “Preparations have been completed for the 12th TTAADC election. Forces have already been deployed and strategies are in place to ensure the entire process—from pre-poll to post-poll—is conducted peacefully,” Anurag said.

He added that regular reviews are being conducted with district police and officers from the police headquarters to monitor the situation. “We are assessing the ground situation and will take further steps if required to maintain peace. We want to ensure a free, fair and peaceful election,” he said.

Jharkhand Minister Shilpi Neha Tirkey accuses the BJP of “betrayal”

Guwahati, Apr 05: On April 3, Jharkhand Minister Shilpi Neha Tirkey claimed that the BJP government had “betrayed” the people of Assam by failing to keep commitments made over the previous ten years. Tirkey stated that public opinion expresses discontent with the current government while on a campaign visit to Dibrugarh and surrounding areas. “The BJP has betrayed the people here.” “The government has not fulfilled any of its promises,” she stated. She further claimed that decisions were made to favor certain corporate interests and that a number of recent measures have had a negative effect on tea estates in the area. She claims that communities have voiced concerns about the purchase of land for oil exploration without providing sufficient compensation or appropriate procedures for displacement. Highlighting environmental and livelihood issues, Tirkey said that oil extraction activities have led to pollution, affecting the natural ecosystem of tea gardens. She also claimed that policy changes allowing commercial activities within tea estates have resulted in job losses and displacement of workers. “The core identity of Assam, rooted in its



tea gardens, is under threat. People are now looking for change,” she added, expressing support for the Congress and its leadership, including Gaurav Gogoi. Her remarks come amid intensified political campaigning ahead of the Assam Assembly elections scheduled for April 9. The BJP-led NDA alliance is aiming for a third consecutive term, while a multi-party opposition bloc led by Congress is seeking to unseat the ruling government.

The chief minister of Manipur will return to Jiribam to promote peace

Imphal, Apr 05: According to sources, Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh would make a second trip to Jiribam district as part of the state's continuous efforts to promote peace and reconciliation. In an effort to rebuild confidence and stability in the area, the Chief Minister is anticipated to interact with local leaders from both Meitei and Kuki communities during the visit, which is set for April 4–6. He is expected to arrive in Jiribam on April 4 at approximately 12:55 p.m., according to sources. The Chief Minister will stop briefly at Jiribam District Hospital, Lamlenkhul, and Leingangpokpi Police Outpost during the tour to assess the situation on the ground and speak with officials and residents. The visit comes after he met with Union Home Minister Amit Shah on April 1 in New Delhi, where they talked about the need to expedite



the peace process and the state of law and order in Manipur. The Chief Minister also met Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla at Raj Bhavan on Thursday after returning to Imphal. According to sources, the talks may have covered updates on his meeting with the Union Home Minister and the state's present security situation. Seven MLAs, including Tongbram Robindro, Kongkham Robindro, L. Rameshwor Meetei, Dr. S. Ranjan, H. Dingo, S. Premchandra, and Paonam Brojen, will accompany Khemchand.

Earlier, on April 2, the Chief Minister chaired a high-level review meeting at the Secretariat to assess security measures along National Highways. Emphasising the government's priorities, he stated that ensuring the protection of life and maintaining the uninterrupted movement of people and goods remain paramount. “We remain resolute in our commitment to uphold peace, stability, and public confidence through decisive and coordinated action,” he said in a post on X.

Assam CM Pledges to End Love Jihad and Promote Development and Tribal Traditions

Guwahati, Apr 05: Himanta Biswa Sarma, the chief minister of Assam, presented the government's five-year priorities on Friday, focusing on security, development, and healthcare programs. Sarma discussed the state's strategic objectives on the microblogging platform X, stating that the government is dedicated to stopping “Love Jihad” and is actively combating infiltrators. Sarma wrote on X, “We are determined to put an end to Love Jihad, take ongoing action against infiltrators, give

Assam's development new momentum, and implement such a UCC that respects the customs of our tribal and indigenous communities.” In order to establish Assam as a top medical tourism destination, he also announced plans to invest Rs 50,000 crore in the state's health sector under the Assam Swasthya Utkarsha Abhijan.

“Over the next five years, we will invest ₹50,000 crore to transform Assam's health sector under the Assam Swasthya Utkarsha Abhijan,” he added.

Sarma further revealed that the state government will introduce Proton

Therapy to treat cancer patients, describing it as a major step toward improving advanced healthcare facilities in Assam. “We will also bring in Proton Therapy to treat cancer patients,” he added. The Chief Minister's statements come as the government seeks to combine security measures with social development and modern healthcare infrastructure to boost Assam's overall growth.



Mizoram will start preliminary work on the 2027 Census first in the Northeast



Aizawl, Apr 05: According to officials, Mizoram is the first state in Northeast India to begin preparatory work for the Census of India, 2027. The process formally started on Wednesday. Leading by example, Chief Minister Lalduhoma used a recently established online site to complete his self-enumeration under Phase-I of the census, the House Listing and Housing Census, at his official house. For the first time in the nation's history, the Census of India, 2027 will be performed digitally, which is a major change from previous practices.

In addition, citizens can now choose to self-enumerate, which is a new function. Rather than waiting for an enumerator to visit, residents can log into the official portal, identify their location, and fill in household details themselves. Upon completing the process, a unique Self-Enumeration ID (SE ID) is generated. Following the Chief Minister, other senior Mizoram leaders also completed their self-enumeration. Home Minister K. Sapdanga and PWD Minister Vanlalhlana both undertook the process at their respective residences.

NE/EAST

The BJP receives leaders from the Congress; there is no distinction between the two

AIUDF leader Aminul Islam

Guwahati, Apr 05 : On Wednesday, April 1, Aminul Islam, the All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) candidate for the Rupahat Assembly constituency, claimed that the party is seeing a favorable electoral environment in Assam, especially in the Middle Assam region, and that there is no distinction between the Congress and the BJP. Islam told reporters in Nagaon that the AIUDF is optimistic about winning a sizeable number of seats in Middle Assam and overthrowing the Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). He said that the planned visit of Asaduddin Owaisi, the head of the All India Majlis-e-Itte-

hadul Muslimeen (AIMIM), who is anticipated to speak at election rallies in favor of AIUDF candidates, will give the party's campaign even more impetus.

Islam attacked both national parties harshly, claiming that there is little difference between the Congress and the BJP in the political scene of Assam. He asserted that the Congress has become more weaker in the state and charged that it is "supplying leaders" to the BJP in an indirect manner. "There is no difference between Gaurav Gogoi, the Congress, and the BJP," Islam stated, adding that voters are now aware of the BJP's influence within



the Congress. He claims that the Congress party's credibility has declined among voters as a result of this apparent overlap. The AIUDF

leader further maintained that public sentiment in Assam is shifting, with voters increasingly aligning with his party as an alternative to both the

BJP and the Congress. He expressed confidence that this shift would translate into electoral gains for AIUDF in the upcoming polls.

Naga Students' Federation denounces the murder of NSCN (I-M) cadres in Manipur

Kohima, Apr 05: The assassination of four NSCN (I-M) cadres at Hongbei village under Kasom Khullen in Kamjong district on the evening of March 28 was fiercely denounced by the Naga Students' Federation, which described the event as terrible and extremely unsettling. The Federation said in a statement on March 31 that such acts of fratricidal violence occur at a crucial moment when the Naga people are yearning for a just and inclusive political resolution to the long-standing Naga problem. It described the event as harmful to the Naga community's collective goals and a sign of es-



calating internal strife motivated by special interests. The bereaved families have reportedly refused to receive the mortal remains of their loved ones, calling for justice, accountability, and the truth. The NSF voiced solidarity with these families. The Federation expressed grave concerns about how members of the Naga national cause could become victims of violence inside their

own ranks, particularly during such a critical stage of the political process. The Federation acknowledged that the NSCN (I-M) had started an inquiry, but called for it to be carried out in a timely, unbiased, and transparent manner. It emphasized that individuals found guilty must be held accountable in line with accepted justice norms. Calling for restraint, the NSF appealed to all stakeholders to uphold unity and remain committed to the shared vision of peace, dignity, and justice, asserting that the sanctity of the Naga cause must not be compromised by internal conflict and violence.

Unit-4 wet commissioning of the Subansiri Lower Hydroelectric Project marks a significant milestone



Itanagar, Apr 05: On April 1, the wet commissioning of Unit-4 (250 MW) of the Subansiri Lower Hydroelectric Project began, marking a significant milestone in India's energy sector, according to Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu. The Chief Minister described the successful mechanical run as a major step

toward the realization of the nation's largest hydroelectric project, saying it signifies the shift from construction to power generation. He said that the accomplishment is a testament to NHPC Limited's accuracy, tenacity, and top-notch engineering. Khandu further praised the project team's efforts and the leadership of NHPC Chairman and Managing Director Bhupender Gupta for carrying out such a difficult project with devotion and commitment.

Highlighting the broader significance, he said that as the project moves towards synchronization with the national grid and phased commissioning of remaining units, it will further strengthen India's push for sustainable, reliable, and self-reliant energy. The Subansiri Lower Hydroelectric Project is a key component of India's renewable energy strategy and is expected to play a crucial role in meeting the country's growing power demands.

Shillong prohibits dumping on important national highways

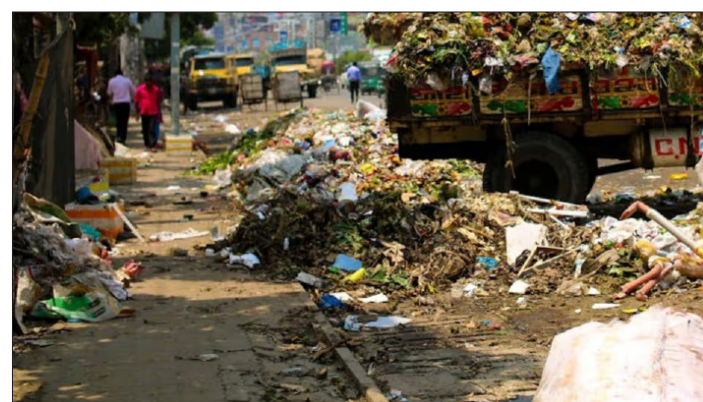
Shillong, Apr 05: The District Magistrate of East Khasi Hills has enforced a prohibition order banning the disposal of waste, debris, and construction material along a 16-kilometre stretch of the Old National Highway 40, connecting Shillong to the national road network.

This decision, signed by RM Kurbah, follows a formal complaint from the National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation (NHIDCL), highlighting ongoing illegal dumping of debris, soil, and household waste along the road shoulder between Barapani (Km 61.800) and the KHADC Junction (Km 77.800). The NHIDCL emphasized that such dumping not only creates an eyesore but also disrupts vital maintenance work and poses

dangers to motorists, particularly at this key transition area where the four-lane Jorabat-Barapani section concludes.

Under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023, which allows magistrates to act in urgent situations, the District Magistrate has prohibited the dumping of debris and the unauthorized disposal of both domestic and commercial waste. Activities obstructing maintenance or vehicular flow are also banned, with violations resulting in prosecution under Section 223 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).

This order is indefinite and will remain until officially lifted. This crackdown follows a prior directive from the same magistrate, issued



earlier in March, which prohibited unauthorized excavation and indiscriminate dumping across the district, responding to concerns about soil and debris contaminating rivers and drinking water sources during the rainy season. Given the envi-

ronmental pressures faced by the Umiam Lake area, situated north of Shillong along this corridor, the strict enforcement of waste disposal regulations is critically important to mitigate pollution and siltation issues.

Sarbananda Sonowal advocates for Hitendra Nath Goswami

Guwahati, Apr 05 : In support of BJP candidate and current MLA Hitendra Nath Goswami, Union Ports, Shipping, and Waterways Minister Sarbananda Sonowal spoke to a crowd of more than 5,000 people on Tuesday night at Kenduguri Kala Krishti Kendra in Jorhat. Speaking at the event, Sonowal characterized Goswami as a responsible and commit-

ted leader in addition to being intelligent. Sonowal claimed that Goswami was not just trustworthy but that Jorhat had developed quickly under his leadership, as evidenced by the quantity of flyovers and overbridges built during his five years as Jorhat's MLA. Another point highlighted by Sarbananda Sonowal was that during his tenure as Chief Minister of Assam

(2016-21), when Hitendra Nath Goswami served as Speaker, special permission was obtained from the Union Parliamentary Affairs Ministry to allow students to attend sessions of the State Assembly. This initiative enabled students to witness the functioning helping dispel the notion that it was merely a place for disputes and disruptions. Instead, they were

able to observe meaningful discussions, decision-making processes, and the passage of legislation. Sonowal criticized the Congress party. The Union Minister further stated that the Congress failed to implement the Assam Accord and imposed the controversial IMDT Act on the people of Assam, which he claimed worsened the issue of illegal migration.



Tipra Motha head Pradyot is accused by Tripura head Minister Manik Saha of traveling to Delhi to "align with the BJP"

Agartala, Apr 05: On Wednesday, April 1, Manik Saha, the chief minister of Tripura, accused Pradyot Kishore Manikya Debbarma, the leader of the Tipra Motha Party (TMP), of contacting the BJP in Delhi in order to obtain development funding intended for tribal areas. Speaking at a Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council election rally in Birchandramanu, South Tripura, Saha asserted, "It was Debbarma who went to Delhi to ally with the BJP so that his party could loot money meant for the development of tribal people." He further claimed that during negotiations in the nation's capital, TMP leaders had suggested giving the BJP a small number of seats; however, the offer was turned down, claiming that the saffron party is still "the biggest political organization."

Despite TMP's affiliation with the BJP-led coalition administration in Tripura, the statements were made. But at the moment, the tribal council is run independently by the regional party, with no involvement from the BJP. Saha claimed that although the state government devotes between 39 and 40 percent of



its yearly budget to the welfare of indigenous groups, the results of development in tribal areas are still insufficient. He said that money supplied by the state had not been appropriately accounted for and accused the council of corruption and procedural errors.

He added that if the BJP gains control of the council, more stringent measures would be taken. "The state has been releasing funds to the tribal council, but it

is not submitting utilization certificates as rampant corruption is taking place there," he said. Highlighting funding figures, Saha noted that the TTAADC received ₹2,097 crore under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act over the past four years, out of a total state allocation of ₹4,311 crore — roughly 48 per cent of the overall outlay. Positioning the BJP as a vehicle for govern-

ance reforms, Saha promised improved administration, stability and faster development in the tribal council areas.

"Development will reach its peak if the BJP forms the government at Khumlung," he said, expressing confidence of a decisive electoral mandate. Polling for the tribal council is scheduled for April 12, with counting set to take place on April 17.

Meghalaya Cabinet has approved the non-government school employees' provident fund scheme

Shillong, Apr 05: Chief Minister Conrad Sangma announced that the Meghalaya Cabinet has approved the Meghalaya Non-Government School and Colleges Employees Centralized Provident Fund Scheme, 2026. In a post on X, Sangma stated, "The Meghalaya Non-Government School, Colleges Employees Centralised Provident Fund Scheme, 2026 has been approved by the Cabinet."

The program's goal is to give workers who have been making contributions to the Provident Fund in accordance with the applicable Act a legal structure. Previously, there was no government system in place to handle these donations.

In order to recruit agencies and provide a competitive business climate in Meghalaya, the Cabinet has approved lowering the



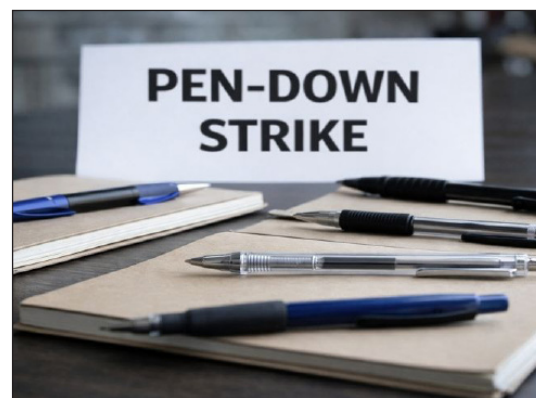
VAT rate on methane gas utilized as Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) from 14.5% to 5%. The Cabinet also approved the service conditions of regularised ad hoc employees, including seniority and promotions. "This one-time condonation will recognise promotions made according to prescribed rules and enable eligible

employees to receive salary and pension benefits based on their promoted posts," Sangma added. As per Sangma, these measures are aimed at strengthening employee welfare, boosting industrial competitiveness, and ensuring fair service conditions for government and non-government employees alike.

Staff members of the Chakma Council declare an indefinite pen-down strike due to Mizoram's salary delays

Aizawl, Apr 05: Teachers and staff at the Chakma Autonomous District Council (CADC) in Mizoram have declared that they will go on an indefinite pen-down strike starting on Thursday, April 2, alleging long-term salary payment delays that have caused serious financial hardship.

According to a CADC official, the decision was made jointly at a meeting on Tuesday by the Chakma District Council Teachers' Association (CDCTA) and the Chakma District Council Employees' Association (CDCEA). According to the official, the meeting examined a petition that the groups sent to the governor on March 16, highlighting the severe difficulties that workers were experiencing as a result of not receiving their payments for more than four months. Sources within the council indicated that the prolonged delay has severely impacted the livelihoods



of staff members, many of whom are struggling to meet basic household expenses. The associations have expressed concern that repeated appeals have not yielded any concrete resolution so far.

The proposed pen-down strike is expected to disrupt administrative and educational activities under the CADC, which governs areas in southern Mizoram predominantly inhabited by the Chakma community.

Officials said there has been no immediate response from the state authorities regarding the employees' demands, even as concerns grow over the potential impact of the strike on public services in the region. The employee bodies have reiterated their demand for immediate release of pending salaries and warned that the agitation will continue until their grievances are addressed.

Public Hearing on the 680 MW Athunli Hydro Project in the Dibang Valley of Arunachal Pradesh

Itanagar, Apr 05: The proposed 680 MW Athunli Hydro Electric Project in the Dibang Valley district of Arunachal Pradesh successfully held a public hearing on Wednesday at Anini, removing a significant legal obstacle in the project's path to environmental approval from the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change. Dibang Valley Deputy Commissioner Bekir Nyorak presided over the hearing, which was organized by the Arunachal Pradesh Pollution Control Board (APPCB). Locals,

project-affected families (PAFs), and other stakeholders actively participated in the Anini procedures, demonstrating a broad community engagement with a project that has the potential to drastically alter the region's energy and economic landscape. The project consultant gave a thorough summary based on the Environmental Management Plan (EMP) and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report at the hearing. The main technical aspects of the project, suggested environmental protections, and the expect-

ed socioeconomic advantages for Dibang Valley and the surrounding area were all discussed in the presentation. During the hearing, members of the families impacted by the project spoke out in favor of it, expressing hope for its prompt execution and early commissioning. This was a noteworthy development. Their support is crucial at this point in the clearance process since regulators frequently consider community sentiment when evaluating the social impact of major infrastructure projects.

Tripura BJP steps up TTAADC campaign



Agartala, Apr 05: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) announced that its campaign for the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) elections is gaining momentum, with an influx of supporters across tribal regions. The party’s Tripura unit general secretary,

Bipin Debbarma, addressed party workers, highlighting a rise in public support particularly in crucial constituencies within the tribal belt. He attributed this to various mass joining programs, indicating a shift in voter sentiment towards the BJP’s development-focused agenda. Debbarma noted that increased attendance at campaign events suggests voters desire change and are aligning with the party’s promises of economic progress and better governance. He criticized the Tipra Motha party for failing to meet commitments to tribal communities, positioning the BJP as a more dependable alternative for leading the Autonomous District Council. He argued that “emotional politics” and instability under Tipra Motha are diminishing in appeal, with many tribal voters now favoring a BJP-led administration in the council.

Rajya Sabha passes CAPF bill through voice vote

New Delhi, Apr 05: The Rajya Sabha passed the Central Armed Police Force (General Administration) Bill, 2026, amid Opposition protests demanding referral to a select committee. The bill maintains IPS officer dominance in five CAPFs, countering a Supreme Court ruling that aimed to phase out their deputation. Opposition members denounced the bill as “unconstitutional,” claiming it undermines judicial authority and state roles.

Junior home minister Nityanand Rai defended the bill as a means to



enhance force efficiency, coordination with state police, and streamline service rules. The Opposition, led by Mallikarjun Kharge, called for a committee review before staging a

walkout in dissatisfaction with the minister’s response. Leader of the House J.P. Nadda accused the Opposition of disrespecting parliamentary procedures.

Nitish Kumar to take oath as Rajya Sabha member on April 10

Patna, Apr 05: According to sources who spoke to India Today, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar is scheduled to take the Rajya Sabha oath on April 10. Sources said that on April 9, Kumar will go from Patna to Delhi, where he may spend two to three days meeting with key BJP leaders. According to sources, Kumar is expected to step down as Chief Minister shortly after returning to Patna, paving the way for the establishment of a new Bihar government. It is anticipated that he will return on or after April 12. Speculation over the next Chief Minister has increased as a result of the JD(U) chief’s intention to join the Rajya Sabha, particularly because he only received a new mandate in. Aides cite constitutional rules that let a non-legislator to serve as Chief Minister for a maximum of six months, but NDA sources indicate Kumar is unlikely to hold the position for that long. According to news agency PTL, a change in leadership is anticipated following the conclusion of the Khamaas period on April 14. The BJP is reportedly eager to make a claim this time around, despite having been a member of Bihar’s government coalition for almost



20 years without holding the top position. Union Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai is also being considered, as is Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary.

Party insiders say the final decision will be taken at a legislative party meeting but will effectively be made by the central leadership. On the other hand, JD(U) sources indicate the party is likely to negotiate a significant share in the new cabinet as part of any transition arrangement, with discussions also around a possible prominent

role for Nitish Kumar’s son, Nishant Kumar. Meanwhile, the Bihar Home Department has confirmed that Nitish Kumar will continue to receive ‘Z Plus’ security even after stepping down as Chief Minister.

An order issued by the Special Branch states that his protection will remain in place upon assuming office as a Rajya Sabha member. The decision follows a review of his security requirements under the Bihar Special Security Act, 2000, with the Director General of Police and the Special Branch

tasked with ensuring the highest level of protection.

‘Z Plus’ is India’s top-tier security cover, typically reserved for the Prime Minister, the President, and senior political leaders, and includes around 55 personnel comprising Personal Security Officers, armed guards, escort vehicles, and round-the-clock surveillance. Nitish Kumar was elected to the Rajya Sabha on March 16 and resigned from the Bihar Legislative Council on March 30, paving the way for a significant political transition in the state.

In Sarbhog, Assam, former AASU leader Harsha Das joins the BJP at a campaign rally for Ranjeet Kumar Dass



Guwahati, Apr 05 : During Ranjeet Kumar Dass’s election campaign rally in Sarbhog, former AASU leader and Howly Marketing Board chairman Harsha Das joined the

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

After joining the party, Das told the media that the BJP has been instrumental in defending the people’s “jati, mati, bheti” (identity,

land, and foundation). He added that he feels honored to have the chance to work under Ranjeet Kumar Dass’s leadership after joining the BJP, describing him as a leader who is well-liked and trusted by the public.

Das went on to say that the public is once again anticipating the formation of a BJP administration led by Himanta Biswa Sarma for the third term in a row. He also expressed his commitment to work as a dedicated member alongside others in the party. Highlighting development issues, Das said that pending works in the constituency over the last five years would be completed under Dass’s leadership. He added that the people of Bhawanipur-Sarbhog constituency have “100 per cent faith” in Ranjeet Kumar Dass.

The remarks were made by Harsha Das while addressing the media following his formal induction into the BJP.

Tipra Motha Turns to Violence Out of Anger : Manik Saha



Agartala, Apr 05: Manik Saha, the chief minister of Tripura, claimed on Wednesday that the Tipra Motha Party was acting like an opposition party even though it was a part of the state government and accused the party of engaging in violence out of “frustration” over dwindling public support. Speaking during a rally in favor of BJP candidate Sanjib Reang in the Birchchandranagar-Kalsi con-

stituency, Saha stated that people were aware of the situation on the ground and have faith in the BJP’s chances in the next ADC elections. “People are now aware of the reality and asserted that the Bharatiya Janata Party is committed to the genuine development of tribal communities, expressing confidence that the party will secure victory in the upcoming ADC elections,” he stated. While

claiming to want peace, the Chief Minister accused the Tipra Motha leaders of inciting trouble. He claimed that the people has started to see the obvious discrepancy between their words and deeds.

According to Saha, the BJP is still dedicated to preserving the state’s tranquility and fostering the growth of tribal tribes. The Chief Minister also mentioned the partnership between the IPFT, Tipra Motha, and the BJP, but asserted that attacks on BJP employees have persisted throughout time. “The party would not tolerate such incidents and would respond through legal means,” he stated. Saha also said Tripura has seen a return to peace since 2018 and is now witnessing development, adding, “The funds allocated for ADC areas must be used properly and warned against irregularities”. Several BJP leaders, including state president and MP Rajib Bhattacharya, were present at the rally.

Amit Shah authorizes the Mahila Battalion and instructs the Manipur chief minister to expedite the peace process

Imphal, Apr 05 : In a thorough meeting with Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh on Wednesday, Union Home Minister Amit Shah reviewed the state’s law and order situation and urged the Chief Minister to forward the peace process more quickly. The meeting was held at Shah’s New Delhi home. Chief Minister Khemchand Singh arrived in the city on Tuesday night, having traveled there especially for the conversation. An official from the Manipur Chief Minister’s Office (CMO) claims that Shah examined the state’s present security situation and gave precise directives on how to proceed.

“The Union Home Minister reviewed the current security scenario in Manipur with the Chief Minister. He also instructed him to expedite the ongoing peace initiatives and consolidate the improving relations among various communities,” the CMO official said. The directive comes as Manipur continues to navigate the aftermath of the ethnic conflict that has gripped the state since May 2023, with multiple communities still working towards reconciliation. In a significant development from the meeting, Shah gave in-principle approval for the raising of a Manipur Rifles unit — specifically a Mahila India Reserve Battalion for the state. The Chief Minister has been asked to submit



a formal proposal to take the approval process forward. The new battalion, once raised, would add to the state’s security infrastructure while also creating opportunities for women in the security forces.

The CMO official noted that since the BJP-led coalition government came to power in Manipur, the state administration has rolled out multiple outreach programmes aimed at building peace, fostering reconciliation, and restoring mutual trust among communities. Wednesday’s meeting in New Delhi appeared aimed at giving fresh momentum to those efforts, with the Home Minister’s direct involvement signalling the Centre’s continued focus on stabilising the situation in the Northeast state.

Kanpur police bust kidney transplant racket

Kanpur, Apr 05 : Kanpur police sealed three hospitals due to a kidney-transplant racket involving six arrests, including two doctors, Priti and Surjit Ahuja. Additional hospitals are under investigation, as police received a complaint from a man who sold his kidney for ₹10 lakh but only received ₹9.5 lakh. Investigations revealed that the ring targeted financially vulnerable individuals, conducting over 40 illegal transplants without proper licensing. Operatives, including middleman Shivam Agrawal, bought kidneys for ₹60,000 to ₹10 lakh and sold them for ₹60 lakh to ₹1 crore. The accused face charges under the Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues Act, 1994.

A research from Nagaland University highlights Kohima’s growing environmental degradation

Kohima, Apr 05: A comprehensive geospatial study conducted by Nagaland University, in partnership with PNG Government PG College in Nainital, reveals significant environmental degradation in the Kohima district of Nagaland. Utilizing advanced Geographic Information System (GIS) modeling and remote sensing techniques, the research highlights rising ecological vulnerabilities driven by rapid land-use changes, climate variability, and seismic instability in the North East Hill (NEH) region. The findings, published in December 2023 in the journal Environmental Monitoring and Assessment, indicate that natural landscapes in Kohima—such as forests, scrublands, and water bodies—have diminished from 93.93% to 81.86% over the past two decades. This decline has been accompanied by an increase in built-up areas, agricultural land, and wasteland as a result of heightened human activities. Temperature trends show a steady increase of approximately 0.13°C per year, alongside a reduction in annual rainfall and fewer rainy days, pointing to escalating climate stress in the region. The study

also reveals that Kohima’s geological instability is marked by over 1,100 recorded seismic events between 1982 and 2022, averaging 27 micro-earthquakes annually. These tremors, linked to tectonic faults, exacerbate slope instability and erosion, increasing the risk of landslides. Researchers employed an integrated GIS database modeling system that evaluated environmental changes across three modules: Geodiversity Informatics, Land Use Informatics, and Climate Informatics.

This approach allowed for a thorough analysis of the interplay among geological structures, vegetation cover, rainfall patterns, temperature shifts, and ecological habitats. The study categorizes the degradation into three primary forms: geodiversity degradation, ecological degradation, and climatic degradation. The convergence of these stressors heightens the risk of geohydrological hazards affecting ecosystems, agriculture, and human settlements. Vice-Chancellor Jagadish K. Patnaik emphasized the research’s importance for policymakers and stakeholders, facilitating informed decision-making for sustainable development and

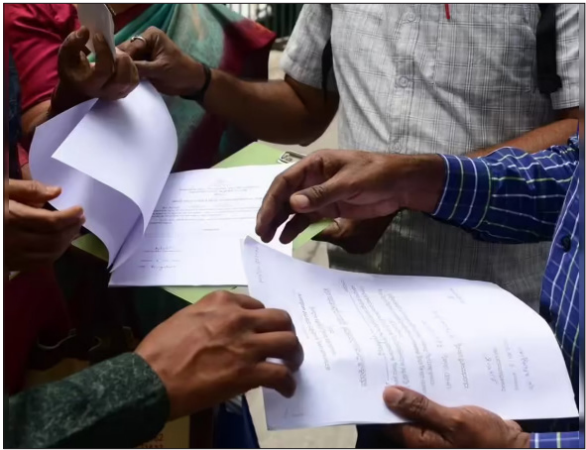
environmental management in the NEH region. M. S. Rawat underscored the urgency of the findings, describing the alarming conditions due to land degradation and climate change, advocating for the implementation of robust geospatial technologies and proactive environmental management strategies to mitigate these risks. Co-author Khrietketouno Belho remarked on the region’s socio-economic and demographic vulnerability to climate change, particularly regarding monsoon-related hazards. The research, backed by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs and Nagaland University’s Non-NET Fellowship programme, establishes a comprehensive framework for evidence-based planning in environmentally fragile areas. The results are poised to guide climate adaptation strategies and sustainable land management practices not just in Nagaland, but throughout the broader Indian Himalayan region. Notably, Nagaland University, established by an Act of Parliament in 1989, is the only central university in the state, with its multiple campuses and affiliations across Nagaland enhancing its educational outreach.

Mizoram begins Census 2027 self-enumeration drive

Aizawl, Apr 05: Mizoram has launched the self-enumeration phase of Census 2027, with Chief Minister Lalduhoma registering online on April 1, 2023.

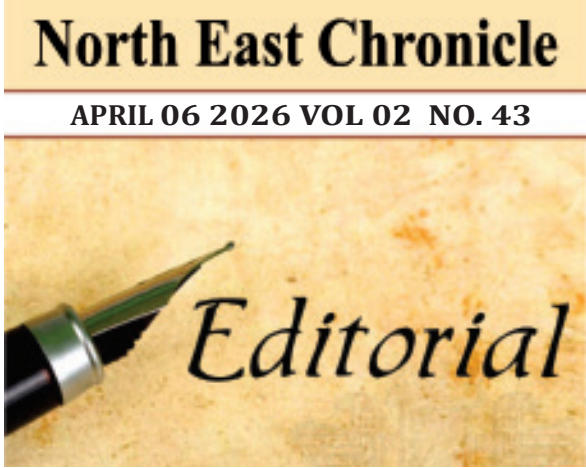
This initiative signifies the state’s commitment to a digital-first approach in data collection, facilitated by a new census portal.

Officials from various governmental departments, including the Aizawl Municipal Corporation, assisted in the process, while several senior cabinet members also participated, highlighting a push for public involvement. This self-enumeration facility is part of the ongoing



16th Census of India, allowing residents to submit personal and household information via a secure online portal that supports 16 languages. It aims to streamline data collection

and reduce manual effort, with the self-enumeration window open from April 1 to April 15, encouraging citizens to complete the process to ensure accurate census data.



Arms sale to Taiwan deepens US-China friction

On October 13, 2025, the United States approved a \$330 million sale of spare parts for fighter jets and other aircraft to Taiwan, aiming to enhance Taiwan’s defensive capabilities against potential threats, particularly from China. This transaction is notable as it marks the first military sale during President Donald Trump’s administration. The U.S. is bound by the Taiwan Relations Act of 1979 to provide arms of a defensive nature to Taiwan, which has welcomed the sale as crucial in fortifying its self-defense amidst escalating tensions with China. Taiwan’s government expressed gratitude for the U.S. commitment to normalizing arms sales, as they view this relationship as vital for their security.

China, however, expressed strong opposition to the sale, asserting that it violates the one-China principle, a tenet critical to Beijing’s view of Taiwan as a part of its territory. The Chinese Foreign Ministry threatened to take “necessary measures” to protect its sovereignty and condemned the arms sales as a signal to Taiwanese separatist forces. The tension is compounded by historical claims, given that Taiwan has operated independently since the Republic of China (ROC) retreated there following the Chinese Civil War in 1949. The region’s political landscape is further complicated by the evolving military dynamics between the U.S. and China, with the U.S. adopting a stance of strategic ambiguity regarding military intervention should China attack Taiwan. American military cooperation with Taiwan includes advisory roles and joint exercises, despite the absence of a permanent U.S. military presence on the island. The U.S. recognizes Beijing’s position on the one-China policy but does not explicitly endorse Chinese sovereignty over Taiwan, resulting in ongoing military sales that remain contentious within the U.S.-China relationship. As China increases its military presence through drills and incursions near Taiwan, it poses a direct threat to Taiwan’s security, which is viewed as part of China’s broader goal of reunification. This situation creates regional instability, pushing entities like Japan to reconsider their security posture, whereby a conflict in the Taiwan Strait could trigger significant security concerns for Japan. Japan, although officially maintaining a stance of strategic ambiguity, may feel compelled to support Taiwan militarily in the event of an invasion, emphasizing the notion that a crisis in Taiwan could also threaten Japan’s national security. The complexity of these international relations, driven by historical legacies and escalating military tensions, underscores the delicate balance of power in the region and the potential for conflict over Taiwan’s status and future.

Russia launches a drone attack in response to Zelenskyy’s offer of an Easter truce

The president of Ukraine stated on Wednesday that he had discussed an Easter truce with US negotiators, but in a rare daytime bombardment, Russian forces shot over 700 drones, many of which were Iranian-made Shaheds, targeting areas of western and central Ukraine. “Russia is responding [to the Easter ceasefire offer] with Shahed drones and continues its terrorist operations against our energy sector, against our infrastructure,” Zelenskyy stated, adding that he has spoken with US officials about methods to further negotiations. “Silence during Easter might be the perfect cue to let everyone know that diplomacy can work.” Zelenskyy’s plan was turned down by Russia’s foreign ministry as a “PR stunt.” The talks were held remotely on Wednesday with the US special envoy, Steve Witkoff, Donald Trump’s son-in-law Jared Kushner and the US senator Lindsey Graham, with Nato’s secretary general, Mark Rutte, also joining the call amid the alliance’s continuing tensions with Washington. Zelenskyy thanked the US for its efforts to bring about peace and said the Ukrainian and US teams had agreed to strengthen a document outlining US security guarantees for any future peace deal. “This is precisely what could pave the way for a reliable end to the war.” In recent weeks Zelenskyy said the US had been pressuring Ukraine to make concessions to bring a quick end to the conflict after the US and Israel launched the war on Iran in late February. Talks with Russia are deadlocked over the question of land, with Ukraine refusing to cede to Moscow’s demands that it relinquish the eastern region of Donbas. Russia’s defence ministry claimed its forces had taken control of the entire Luhansk region – part of the

Voters in the Greens court are fighting for council seats in the northeast

Jamie Driscoll thanked the twelve supporters who braved the bitterly cold, windy weather to start knocking on doors and handing out flyers. “Thank you very much to all you would-be penguins huddling together for warmth,” he added. One of the most prominent recruiters for the Green party is the former Labour mayor of Tyne. He was delivering a motivational speech to a crowd that would have likely been considerably larger if some had not been in London for a protest against the far right. He was representing Newcastle City Council in the central Monument ward. Driscoll is running for a council seat in a minority Labour-led government. Reform, the Liberal Democrats, and the Greens anticipate success. Meanwhile, Labour will be reminded of what transpired in the formerly unwavering stronghold of County last year. The Greens, the Liberal Democrats and Reform expect to do well. Labour, meanwhile, will remember what happened last year in the once rock-solid stronghold of County Durham where it was almost wiped out by Reform. What happens in the north-east of England could be pivotal for Keir Starmer. When Labour lost the Hartlepool byelection in 2021, the party was humiliated and he came close to quitting. If Labour loses heavily in the four full council elections of Newcastle, Gateshead, Sunderland and South Tyneside there will be people who expect him to do more than merely consider stepping down. Driscoll had been Labour all his life, as had some of the campaigners gathered in the cold for the Greens on Saturday. Maisie Sharp, a retired stilt walker, said she had always voted Labour, apart from once when she voted Lib Dem as a protest against the city council. She joined the party just before Jeremy Corbyn became leader and remained a member during the early years of Starmer but began to feel disillusioned by a number of policies, including on Gaza. “I can’t remember what the final straw was, but there was one,” she said. “I joined the Greens because I think people need hope.

The Greens do seem to have a plan. I’m 75 and have grandchildren and I want there to be a world for my grandchildren.”Another recent Labour to Green convert is Richie Barlow, 44, who said: “I was so supportive of Keir Starmer, very supportive, but he is basically a red Tory. He has totally abandoned the people who voted for him, he is not doing what he promised. We need a viable alternative to the two-party status quo.”That message is, of course, one that Reform is also putting out. On the campaign trail, the Greens are trying to convince people that they are the only party that can keep Reform out. Labour will say the same thing. It raises the question: what are left-leaning, anti-Reform voters meant to do? It is a dilemma for Maureen Gilmore, a 77-year-old retired probation officer whose door was knocked on by Driscoll. The campaigning was on the leafier streets of Newcastle – so not too much, perhaps, should be read into it – but it was striking how many once Labour-voting residents said they would vote Green.One young woman assured Driscoll she would be voting Green, as would her pomeranian, Teddy, happily yapping and running round the politician’s legs.

Later, a middle-aged man told Driscoll he was undecided between the Lib Dems and Greens but thought the Lib Dems were better on defence. Driscoll told him his dad had been a tank driver, his brother in the Royal Navy, and then argued that the challenge was that warfare had changed and that the “current defence system is there to serve defence contractors rather than the needs of the service personnel”. Bar one resident telling Driscoll that he supported Rupert Lowe’s Restore Britain party – “he said Reform was too leftwing for him” – the campaigners were buoyed and cheerful. The wind died down and the sun even came out. Driscoll spoke about his history with the Labour party, the cataclysmic falling-out and his hopes for his new party. A former engineer, software developer, martial arts instructor and nightclub bouncer, Driscoll said he and his brother had joined Labour in 1985 “after we’d seen a party political broadcast with, funnily enough, Roy Hattersley”. Driscoll was 15 and he is now in his mid-50s, so he has four decades of being Labour. He has repeatedly been called a Corbynista, but insists he has never been tribal. He was, though, never a Blairite, and remembers a time when the Labour party was more tolerant of a wide range of views.

As the Iran War drives up costs, UK businesses anticipate raising prices more quickly

According to Bank of England study, businesses in the UK anticipate raising their pricing more quickly in the upcoming months as the Middle East conflict raises costs. Following the start of the Iranian conflict, the Bank regularly polled over 2,000 chief financial officers last month, and the results indicate that they now anticipate a 3.7% price increase over the next year.

The managers’ forecast of inflation across the economy increased from 3% to 3.5%, which was an increase from 3.4% in February. Due to the impact of these increased costs on industry, the effective closing of the Strait of Hormuz has resulted in a major increase in the price of gas and oil, as well as predictions of further price increases. She has also come under pressure to cushion the blow of likely rises in household gas and electricity bills before next winter and halt plans for a 5p a litre increase in fuel duty, due to take effect by next March.

Reeves has repeatedly made clear that any help for households will be “targeted”, unlike the costly across-the-board support offered by the Liz Truss government as energy prices soared in the wake of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine four years ago.

The Bank of England’s policymakers will be watching UK companies’ pricing intentions closely, as they weigh up whether to raise interest rates in the coming months from their current level of 3.75%, in the face of higher inflation.Financial markets are currently pricing in two interest rate rises by the end of the year – a sharp turnaround from expectations of rate cuts, before the war began. However, the Bank’s governor, Andrew Bailey, has warned that markets may be “getting ahead of themselves” and weak consumer demand may prevent companies passing on cost increases to their customers.



Archaeologists find the wreck of a Danish warship that Nelson sank 225 years ago

Marine archaeologists have found a Danish cruiser on the bottom of Copenhagen Harbor, more than 200 years after it was sunk by Admiral Horatio Nelson and the British fleet. Divers are racing against time to uncover the Dannebrog’s 19th-century wreck before it is turned into a construction site for a new housing development being built off the Danish coast. They are working in thick silt with nearly no visibility 15 meters (49 feet) beneath the waves.225 years to the day after the Battle of Copenhagen in 1801, Denmark’s Viking Ship Museum, which is in charge of the months-long underwater digs, revealed its results on Thursday.

According to Morten Johansen, the head of maritime archaeology at the museum, “it’s a big part of the Danish national feeling.” A great deal had been written about the battle “by very enthusiastic spectators, but we actually don’t know how it was to be onboard a ship being shot to pieces by English warships and some of that story we can probably learn from seeing the wreck”, Johansen said. In the Battle of Copenhagen, Nelson and the British fleet attacked and defeated Denmark’s navy as it formed a protective blockade outside the harbour. Thousands were killed and wounded during the brutal hours-long naval clash, considered one of Nelson’s “great battles”.

The intention was to force Denmark out of an alliance of northern European powers including Russia, Prussia and Sweden. At the centre of the fighting was the Danish flagship, the Dannebrog, commanded by Commodore Olfert Fischer. The 48-metre (157ft) Dannebrog was Nelson’s main target. Cannon fire tore through its upper deck before incendiary shells sparked a fire onboard.

The battle is also believed to have inspired the phrase “to turn a blind eye”. After deciding to ignore a superior’s signal, Nelson, who had lost sight in his right eye, reportedly remarked: “I have only one eye, I have a right to be blind sometimes.” Nelson eventually offered a truce and a ceasefire was later agreed with Denmark’s Crown Prince Frederik.

The stricken Dannebrog slowly drifted northward and exploded. Records say the sound created a deafening roar across Copenhagen. Marine archaeologists have discovered two cannon, uniforms, insignia, shoes, bottles and even part of a sailor’s lower jaw – perhaps belonging to one of the 19 unaccounted-for crew members who probably lost their lives that day. The dig site will soon be enveloped by construction work for Lynetteholm, a mega-project to build a new housing district in the middle of Copenhagen harbour that is expected to be completed by 2070. Marine archaeologists began surveying the area late last year, targeting a spot thought to match the flagship’s final position. “Sometimes you can’t see anything, and then you really have to just feel your way, look with your fingers instead of with your eyes,” the diver and maritime archaeologist Marie Jonsson said.



Delcy Rodriguez, the acting president of Venezuela, is no longer subject to US sanctions

Following the kidnapping of her predecessor, Nicolás Maduro, and his wife by US forces, the United States has taken the most recent step in normalizing relations between the two nations by lifting sanctions on Venezuela’s acting president, Delcy Rodríguez. Following their kidnapping in January, the pair was brought to New York to face allegations of narcotics trafficking, to which they have both entered not guilty pleas.

The Treasury department stated on Wednesday that the sanctions against Rodríguez had been lifted, giving her more freedom to collaborate with American businesses and investors. In a statement, Rodríguez expressed optimism for US-Venezuelan ties without specifically mentioning the sanctions aimed at her. “We value President Donald Trump’s decision as a step toward normalising and strengthening relations between our countries,” she said on her Telegram channel after the Treasury’s announcement.

“We trust that this progress will allow for the lifting of current sanctions against our country, enabling us to build and guarantee an effective bilateral coopera-



tion agenda for the benefit of our people.” Rodríguez and her brother, Jorge, had the sanctions imposed during Trump’s first term over their alleged role in undermining Venezuelan democracy.

The siblings, along with other members of Maduro’s inner circle, were added to the Treasury’s list in September 2018, months after Maduro won re-election in a contest widely considered a sham because opposition politicians and parties were banned from participating. The US

Treasury said at the time: “Maduro has given Delcy Eloina Rodríguez Gomez and Jorge Jesus Rodríguez Gomez senior positions within the Venezuelan government to help him maintain power and solidify his authoritarian rule.” The current Trump administration, however, chose to work with Delcy Rodríguez, instead of Venezuela’s political opposition, after ousting Maduro. She has since led Venezuela’s cooperation with the US administration’s phased plan to turn the country around, pitching her oil-rich nation to international investors and opening up the country to private capital, international arbitrationnd scrutiny. Last month, the US recognised her as the “sole head of state” of Venezuela in an ongoing civil case in the US federal court.The US has lifted sanctions on large Venezuelan industries. In March, the US Treasury issued a broad authorisation allowing the state-owned Petróleos de Venezuela SA, or PDVSA, to directly sell oil to US companies and on global markets, a big shift after Washington for years had largely blocked dealings with Venezuela’s government and its oil sector. Maduro is legally still Venezuela’s president. In the hours after the US operation on 3 January, Venezuela’s high court declared his absence “temporary”, in effect eliminating the need for a speedy election and preserving the protections the office grants him under international law. The court ordered Rodríguez to take office for up to 90 days with the possibility of extending it to six months if approved by the national assembly, which is also controlled by the ruling party and is presided over by her brother.

Bangladesh At a turning point in politics?

The last year in Bangladesh has been characterized by significant unrest and instability, primarily under the interim administration of Muhammad Yunus, culminating in Tarique Rahman’s appointment as Prime Minister on February 17, 2026. In the recent elections, the BNP-led alliance emerged victorious with 212 out of 297 declared seats, while the Islamist Jamaat-e-Islami-led alliance secured 77 seats, marking a notable resurgence that raises concerns for the nation’s democratic framework. Despite the ban on the Awami League due to their exclusion from the electoral process, the National Citizen Party, pivotal in the past student-led uprising against Sheikh Hasina in 2024, has dwindled in influence.

The year 2025 saw an escalation of violence and mob culture, with alarming statistics reported by the Manabdhikar Shongskriti Foundation (MSF) and Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK), showing 428 lynching incidents resulting in 166 deaths, alongside 599 political violence incidents affecting over 5,600 individuals. Yunus’s administration failed to stem this tide and instead intensified repression against perceived political threats, particularly targeting Awami League supporters through operations like Operation Devil Hunt, which saw over 27,000 arrests in total across two phases.

Concerningly, while there were no fatalities attributed to proscribed Islamist groups for the year, 2025 did witness 57 arrests of Islamist radicals, indicating ongoing tensions within these factions. However, the Yunus government displayed a troubling trend of appeasement towards radical Islamist groups. The Manabdhikar Shongskriti Foundation (MSF) and Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) released alarming statistics in 2025 indicating an increase in mob culture and violence, including 599 incidents of political violence that affected over 5,600 people and 428 lynching incidents that resulted in 166 deaths.

India provides a roadmap, and agri-tech might unlock \$90 billion in Southeast Asia



Bengaluru: According to a recent research by Omnivore, Beanstalk AgTech, and Briter, Southeast Asia has one of the biggest unexplored agricultural technology prospects in the world, and India’s development in venture capital and governance offers one of the most instructive examples for unlocking it. In Southeast Asia, agriculture employs up to 40% of the labor force and accounts for 15% of GDP. According to the research “The

Opportunity for AgriTech Investment in Southeast Asia,” by 2033, the region’s GDP may increase by more than \$90 billion thanks to digitalization and agri-tech adoption. The research, which was created with assistance from FMO Ventures, IFC (World Bank Group), and the Rabo Foundation, provides a data-driven analysis of the agricultural and agri-tech environment in 13 regional markets. Drawing on Omnivore’s sector expertise, it identifies four verticals with the strongest momentum — digital value chains, inclusive agri-fintech, agrifood life sciences, and sustainable consumer brands.“We have spent over a decade investing in Indian agri-tech, watching the ecosystem mature through governance, exit

opportunities, and the hard work of building market infrastructure,” said Mark Kahn, managing partner at Omnivore. He said Southeast Asia’s agri-tech landscape is navigating a similar journey, and India’s experience offers a “genuine roadmap”. “The fragmentation is real, but so is the opportunity to uplift agricultural production and farmer communities across the region. Patient, disciplined capital that understands local market dynamics is what moves these ecosystems forward,” Kahn said. The report says the region has undergone a sharp correction as investors reassess the structural realities of agricultural markets, fragmented value chains, and the challenges of scaling ventures across Southeast and South Asia (SEASA).

Amazon will charge third-party merchants a 3.5% premium following a spike in fuel prices due to the Iran War

Mumbai: Due to a surge in fuel prices since the start of the Iranian war, Amazon is imposing a 3.5% fuel and logistical premium on third-party sellers utilizing its platform starting later this month. Many vendors who utilize Amazon’s fulfillment services will be subject to the temporary fee starting on April 17, the online giant confirmed in an email to The Associated Press on Thursday. “Elevated costs in fuel and logistics have increased the cost of operating across the industry,” the email message from Amazon stated. The Seattle-based business claimed to have absorbed these hikes thus far, but like

other large carriers, it imposes interim surcharges to partially offset costs when they stay high. It noted the charge is “meaningfully” lower than surcharges applied by other major carriers. “We remain committed to our selling partners’ success and to maintaining broad selection and low prices for customers,” Amazon added. Amazon’s fuel and logistics-related surcharge will apply to US and Canadian sellers using its Fulfillment by Amazon option. Starting May 2, the surcharge will take effect with sellers using the Buy with Prime and Multi-Channel Fulfillment options. Amazon joins a growing list of carriers imposing sur-

charges to recoup rising energy costs as the Iran war drags on. United Parcel Service and FedEx have increased their fuel surcharges. The United States Postal Service announced last

week it was imposing an 8 per cent fuel surcharge that would apply to packages to be shipped starting April 26. The surcharge would remain in place until January 17 2027, it said.



Income from investments made before April 1, 2017 will not be covered by GAAR



New Delhi: After a historic Supreme Court ruling in the Tiger Global case raised the possibility of retrospective scrutiny, the Center changed the income tax law to allow income arising from the transfer of investments made prior to April 1, 2017, to be outside the scope of

GAAR, allaying worries among international investors. Tiger Global must pay taxes on its \$1.6 billion sale of a stake in Flipkart in 2018, according to a January order by the Supreme Court. According to the judges, Tiger Global solely utilized its Mauritius units as “conduits,” and any benefits under an international treaty for investments made before 2017 would not be applicable. Buyout companies holding billions of dollars in assets will benefit from the Central Board of Direct Taxes’ change to the Income Tax Rules, 2026 regarding the non-applicability of the anti-avoidance provision under GAAR (General Anti Avoidance Rule) to investments made before to FY18.

After the Tiger Global verdict, many expressed concern that grandfathering laws might not be applicable. In order to shield gains acquired up to a particular cut-off date from later changes in tax regulations, the CBDT notification dated March 31 specifies the rules surrounding grandfathering provisions for specific investments and assets. The impact of this notification is that it preserves the tax

treatment for gains realised before April 1, 2017, allaying fears of retrospective taxation,” said Riaz Thingna, partner, Grant Thornton Bharat. India, one of the world’s fastest-growing major economies, has long attracted foreign investors such as private equity firms like Blackstone, KKR and Warburg Pincus.

But tax uncertainty has remained a key concern, from treaty interpretation and import scrutiny to prolonged litigation. In another high-profile tax saga, Vodafone won its case against a \$2 billion retrospective Indian tax demand in 2020 after more than a decade of legal battles with New Delhi, including international arbitration at The Hague. Some tax experts, however, advised caution. Niranjan Govindekar, partner, corporate tax, tax & regulatory Services at BDO India, observed that while protection to pre-2017 investments is provided, the protection has been spelt out only for transfer of investment.

“The income other than capital gains from the transfer of such investments could be subject to GAAR scrutiny,

such as dividend income,” he observed. According to Amit Baid, head of tax, BTG Advaya, the amendment appeared to address the uncertainty that emerged after the recent Tiger Global ruling on GAAR grandfathering. “While Tiger Global may remain relevant on broader questions of substance and treaty abuse, this amendment materially reduces its relevance on the issue of GAAR grandfathering for pre-1 April 2017 investments,” Baid noted. M&A tax partner at Nangia Global Advisors Sandeep Jhunjhunwala said that while the amendment appears to safeguard the income arising from investments made before April 1, 2017, the Tiger Global doctrine preserves GAAR’s reach over the broader arrangement. “This raises a critical question for investors — whether grandfathering protects the investment but leaves the holding structure exposed, thereby underscoring that the contours of India’s tax anti-avoidance regime continue to operate within a highly technical, fact-intensive matrix, marked by significant interpretive indeterminacy,” Jhunjhunwala said.

Smita Ojha and Amit Sharma are appointed VPs by Flipkart



New Delhi: According to The Economic Times, which cited sources, state-run Oil and Natural Gas Corp. (ONGC) is anticipated to spend between \$18 and \$20 billion to rent deepwater drilling rigs for its oil exploration program. In the face of geopolitical unpredictability, India is attempting to boost domestic production and lessen its reliance on imported energy. The tender for the same was floated by the energy exploration and production major last month. The corporation is looking to hire a combination of drillships and semi-submersible rigs for a maximum of five years, according to the article, which cited a senior industry figure. The official emphasized ONGC’s haste to increase deep-water activities by stating that the company wanted the rigs mobilized within 80 days. The move would be ONGC’s biggest hydrocarbon exploration programme. It comes as part of the Centre’s Samudra Manthan programme that aims to advance deep water exploration in India to enhance the country’s energy security.

The pre-bidding meeting for the tender was attended by major domestic and international drilling companies on March 20, the report added. Last year, the company had also said that it had commenced drilling of an ultra-deepwater well in Andaman. “We believe eastern offshore of India hides untapped hydrocarbon potential and ONGC is on a mission to harness it,” it said. Earlier this year, it also floated a tender for a technical support partnership (TSP) with global oil majors for its blocks in the western offshore as a part of its efforts to boost production. Chevron, an ongoing conflict in

Samman Capital plans to diversify and aim to rank in the top three NBFCs by FY29

Mumbai: Samman Capital announced on Tuesday that it intends to change from a pure-play mortgage financier to a diversified non-banking financial company (NBFC) as a result of International Holding Company’s (IHC) investment, in which the UAE-based company will hold a 63.3% stake following the open offer. By FY29, it hopes to rank among the top three in the segment by assets under management (AUM). By purchasing a 41.5% stake in Samman Capital through its affiliate Avenir Investment for Rs 8,850 crore, IHC will become the company’s promoter.

The lender has already received an initial tranche of Rs 5,652 crores (USD ₹600 million), and the remaining Rs 3,198 crores will be received within the next 18 months after the warrants are converted into fully paid equity shares. Avenir will also work on concluding the open offer within 30 days, which has been announced at Rs139 per fully paid equity share of Sammaan Capital. Upon completion of the open offer, and assuming full uptake in the open offer, IHC, through Avenir will hold 63.3 per cent stake in Sammaan Capital. “Sammaan Capital aspires to be in the top 3 NBFCs in India in terms of AUM, achieving best in class Return on Assets, and Return on Equity by FY 2029. Sammaan Capital

shall transition from a pureplay mortgage financier to a diversified NBFC by targeting mid to low-income borrowers through its expanding pan India branch network offering products going beyond mortgage loans to retail products including secured/unsecured MSME, personal loans, business loans, gold loans, etc”, the lender said in a statement. Currently, the lender offers only four products, but by FY29 it aims to expand its portfolio to over 15 products, significantly scale up its branch network to 1,500 from 200, and increase its workforce to 10,000 from 4,000, as it looks to serve nearly 50 million customers, up from 2 million at present. Sammaan Capital will be consolidated as a core investment under Judan Financial within the IHC group.

Judan Financial is IHC’s dedicated financial services subsidiary, managing over Rs 22.4 trillion. “Sammaan will not only anchor Judan’s presence in India but also have access to its asset management experience enabling it to create a large India focused alternate/private credit platform, forming a key pillar of this integrated international structure”, the lender said. As an IHC Group company, the lender will also look to leverage the strong AA sovereign credit rating of the United Arab Emirates to strengthen its domestic and international credit ratings. “We formally



welcome IHC as our Promoter. This partnership brings long-term, growth capital and deep global capabilities — both of which will be instrumental in helping us scale responsibly and reinforce our leadership position in the market. Having an institution of IHC’s standing as our parent company provides a strong foundation for the future — one that extends well beyond financial backing”, said Gagan Banga, MD&CEO, Saamman Capital, adding that over next few years, investments in people and digital landscape, especially artificial intelligence, shall

be augmented on priority. Syed Basar Shueb, CEO of IHC, said, “This milestone marks an important step in our long-term strategy to expand in India’s financial services sector. By becoming a promoter of Sammaan Capital, we are reinforcing our commitment to long-term value creation and supporting a platform that plays a critical role in enabling home ownership and access to credit. We see significant opportunities to enhance capabilities, including through the adoption of AI, and to contribute meaningfully to India’s financial ecosystem.”

Nazara Technologies would use preferential warrants to raise Rs.500 crore

New Delhi: Nazara Technologies, a gaming and media tech company, has announced a preferential issue of warrants worth ₹500 crore, pending approval from shareholders and regulators. The funds raised will mainly support strategic acquisitions, particularly the Bluetile and BestPlay transactions, and accelerate growth in existing business areas. Each warrant is



convertible into one equity share, priced at ₹260 each. The funding round includes contributions from various investors such as Riambel Capital PCC and S Gupta Family Investments. CEO Nitish Mittersain highlight-

ed that this capital infusion supports Nazara’s ambitious growth initiatives and aims to enhance their position in the global AI-enabled gaming market. Additionally, the company is extending an unsecured loan of ₹4 crore to its subsidiary, Smaaash Entertainment, in phases. Nazara’s shares closed at ₹232.35 on the Bombay Stock Exchange, declining by 3.25% for the day.

61.9% of Kwality Wall’s India is acquired by Magnum Ice Cream



New Delhi: The promoter classification has changed as a result of Magnum Ice Cream Netherlands’ successful acquisition of a 61.9% majority stake in Kwality Wall’s (India) Ltd (KWIL). According to the SPA and other relevant laws, the Incoming Promoter purchased the Sale Shares from the Outgoing Promoters on March 30, 2026,” KWIL stated in a regulatory filing. According to the Listing Regulations, the Incoming Promoter is now considered a “promoter” of the company and has gained authority over the business as a result of this transaction. The departing promoters have been moved from the “promoter” category to the public category in the meantime. The Magnum Ice Cream Company Netherlands BV

and Unilever PLC, among others, are parties to the Share Purchase Agreement (SPA) that was signed on June 25, 2025, which governs this acquisition.

The “incoming Promoter (Magnum) agreed to acquire an aggregate of 145.44 crore equity shares of KWIL” from the Outgoing Promoters Unilever, which amounts to 61.9% of the company’s equity share capital. Top-level changes have also been revealed by KWIL. Abhijit Bhattacharya’s appointment as the company’s Chairman and Additional (Non-Executive and Non-Independent) Director has been authorized. Ritesh Tiwari, the company’s Additional (Non-Executive and Non-Independent) Director, resigned.

The USFDA tentatively approves Lupin’s generic Sugammadex injectable

New Delhi: Pharmaceutical giant Lupin Ltd. announced on Tuesday that the US health agency had tentatively approved its generic version of Sugammadex injection, which is used to reverse the effects of muscle relaxants administered after surgery. According to Lupin’s regulatory filing, the US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) has tentatively approved the shortened new drug application for Sugammadex Injection of strengths 200 mg/2 mL (100 mg/

mL) and 500 mg/5 mL (100 mg/mL) single-dose vial.

It also stated that Lupin’s Sugammadex injection of the designated strengths has been tentatively authorized by the USFDA as a bioequivalent to Merck’s Bridion injection. It is used for the reversal of neuromuscular blockade induced by rocuronium bromide and vecuronium bromide in adults and pediatric patients aged 2 years and older undergoing surgery, the company said.



Democrats decry ‘smear’ as Trump FBI pushes for release of Eric Swalwell file

Washington: The Trump administration is reportedly advocating for the release of records from an FBI investigation involving Congressman Eric Swalwell and purported connections to a Chinese agent. This push comes as Swalwell gains traction in the race for California governor. According to a report by The Washington Post, FBI Director Kash Patel is leading this initiative despite a lack of public evidence indicating any misconduct by Swalwell. The investigation pertains to a decade-old case concerning a suspected spy who had cultivated ties with U.S. politicians and aided Swalwell in fundraising efforts. It has been noted by an FBI official that Swalwell has been cooperative throughout the investigation and is not considered a suspect; he ceased contact with the implicated individual after engaging with the FBI. Swalwell’s profile has grown significantly, particularly as he is competing in a large field of candidates for California governor, which includes at least eight Democrats and two Republicans aiming to replace Gavin Newsom. Recent polling indicates that Republicans currently lead the gubernatorial race, heightening concerns about a conservative victory in November’s general election, given that the top two candidates from the June primary will proceed to that election. A poll commissioned by the California Democratic Party revealed that conservative commentator

Steve Hilton and Riverside County Sheriff Chad Bianco received 16% and 14% support, respectively. Meanwhile, Swalwell, former congresswoman Katie Porter, and billionaire environmentalist Tom Steyer are in a tight race with approximately 10% backing each, with Swalwell notably receiving endorsements from influential labor groups like the California Teachers Association. In response to the Trump administration’s actions, Swalwell has claimed that this is an attempt to target him as a political opponent rather than a legitimate issue of governance. He stated, “The reason Trump is so desperately trying to stop me is not because I’m running for governor of California but because now I’m the favorite.” Furthermore, Swalwell’s legal team has sent a cease-and-desist letter to Patel, asserting that the push to release the investigation records is a blatant effort to discredit him and compromise his gubernatorial aspirations. Prominent Democrats, including Senators Adam Schiff and Jamie Raskin, have condemned this initiative by the administration. Raskin characterized it as a misuse of the FBI for political ends, stating, “The FBI is attempting to smear a sitting US congressman, candidate for governor, and vocal opponent of the president. What the hell does that have to do with law enforcement? This is plain weaponization of the FBI for partisan political purposes.”



Donald Trump tells his aides that even if the Strait of Hormuz stays closed, he is willing to end the Iran War



Washington: The Wall Street Journal reports that US President Donald Trump is prepared to end the US military campaign against Iran even if the Strait of Hormuz is still mostly closed. According to the story, Trump and his advisors have determined that a difficult operation to completely reopen the vital canal might cause the fight to last much longer than his desired four to six weeks. According to officials quoted in the report, the administration is instead concentrated on accomplishing its primary military goals, which include weakening Iran’s navy, degrading its missile stockpiles, and restricting its defense industry and nuclear capabilities, before reducing hostilities and depending more on diplomacy. According to the report, Trump has given conflicting public statements about the

significance of the strait, at times threatening to bomb Iranian energy infrastructure if it is not reopened and at other times implying that securing maritime access is more important for other nations than for the United States. According to Secretary of State Marco Rubio, “it will be up to Iran to decide” whether the strait is reopened or whether a coalition of nations will guarantee freedom of navigation after the present phase of military aims is finished in a matter of weeks. The Strait of Hormuz remains a key pressure point in the conflict as around 20 per cent of the world’s oil supply passes through the narrow waterway, making any prolonged closure a major concern for global markets. Multiple countries are already grappling with supply disruptions that previously flowed freely through the strait. Shortages are being felt across sectors dependent on energy-linked commodities such as fertiliser and helium used in semiconductor production. Analysts cited by the report warn that continued disruption could deepen economic strain globally, as oil prices have surged past \$100 per barrel amid uncertainty about the duration of the crisis. Suzanne Maloney, an Iran expert and vice president at the Brookings Institution, was quoted as saying that ending military operations before ensuring safe passage through the strait would be “unbelievably irresponsible,” adding that global energy markets cannot shield the United States from economic consequences. Even as the White House

signals interest in shortening the conflict timeline, US military deployments in the region have continued. The report mentioned that the USS Tripoli and the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit have entered the Middle East, while elements of the 82nd Airborne Division have also been ordered to the region. The administration is also considering sending an additional 10,000 ground troops. White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said the administration was “working towards” normal operations in the Strait but did not list reopening it as one of the primary military objectives.

Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent suggested that the United States or a multinational coalition could escort tankers through the strait if necessary, indicating that responsibility for ensuring safe passage may increasingly shift to allies. ntral to Tehran’s economy.

Trump has suggested the possibility of targeting or even seizing the island if diplomatic efforts fail to produce progress on reopening the strait. “Maybe we take Kharg Island, maybe we don’t,” Trump said, according to AP, indicating that multiple options remain under consideration. AP reported that US forces have already struck targets on the island, including air defence systems, radar infrastructure and a hovercraft base. Analysts warn that deploying ground troops there could expose American forces to retaliatory strikes from the Iranian mainland due to the island’s proximity. Michael Eisenstadt of

the Washington Institute for Near East Policy told AP that occupying Kharg Island could put US troops at risk because Iran could launch drones, missiles or artillery strikes from nearby coastal positions. Danny Citrinowicz of Israel’s Institute for National Security Studies told AP that escalation involving Kharg Island could trigger retaliation from Iran or its regional allies, including Houthi fighters in Yemen, potentially expanding the conflict across the Persian Gulf and Red Sea. Some experts cited by AP suggest that a maritime blockade targeting Iranian oil shipments could achieve similar economic pressure without requiring a ground operation. Clayton Seigle of the Centre for Strategic and International Studies said intercepting tankers at sea could restrict Iran’s oil revenues while reducing risks to US forces. However, analysts caution that even capturing Kharg Island may not decisively cripple Iran’s economy, as Tehran may still find ways to continue limited exports, AP reported. According to The Wall Street Journal, Trump’s approach reflects competing priorities between limiting the duration of the conflict and ensuring long-term stability in global energy markets. While officials believe Iran’s ability to control the strait could weaken as its military capabilities are degraded, the timeline for restoring normal shipping remains uncertain. The report claimed that the administration had anticipated the possibility of Iran attempting to close the strait following initial strikes.

Israel enacts legislation requiring Palestinians found guilty of deadly attacks to be executed

Jerusalem: Israel’s parliament has passed a law imposing the death penalty for Palestinians convicted of fatal attacks classified as terrorism by military courts. This legislation has faced significant criticism from European countries and human rights groups, which label it as discriminatory. Key provisions include that those sentenced to death will be isolated in separate facilities, with executions conducted within 90 days of sentencing. Proponents, including national security minister Itamar

Ben-Gvir, have promoted the law as a necessary measure for national security, despite warnings that it may breach international law and expose Israeli officials to potential legal consequences. Opponents, including Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and human rights organizations, regard the law as institutionalized discrimination, while international bodies like the UN and the EU have called for its withdrawal, citing violations of the right to life and judicial fairness.



Australia will eliminate credit card and debit card levies by October

Canberra: The Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA) has announced new reforms that will abolish debit and credit card surcharges by October, shifting the financial burden onto banks to mitigate cost-of-living pressures. This change targets the fees approximately 16% of businesses currently impose to cover transaction service costs, amounting to around \$1.6 billion annually for consumers. The RBA also plans to reduce the cap on fees businesses can be charged by banks, potentially saving them \$910 million each year. Treasurer Jim Chalmers highlighted that Australians resent these charges, emphasizing the reforms’ aim to alleviate consumer expenses without the need for parlia-



mentary legislation. While businesses will still incur operational costs from payment systems, the removal of surcharges might necessitate a one-time price increase, estimated at 0.1% according to the RBA.

The Australian Hotels Association criticized the ruling, questioning its effectiveness in reducing consumer costs. A survey accompanying the RBA’s review revealed that a major-

ity of consumers prefer transparent pricing, with three-quarters deeming surcharging unnecessary. Although banks and firms argue that surcharging is essential for covering payment system expenses, the RBA’s review indicates broader benefits for consumers and businesses, albeit at the expense of banking revenues. Some banks may increase credit card fees and interest rates while cutting rewards as a direct consequence of the reform, which aims to reduce reliance on debit card surcharges. Non-bank payment providers, such as Square and Tyro, have welcomed these changes, citing improved pricing clarity for businesses in selecting providers.

False reports claim that Somaliland demanded Ilhan Omar’s extradition

Hargeisa: Several news outlets, including Fox News and the New York Post, incorrectly reported that Somaliland’s government had called for the extradition of Ilhan Omar, based on a post from an unofficial X account.

This account, @RepOfSomaliland, was a reaction to claims by JD Vance about Omar committing immigration fraud, which she has denied. Somaliland’s foreign ministry stated the account is not a government channel and advised relying on official sources for accurate information. In a

follow-up statement, Somaliland’s ministry emphasized the necessity of using authorized channels for news. Somaliland, a self-declared republic since 1991, is unrecognized internationally, except by Israel, while Somalia still claims it. After erroneous reporting, Fox News revised their article to clarify that the account was not verified.

Vance, in an interview, accused Omar of immigration fraud and hinted at potential legal action with White House adviser Stephen Miller. Omar’s staff dismissed

Vance’s claims as unfounded. This incident is part of a broader context where Omar has faced misinformation, especially regarding her ties to Somalia, amidst heightened anti-Somali rhetoric from political figures. Moreover, remarks from former President Trump have incited hostility against Minnesota’s Somali community, prompting concern from advocacy groups like the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR). Omar, who became a U.S. citizen at 17 after arriving as a refugee, expressed that the



inflammatory rhetoric could lead to violence, which has reportedly manifested in threats against her life. In a recent incident, a man was charged after spraying her with a liquid during a town hall, believed to be motivated by similar xenophobic rhetoric from Trump.

Meningitis outbreak in and why students are at risk



London: A university student and a student from a local school have died as a result of a meningitis outbreak in southeast England, leading public health officials to swiftly implement medical measures. UK Health Secretary Wes Streeting called the epidemic in the county of Kent “unprecedented” on Wednesday due to the large number of cases that have emerged in such a short period of time. By Wednesday, there were 20 confirmed cases, up from the first on Friday. The majority of them were associated with the University of Kent in Canterbury’s ancient Cathedral City. Antibiotics and a vaccination against the strain found to be the source of the illness are being supplied to students, many of whom have returned home for an end-of-term break. With public health officials highly visible, and students jittery, here is what to know: Meningitis is an infection of the membranes around the brain and spinal cord and can be caused by either viruses or bacteria. Contracting meningitis can lead to a severe blood infection that is called meningococcal sepsis, which often manifests itself as a rash. It can be life-threatening if not treated rapidly. Meningitis can also lead to limb amputations. The most dangerous outbreaks are usually a result of bacteria. The majority of the cases in Canterbury have been confirmed as stemming from a bacterial infection, or meningitis B. Meningitis is a rare disease in the UK — around 350 a year — but it can spread in tight communities, such as university dormitories. Students are seen as particularly vulnerable as the bacteria is often lying dormant in the nose or throat of individuals and can spread through coughing, kissing or sharing drinks and vapes. Experts said many of those affected in the outbreak went to a nightclub in Canterbury from March 5–7. Doctors across the country have been told to prescribe antibiotics to anyone who visited Club Chemistry during those dates in addition to students at the University of Kent. “This is so that anyone who has travelled home, or away from Kent, can easily access this important preventative treatment close to them,” it said. Given the recent memory of the COVID-19 pandemic, people in Kent have started donning masks and keeping their distance from each other. On the medical front, antibiotics are considered the most effective treatment to limit the spread. So far, more than 2,500 doses have been given, including to some of those who visited Club Chemistry. A vaccination against the meningitis B strain is also being offered. The vaccine only became part of the UK’s childhood immunisation program since 2015, so students at the University of Kent wouldn’t have been vaccinated, though some may have taken it privately. The UK Health Security Agency, or UKHSA, said there are enough supplies of the two-dose vaccine course, though some pharmacies have reported struggling to obtain stocks for people who want to pay privately. The number of cases is expected to rise because the infection’s incubation period can be up to 14 days. Scientists have said it’s too soon to assess whether the strain in Kent is more virulent than others. The strain is undergoing whole genome sequencing to assess any potential differences. The UKHSA issued an alert for the state-run National Health Service across England to look out for signs and symptoms of meningitis. However, this does not signal that the outbreak is spreading nationwide.

Tourism in Morocco is booming – except here



Strolling through the crowd-free lanes in Rabat’s old medina is a sharp contrast to navigating the narrow, labyrinthine streets swarming with tourists in Marrakesh. Here, it’s so calm that you can hear waves from the Atlantic that rhythmically lap against the nearby shoreline. Swaying palm trees and towering stone minarets poke their heads above the Moorish arches, adding a pop of color to the spotlessly clean whitewashed alleyways. “The first thing you notice [in Rabat’s medina] isn’t just what’s here, but also what’s missing,” says Farah Cherif D’Ouezzan, founder and director of Rabat’s Center for Cross-Cultural Learning. “It is almost too quiet, as locals simply go about their day with no grabby shopkeepers, loud moped horns or oppressively crowded alleyways.” Tourism in Morocco is booming. In 2023 the nation set out on an ambitious goal to double its number of international visitors to 26 million by 2030 when it co-hosts the FIFA World Cup. In 2025, nearly 20 million visitors descended on the North African nation. But while destinations like Marrakesh have seen a 40% year-over-year surge in overnight stays, visitor numbers to Rabat remain relatively flat at just 3%. Despite being Morocco’s political and cultural capital, this fortified Unesco-inscribed city has yet to generate the same buzz. But that may be about to change. In late 2025, Unesco named Rabat its 2026 World Book Capital to honour its long literary heritage. Home to 54 publishing houses, a slew of historic libraries, indie bookshops and one of

the largest book fairs on the continent, the city is launching a year-long celebration with book events, writing workshops and reading marathons – giving bookish travellers another reason to visit this calm, off-the-beaten-path capital. “It has everything you would expect from a capital with modern infrastructure, cleanliness and a rich mix of history,” says Redouane El Mouatasim, Intrepid Travel’s general manager for Morocco. “Investments in public transit, including expanded inner-city trams, taxis and high-speed train access linking Casablanca and Tangier, are also making it easier for travellers to visit.” D’Ouezzan says Rabat’s languid



feel and lack of twisting alleyways or pushy vendors may also appeal to travellers. “You can actually wander the streets without fear of getting lost,” she says. “And even if you do, a quick turn or two and you’re back on track.” This sense of calm defines Rabat. It started as a ribat (fortified monastery) under the 12th-Century Almohad Empire and later became a centre of Islamic learning. The city’s strategic importance along the Atlantic coast lured the Moriscos (exiled Muslims from Spain) to settle here in the early 17th Century. As skilled artisans, traders and shipbuilders, the Moriscos facilitated trade and diplomacy with Europe and transformed Rabat into a flourishing international city. Rabat was chosen as Morocco’s capital in 1912 when it was under French colonial rule, and the French set out on an ambitious urban planning programme that differentiates the capital from other Moroccan cities. While preserving the



the Udayas fortress (with panoramic ocean views) and the French-created Andalusian Gardens nod to the city’s deeply layered past. In the New City and surrounding areas, the 44m-tall Hassan Tower and nearby Mausoleum of Mohammed V (who led Morocco to independence) are symbols of national pride. Elsewhere, the Mohammad VI Museum of Modern Contemporary Art features the work of more than 200 modern Moroccan artists, and is the first museum in Africa powered by solar energy. “You can feel centuries of history in our streets, monuments and museums, all while enjoying the cool ocean breeze and the city’s surprisingly green vibe,” says D’Ouezzan. Dutch photographer Leonie Zaytoun, who lives in Marrakesh with her Moroccan husband and young son, recalls being surprised by the city’s orderliness. “I never really paid attention to Rabat until I had to visit the Dutch Embassy there and was shocked at how walkable it was – even with a stroller,” she says. “You can wander along the picturesque Corniche (riverwalk) Bouregreg, admir-

ing the white-and-blue houses, visit the fragrant Andalusian Gardens or enjoy a refreshing mint tea and traditional almond cookies in Café des Oudayas with a view of the ocean.” Rabat’s food scene is marked by its fresh, seasonal seafood. In the medina, shopkeepers sell take-with-you bites like maakouda (fluffy potato patties) with freshly grilled sardines and rziza (a stringy bread that unravels like a turban, served with honey). If you meander along the whitewashed buildings, aromas from clay tagines filled with fresh clams guide you to small food stalls serving midday meals like seafood chermoula (a North African marinade made with herbs, garlic, lemon juice and spices).

D’Ouezzan recommends visitors try Rabat’s version of the traditional pastilla (sweet and savory pie typically stuffed with pigeon meat or chicken) made with fresh seafood. “[It] brings the flavours of the sea to a traditional Moroccan dish,” she says. Beyond the literary-themed Unesco celebrations, travellers will



find small, independently owned bookshops like Bouquiniste and Bab El Had. Inside Bouquiniste El Azizi, owner Mohammed Aziz has been selling books in dozens of languages for the past 43 years and always draws a crowd eager to browse his floor-to-ceiling-stacked titles. Institutions like the National Library of the Kingdom of Morocco, National Archives of Morocco and the French Institute of Rabat host public lectures, book launches, author talks

and programming that promotes a reading culture, especially for women and children. Still, D’Ouezzan feels that Rabat is unlikely to be overrun by tourists. “This is not because it lacks appeal, but because its vibe is fundamentally different,” she says. El Mouatasim also notes that Rabat’s slower, deliberate pace of life may appeal to visitors who value a more unhurried travel experience. As Zaytoun says, “Rabat has the charm of Morocco without the chaos or frenzy of Marrakesh, and you can still feel the allure of Africa in every corner, every street and every meal at a pace that is refreshing and relaxing.”

New cancer drug shows promise, made brain tumour almost disappear in 5 days



Glioblastoma is an extremely aggressive kind of brain cancer that has shown promising outcomes when treated with a novel CAR-T cell treatment. The first three patients treated in a phase 1 clinical trial named INCIPENT in 2024 showed notable tumor reductions, according to researchers from the Mass General Cancer Center in the United States. The New England Journal of Medicine released the study, which assessed CARv3-TEAM-E T cell treatment, a medication intended for individuals with recurrent glioblastoma. Patients reported significant tumor shrinking, including one instance of near-complete tumor remission, within days after a single treatment. Glioblastoma is an extremely aggressive kind of brain cancer that has shown promising

outcomes when treated with a novel CAR-T cell treatment. The first three patients treated in a phase 1 clinical trial named INCIPENT in 2024 showed notable tumor reductions, according to researchers from the Mass General Cancer Center in the United States. The New England Journal of Medicine released the study, which assessed CARv3-TEAM-E T cell treatment, a medication intended for individuals with recurrent glioblastoma. Patients reported significant tumor shrinking, including one instance of near-complete tumor remission, within days after a single treatment. This approach combines CAR-T therapy with bispecific antibodies called T-cell engaging antibody molecules (TEAMs). It aims to address the challenge of tumour het-

erogeneity by targeting different cancer cell populations within glioblastoma. The therapy is directly injected into the brain to maximise its effect. The trial involved three patients aged between 57 and 74, all of whom had previously undergone standard treatments including radiation and chemotherapy. One patient showed a rapid but temporary tumour regression, another had a sustained reduction of over 60 per cent lasting more than six months, and the third exhibited near-complete tumour shrinkage within 5 days. Patients tolerated the treatment well, with expected side effects such as fever and altered mental status shortly after infusion. All were monitored in hospital before being discharged. Despite initial positive responses, tumour progression eventually occurred in all cases, partly due to the limited persistence of the CAR-TEAM cells. The research team is now exploring strategies to extend the durability of the therapy’s effects, including multiple infusions or preconditioning with chemotherapy. The study reflects a collaborative effort led by experts at Massachusetts General Hospital to translate laboratory discoveries into clinical treatments. While this therapy has not yet cured patients, the researchers emphasise that these early results mark important progress and hope to improve outcomes for those with this difficult-to-treat brain cancer.

Doctors Explain Why Season Change Is Making You Sick

You’re not alone if you’ve recently experienced persistent coughing, sneezing, exhaustion, or inexplicable allergies. One of the most frequent causes of illness is seasonal variations, yet many people are unaware that these shifts can subtly impair your immune system. Additionally, the risk is far greater than it appears for certain individuals. According to Dr. Ajay Kumar Gupta, Senior Director & Head of Internal Medicine at Max Super Speciality Hospital in Vaishali, “the body is constantly trying to adapt to changes in temperature, humidity, and air quality during seasonal transitions.” “This change may momentarily impair immunity, leaving people more susceptible to allergies and infections.” From a medical perspective, these environmental fluctuations can disrupt the body’s natural balance. Sudden exposure to varying conditions, such as heat, cold, pollution, or allergens can make it easier for viruses and irritants to affect the respiratory system. “The immune system may become slightly compromised during this time, which is why people experience more frequent coughing, sneezing, and allergic reactions,” explains Dr Gupta. Certain groups are particularly vulnerable during seasonal changes. “Children and older adults are at higher risk because their immune systems are either still developing or have weakened over time,” says Dr Gupta. “This



makes it harder for them to fight off infections effectively.” Individuals with chronic health conditions also need to be cautious. “People with conditions such as type 2 diabetes, asthma, cardiovascular disease, or chronic kidney disease often have a reduced immune response, making them more prone to infections and slower recovery,” he adds. Those sensitive to allergens or prone to respiratory irritation may also experience worsening symptoms during this period, especially when pollen counts and pollution levels rise. “When the immune system is compromised, the body becomes more reactive to allergens and more susceptible to viral infections,” notes Dr Gupta. Daily habits also play a crucial role in determining how well the body copes with seasonal changes. “Lack of sleep, high stress levels, and irregular eating habits can significantly weaken immunity,” says Dr Gupta. “Elevated stress hormones like cortisol suppress immune function, while poor sleep affects the body’s ability to repair and defend itself.” Nutritional deficiencies can further increase vulnerability. “Inadequate intake of essential vitamins, especially Vitamin D and Vitamin C, can make individuals more prone to falling sick,” he explains. Frequent shifts between different environments can also impact health.

Which Is Better for Your Heart: Ghee, Oil, or Carbohydrates?

You may believe that you are eating a healthy diet by consuming a lot of carbohydrates, cutting back on fats, and selecting “light” oils. However, what if some of these behaviors are truly more detrimental than beneficial? What counts most in terms of heart health is not just what you eat, but also how much, how often, and how it is prepared. Heart health is largely dependent on nutrition, but there is a lot of misunderstanding about what actually makes a “healthy” diet. “The most crucial element in maintaining heart health is diet. Your heart cannot be healthy if your diet is unhealthy, according to Dr. Amitabh Poonia, Consultant Cardiology at Kailash Deepak Hospital. He believes that finding balance is more important than cutting out specific items. Including everything the body requires in the proper amounts is what constitutes a healthy diet. “Anything in excess is bad, and anything in deficiency is just as bad,” he says. All nec-



essary macronutrients and sufficient amounts of vitamins and minerals are part of a balanced diet. According to Dr. Poonia, 40–60% of your daily caloric intake should come from carbohydrates, 20–30% from fats, and 10–30% from protein. “Fruits, vegetables, and vital micronutrients must also be a part of your diet.” It’s critical to keep this equilibrium. “Anything that is excessive or deficient is unhealthy.” “A heart-healthy diet starts with balance,” he continues. One of the most common misconceptions is that fat should be avoided altogether. “This is not true. Fat is an essential component of the diet and plays a key role in metabolism and various bodily functions,” says Dr. Poonia. Fats are necessary not just for heart health but also for the brain and nervous system. However, moderation is critical. “Fat should be included in the diet, but it should not exceed 20–30% of daily caloric intake,” he advises.

Ghee vs Vegetable Oil: Which Is Better?
Another widely debated topic is whether ghee is harmful. “The idea that ghee is bad for the heart is incorrect,” says Dr. Poonia. “In fact, when compared to vegetable oils, ghee can be equal to or even better from a heart-health perspective.” However, the emphasis remains on quantity and usage. “Neither ghee nor vegetable oil is inherently good or bad, it is the amount and method of use that matter,” he explains. What makes fats harmful is improper usage. “Deep frying and repeatedly reheating oil or ghee leads to oxidation, and oxidised fats are extremely harmful for the heart,” he warns. “Never reuse oil or ghee multiple times. If it has been used once or twice, it is better to discard it,” says Dr Poonia.

Carbohydrates: The Hidden Risk

While fats often get blamed, excessive carbohydrates can be more harmful. “If you reduce fat or protein, you tend to increase carbohydrates but excess carbohydrates are actually worse than excess fat,” explains Dr Poonia. High carbohydrate intake can increase the risk of diabetes and contribute to the formation of bad cholesterol. “Carbohydrates should be consumed in moderation and preferably on the lower side of the recommended range,” he advises.

Why Protein Matters

Protein is often overlooked but plays an important role in a balanced diet. “Protein should make up 10–30% of your daily intake,” says Dr Poonia. “If you need to increase one component, it is generally better to increase protein rather than fats or carbohydrates.” However, moderation still applies. “Excess protein is also not advisable. Balance remains the key,” he adds.

Which Cooking Oil Should You Use?

There is no single “best” oil for heart health. “No one oil is superior. The important factor is purity and quality,” says Dr. Poonia. He recommends rotating different fats. “It is better to use a mix of oils and ghee in rotation rather than sticking to just one type,” he explains. However, some oils should be avoided. “Palm oil is not recommended as it oxidises quickly and its quality deteriorates on heating,” he notes.

Don’t Forget Fruits and Vegetables

Beyond macronutrients, fresh produce is essential for heart health. “Your diet must include 2–4 servings of fruits and vegetables daily, including raw salads,” says Dr. Poonia. “They should always be properly washed and cleaned before consumption.” A heart-healthy diet is not about restriction, it is about balance, quality, and mindful consumption. “There is no single ‘good’ or ‘bad’ food. What matters is how much you eat and how you prepare it,” concludes Dr Poonia.

ENTERTAINMENT

Bollywood’s defeatist hero has been reinvented by Ranveer Singh’s Jaskirat

Mumbai: The hero in Hindi cinema is tall, unbeaten, and emotionally unbreakable. Even when he loses, he rises like a phoenix and wins again in the last act. That is the blueprint, the formula. But Dhurandhar: The Revenge reverses the pattern. In the end, Ranveer Singh’s Jaskirat Singh Rangī, often known as Hamza, does not win in the traditional sense. Even though Jaskirat, also known as Jassi, wins the battle against terror for India, he loses his identity, his family, the love of his life, and his emotional stability. Ironically, he becomes one of the coolest heroes of modern Hindi cinema in the process. The defeat-



ist hero self-destructs instead of giving up. He prepares for the next battle in life while fighting in silence. Separation and longing are at the core of Jassi’s emotional graph. He lives in Pakistan apart from his spouse, Yalina (Sara Arjun), and their child. At the beginning of Dhurandhar 2, Ranveer’s

Jaskirat has already experienced a personal loss back home in India. He is shown in the movie as a guy battling while carrying irreversible emotional wounds rather than as a victorious warrior.

The character’s distinguishing strength is this dual loss. Hamza is motivated by loss,

loneliness, and emotional tiredness rather than just retaliatory aggression. His strikes are not as powerful as his silences. In a time when hypermasculine invincibility rules the film industry, Hamza stands out for his fragility. Scars are more relatable to today’s viewers than swagger. Hindi cinema

has explored defeatist protagonists well before the Dhurandhar films, with notable examples like Guru Dutt’s Pyaasa and Amitabh Bachchan’s roles in Faraar and Aakhee Raasta.

These characters typically portrayed tragic icons shaped by personal reasons for their defeat. In contrast, the contemporary character Jaskirat, played by Ranveer Singh, represents a modern take on this archetype. His emotional struggles are framed with a cinematic style that emphasizes restraint and psychological depth, as he sacrifices everything for a greater cause, unlike traditional heroes who symbolize despair.

The ferocious Riteish Deshmukh plays Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj

Mumbai: The teaser for the period drama “Raja Shivaji,” released on March 31, 2026, showcases actor Riteish Deshmukh in the lead role as the Maratha warrior king Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, who fights against the Mughals.

Directed by Deshmukh, the teaser features a runtime of 2 minutes and 31 seconds and highlights the battles between the Maratha empire and the Mughals. Genelia Deshmukh, Riteish’s wife, portrays Saibai, while other notable actors include Sanjay Dutt as Afzal Khan, Abhishek Bachchan as Sambhaji Shahaji Bhosale, and Mahesh Manjrekar as Lakhuji Jadhav. The film traces Shivaji Bhonsale’s journey as he de-



fies powerful empires to establish the Maratha kingdom, emphasizing themes of Swarajya (self-rule) through strategic brilliance and resilience. The teaser also presents visually stunning battle sequences, horses, elephants, and royal pal-

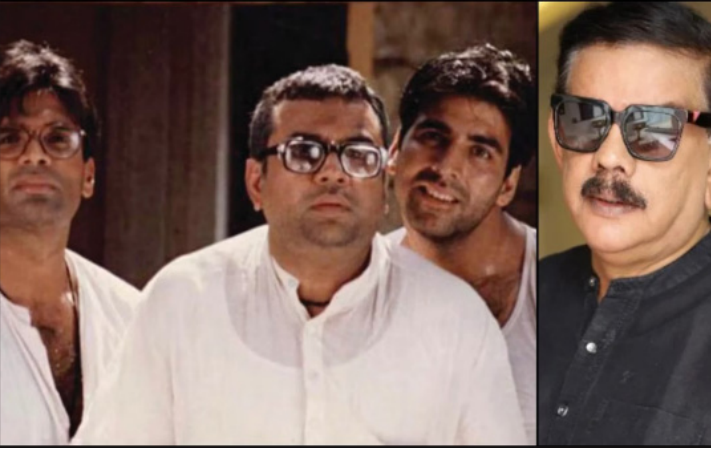
aces, showcasing rich world-building.

The score is composed by the musical duo Ajay-Atul, with cinematography handled by Santosh Sivan. Co-produced by Jyoti Deshpande and Genelia Deshmukh under Jio Studios and

Mumbai Film Company, “Raja Shivaji” is set for a worldwide theatrical release in Marathi, Hindi, and Telugu on May 1, 2026, coinciding with Maharashtra Day, a state holiday celebrating the formation of Maharashtra.

Priyadarshan claims that Hera Pheri 3 is in legal limbo and is working to resolve it

Mumbai: Hera Pheri 3’s future is still up in the air. Filmmaker Priyadarshan said in an exclusive interview with India Today that the highly anticipated sequel is still on hold due to ongoing legal concerns. “There are still some legal issues.” We’re working to resolve it. He gave a calm but optimistic update on the franchise’s state, saying, “Once that is resolved, then we’ll proceed with that movie.” The announcement follows years of speculation about the third episode of the legendary comedy series that started with Hera Pheri and continued with Phir Hera Pheri. One of the most enduring comedy brands in Hindi cinema is the Hera Pheri franchise, which stars Akshay Kumar, Suniel Shetty, and Paresh Rawal. Raju, Shyam, and Baburao, three of its characters, have left the screen and entered online culture. But there have



been many obstacles in the way of a third installment. Hera Pheri 3 is up against significant contractual, financial, and legal obstacles as of early 2026. Producer Firoz Nadiadwala is not the owner of the franchise rights, according to a copyright claim made by Seven Arts International, a South Indian

production company. Production on the eagerly anticipated movie may be halted as a result of the disagreement, which has created even another level of uncertainty. The situation builds on years of turbulence, with earlier reports pointing to disagreements over rights ownership, contractual ob-

ligations, and creative control. At various points, the conflict reportedly escalated into legal notices and public disagreements between stakeholders. But Priyadarshan’s return to the franchise had sparked renewed excitement, given that he directed the 2000 original that laid the foundation for its cult status. His association with the third film is seen as a creative reset of sorts, especially after years of development limbo.

When asked about returning to comedy, he responded with trademark humility and humour: “Let’s see. You also pray that I’ll have the brain to do it.” For now, Hera Pheri 3 remains in a holding pattern. With legal issues yet to be resolved, the film’s production timeline continues to be uncertain. But Priyadarshan’s update makes one thing clear: the project is not off the table.

Alia Bhatt seeks Sadhguru’s advice on Raha



Mumbai: Actor Alia Bhatt recently sought parenting guidance from spiritual leader Sadhguru, asking how to assess whether she is raising her daughter Raha Kapoor well. Sadhguru responded with a brief summary. Snippets of the conversation that took place in Chennai were posted on social media by Sadhguru. Since then, the incident has gone viral, with viewers responding to the actor’s open communication with the spiritual leader.

Sadhguru responded, “A worried parent is not a good parent,” to Bhatt’s suggestion that parents will always worry. A broader conversation on parenting and thinking was sparked by his comment, which made everyone in the room giggle. In the video shared online, Sadhguru emphasised that anxiety does not contribute positively to parenting. His response came after Bhatt asked for “one advice” for parents concerned about whether they are

doing enough. The interaction was part of an event hosted by Jain International Trade Organization in Chennai. Social media posts from attendees and organisers indicated that the session was held at The Leela Palace. Photos and videos from the event, including a moment of prayer before the discussion began, have been widely circulated online. Fans have also expressed anticipation for the full conversation to be released. Bhatt married

actor Ranbir Kapoor in April 2022 after several years of dating. The couple welcomed their daughter, Raha, in November the same year. The actor has occasionally shared glimpses of her daughter on social media but has also requested privacy around her family life in recent months. Bhatt was last seen in Jigra (2024) and is set to appear in upcoming projects including Alpha and Love & War, alongside actors such as Vicky Kaushal and Bobby Deol.

Nayanthara will act with Salman Khan after Shah Rukh Khan

New Delhi: Salman Khan will star opposite Nayanthara in his upcoming action drama film, directed by Vamshi Paidipally and produced by Dil Raju under Sri Venkateswara Creations. The project was officially announced on March 31, with enthusiastic posts from both the production team and Paidipally, who praised Nayanthara’s grace and strength. This collaboration marks the first time Khan, Paidipally, and Raju are working together, although Paidipally and Raju have previously created five successful films. Nayanthara, known as Lady Superstar for her extensive work in South Indian cinema, has been a prominent figure in the industry for over two decades, having also made her Hindi film debut in 2023 with Shah Rukh Khan in Jawan. Production for the new film is set to begin next month, with additional details to follow. Nayanthara’s recent works include her role in the Telugu film Mana Shankara Vara Prasad Garu and she is set to appear next in Toxic: A Fairy Tale For Grown-Ups, alongside Yash.



Fans voice concerns over security as Salman Khan is surrounded at an event amid death threats



Mumbai: Superstar Salman Khan took a break from his busy schedule to go to an event in Mumbai, but people are talking about more than just his appearance. A number of the outing’s films have appeared online, but one in particular has drawn notice for an unsettling reason. The actor is seen in the footage trying to navigate through the mayhem as a throng of enthusiastic fans mob him. On social media, the excitement has raised new wor-

ries about Salman’s safety. Salman was present at the President Cup 2026 event on Tuesday at Thane’s Dadoji Konddev Stadium. Salman wore a casual outfit for the event, choosing black pants and a brown top.

In the videos, Salman is seen arriving at the event with a security convoy, but his team appears to struggle to control the massive crowd that had gathered to catch a glimpse of the star. As he made his way off the

stage, visuals circulating on social media show him being surrounded by a sea of fans, many attempting to get close and click photographs with him.

Despite the presence of security personnel, the clip shows them struggling to hold the crowd back and create space for Salman to move.

The team is seen pushing people aside as eager fans try to reach out to the actor. Amid the chaotic scene, Salman was seen keeping calm and smiling while trying to find some space to move out. Some videos also capture the actor leaving the venue in a convoy of police vehicles, but even then, the security team appeared to struggle to keep the crowd at bay. Several fans were seen with their phones out, trying to photograph Salman as he made his exit, with a few getting close and even leaning against his car window for a better shot. As videos of the chaos surfaced on social media, many people began questioning the arrangements in place and raised concerns over Salman’s security. Salman’s security has been a point of discussion ever since he got multiple death threats.

Shweta Tripathi talks about Mirzapur

Mumbai: Meeting an actor who welcomes you with the biggest smile and a hello that conveys the excitement of a long-lost friend is rare. Gagamini ‘Golu’ Gupta from Mirzapur is the most remembered of Shweta Tripathi’s many roles. She showed us who she really was as we sat down for an exclusive chat. She quoted her father, an IAS officer, as, “Do whatever you want as long as you’re learning and growing.” Her mom was a retired educator. We had an open discussion on Mirzapur: The Movie, Season 4, co-star Ali Fazal, and other topics when the actor returned to her hometown of Delhi. She mentioned that while films like Masaan, Haraamkhor and Gone Kesh hold personal significance, people often ask about her commercial projects. “I want to tell the kind of stories that evoke feelings and emotions, that make you raise your hand to ask questions,” she explained. After Mirzapur, she said, those questions stopped because it’s “the most commercial project anybody can ever be a part of”. Reflecting on Mirzapur’s impact, she recalled a taxi driver recognising her and asking, “Season 4 kab aa raha hai? (When is Season 4 coming?)” She said, “Now that is what Mirzapur has done. It has made Golu a part of every household!” Shweta shared her appreciation for how Mirzapur challenged stereotypes. She said, “Women are told so much. How to be, what to be, how to dress up, how to sit.

Even the representation of women has been limited. We are bracketed into good, bad, not so good, or how a ‘good girl’ can be. So I like to break those stereotypes. Please, life is beyond tags and labels.” She added, “Mirzapur changed all of that. A girl can be studious, and she can still be hot. She can be wearing specs, and she likes that.” She doesn’t like the idea of being imposed with perceptions.

“Don’t sell it to me like, ‘Oh my God, you’re in spectacles,’ and stop selling stuff to me just because you want to sell your products. I understand the economy of the world works like that but also let me choose,” she said. “Mirzapur has given me one of my favourite characters, of course,” Shweta said, about playing Golu Gupta on the show. Describing her long association with Golu, she said, “This relationship has been around for over eight to nine years, much longer than many relationships are. I love her. She has actually made me stronger because I started going to the gym because of her. Because if Golu is picking up a gun and gun is not just about physical strength, it’s about mental fitness.” She quoted her father’s philosophy, which she believes aligns with Golu’s: “Mental fitness and physical fitness go hand in hand.” She said about her character, “She’s this girl who’s trying to make a space in a world which is full of men, where you need to command respect.



This is why the Didi (suffix to Golu on the show) as well. So I think for Golu, it was very important to feel powerful. Because when you feel powerful, you exude that. So, Golu has given me a lot.” When asked about fitting into a box as an actor, Shweta responded, “I think more than that. Don’t fit girls into a box.” She elaborated, “We have a lot of power inside us, and we have access to that. Sometimes we don’t realise it.” “I think when I’m conscious, I do not want to get bored. And again, (I want) to explore. Because as an actor, you live those different lives.

You’re living those emotions,” she added. Shweta shared how details help build her characters. “I also play a lot of girls from the heartland, so I would wear a kurta-pyjama. I’m always trying to figure out with the costume designer or the director how to build the character. Like Golu’s watch is very different. Most of my other characters have small watches, but Golu has a digital watch. So these are the kind of things that help me build my character.” She added, “Yes, we are acting, but your body doesn’t understand that. Your body goes into fight-or-flight mode.”

Election vehicle accidents are the government’s responsibility, and victims must be compensated: SC

New Delhi, Apr 05: The Supreme Court has decided that if the car in question is requisitioned for election-related responsibilities, the government must compensate victims of traffic accidents and that the insurance company cannot be held liable. The Madhya Pradesh government filed an appeal through the district collector and district electoral officer of Gwalior, challenging a state high court ruling that ordered the authorities to pay compensation of approximately ₹27 lakh to the legal representatives of Rajesh Mandil, a motorcyclist killed by a speeding bus hired by the collector for poll duties. This appeal was dismissed by a bench of Justices Sanjay Karol and N. Kotiswar Singh. The bus was covered by an insurance policy at the time of the accident, making the insurer accountable to pay compensation, according to the state government’s challenge to the high court ruling. According to the state government, the bus was

requisitioned for poll duties under the Representation of the People Act, even though it had originally belonged to a private school. It was argued that as the bus was utilized for public purposes, holding the government accountable for damages would send the wrong message to the public and that the authorities neither owned the vehicle nor had any insurable interest in it. Rejecting the state’s argument, the top court said that when a public authority requisitions a privately owned vehicle, the nature of possession and control changes entirely. “The owner is divested of custody and decision-making power, and the vehicle is placed at the disposal of the State for governmental functions. During this period, the owner neither directs its use nor derives any benefit from it,” Justice Karol, who authored the judgment, said. “It only stands to reason that in such circumstances, if an untoward incident occurs, responsibility would properly

rest with the requisitioning authority and not with the insurer engaged by the owner for ordinary, private or commercial use, as the case may be,” it added. The bench noted that when the vehicle was operated under official directions, the requisitioning authority determined the manner of deployment, the purpose for which it was used and the conditions under which it was operated. “The owner has no say in these matters. Where control is assumed by the State, the legal consequences arising from that control cannot, in fairness, be shifted back to a private insurer whose contractual engagement was premised on a wholly different footing. “It is equally important to recognise that a requisition is not a voluntary arrangement; instead, it is a command issued under statutory authority... The owner does not consent to part with possession; he is compelled to do so,” the bench said. To fasten liability upon the insurer in these circumstances would be



to extend the contract beyond the risk that it agreed to cover, the top court said.

BJD requests an extension after noticing a delay in the purchase of paddy

Balasore, Apr 05: The Biju Janata Dal (BJD), the main Opposition party, has urged the state government to extend the kharif paddy procurement period by 15 days and allow an additional month for rabi paddy registration, citing significant distress among farmers. This demand follows widespread protests, particularly in Balasore, where farmers blocked roads after many could not sell their produce

by the procurement deadline. BJD leaders criticized the government for mismanagement, noting that 1.11 lakh registered farmers had unprocured paddy, and alleged hardships due to registration complexities and payment delays. They called for an extension for farmers with tokens who could not sell their paddy and demanded a simplified registration process for future procurements.

The ‘Dhurandhar’ return of Raghav Chadha to AAP charges

New Delhi, Apr 05: Raghav Chadha, a Rajya Sabha MP, publicly responded to allegations from the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) following his removal as deputy leader. In a video, he refuted claims that he was afraid to criticize Prime Minister Narendra Modi and had failed to support a resolution against Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar. Chadha accused AAP of orchestrating a “scripted campaign” against him, asserting that similar allegations were a coordinated attack. He challenged the party to provide instances of his lack of opposition support, pointing to CCTV evidence. Furthermore, he



defended his parliamentary contributions, emphasizing his focus on pressing issues such as pollution and government schools. Chadha’s removal was attributed to his perceived silence on significant party matters, particularly after the discharge of AAP leaders in a CBI case.

LG raises safety worries by “lifting” the security cover at the NC headquarters in Srinagar

Srinagar, Apr 05: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah and party leaders are allegedly shocked by the lieutenant governor’s administration’s decision to remove protection from the National Conference headquarters in Srinagar, which has given the security situation for both government and opposition figures in Kashmir a new twist. When a reporter asked whether security had been reduced outside the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly in Jammu, Omar said that it had been entirely removed. This is quite unexpected in and of itself. Mr. Farooq Abdullah was attacked barely a

week ago. They argued that the attack should not have occurred and that it was concerning at the time, but as my colleague correctly pointed out, Farooq Sahab comes to the workplace two or three times a week. “Learning from the (LG) administration what the compulsion was for that will be beneficial.” Omar’s helplessness in the face of the LG administration’s decision was a clear indication of the office of the chief minister’s weakened power. Prior to the repeal of Article 370, the office oversaw the unified command, which included the army, paramilitary, and



police forces. Neither the police nor the LG office responded to the claim until late Tuesday night. The decision was made a few days after MLAs from both the

government and opposition parties in the Valley claimed that the administration had removed their security escorts, making them open to potential attacks.

Bhagwant Mann Slams Raghav Chadha



Chandigarh, Apr 05: Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann criticized AAP MP Raghav Chadha for allegedly compromising party integrity by not addressing key issues such as vote deletions in West Bengal and the arrests of AAP leaders in Gujarat. Responding to Chadha’s statement about being “silenced,” Mann affirmed Chadha’s removal from the party’s deputy leadership in the Rajya Sabha, indicating that breaking party lines leads to consequences. Mann emphasized the need for unity in addressing significant issues and criticized Chadha for his focus on trivial matters instead of aligning with the party’s stance. He also stated that AAP would raise objections regarding the arrests of its volunteers in Gujarat with the chief minister.

In the Punjab Kings’ impressive IPL 2026 debut, Shreyas Iyer was penalized

New Delhi: Shreyas Iyer, the captain of Punjab Kings (PBKS), was fined Rs 12 lakh for his team’s slow over-rate during Tuesday, March 31’s Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026 opener against Gujarat Titans (GT) at the Maharaja Yadavindra Singh International Cricket Stadium in Mullanpur, New Chandigarh. PBKS, who came in second place the previous season, defeated the Titans by three wickets to get off to a respectable start to their IPL 2026 campaign. The IPL said in a press release on Wednesday that PBKS had been deemed to have violated Article 2.22 of the league’s Code of Conduct. Iyer was fined Rs



12 lakh because it was the team’s first offense of the season. The media alert stated, “Punjab Kings (PBKS) Captain Shreyas Iyer has been fined after his team maintained a slow over-rate.”

“Iyer was fined INR 12 lakhs because this was his team’s first offense of the season under Article 2.22 of the IPL’s Code of Conduct, which pertains to minimum over-rate offens-

es.” Teams must finish their bowling innings in ninety minutes, according to the IPL Code of Conduct. Only the captain is penalized for a first offense; in this instance, the fine is Rs 12 lakh. The captain will be penalized Rs 24 lakh if the team commits a second over-rate infraction, and the remaining members of the playing XI will be fined Rs 6 lakh or 25% of their match fee, whichever is less.

D Gukesh chooses to forego a portion of the Grand Chess Tour in favor of workload management in order to find form

New Delhi: After going through a difficult period in 2025, world champion D Gukesh stated that he is giving task management top priority. Gukesh stated that he has chosen to forego lengthy competitions away from home and is trying to compete with less energy in an effort to find his finest form. The 19-year-old stated that he will only compete in two European Rapid and Blitz competitions, one in Zagreb and one in Warsaw. Additionally, he expressed gratitude to the Grand Chess tour organizers for granting his request. “My performance in the last few events has been quite disappointing, not just for me, but for all of you who support me.”

“My team and I have decided that I should compete with a little less intensity over the next few months in order to



find my best form. As a result, we believe it is best for me to avoid lengthy events away from home so that I may devote more time to training.” In light of this, I requested to participate in just two European Rapid & Blitz events when I approached the Grand Chess Tour organizers. We decided that I would take part in the Rapid & Blitz competitions in

Warsaw and Zagreb this year because they were so understanding and encouraging. I am really appreciative of their help. With all due respect, I do not intend to participate in any other Grand Chess Tour events, and I will undoubtedly return for the entire Grand. Respectfully, I am not planning to play any other events during the Grand

Chess Tour schedule and will certainly be back for the full Grand Chess Tour in the future,” read the statement from Gukesh.

2024 was a career-defining one for Gukesh as he went on to win the candidates at the first time of asking and became the world champion. He also led India’s charge to win a gold medal at the chess Olympiad. He was also briefly World No.3 during this time. Then came a difficult phase in 2025, when D Gukesh failed to secure a single tournament win, including disappointing outings at the FIDE Grand Swiss Tournament and an early third-round exit from the FIDE World Cup. That poor run carried into 2026, where he finished 10th at the Tata Steel Chess Tournament and ended joint-last at the Prague Masters.

Argentina defeats Zambia in a friendly, with Messi on target

New Delhi: Argentina defeated Zambia 5-0 on Tuesday in the South American country’s final home match before beginning the defense of its World Cup title, with Lionel Messi scoring one goal and setting up another. Messi made an instant impression in Tuesday’s friendly at La Bombonera in Buenos Aires after coach Lionel Scaloni reinstated him in the starting lineup following Argentina’s disappointing victory over Mauritania last Friday. Just before halftime, the 38-year-old great scored his 116th goal for Argentina after setting up Julian Alvarez’s first goal. The current global champion, which will play Algeria, Austria, and Jordan in Group J of the June championships, had a global Cup send-off on Tuesday. Argentina is looking to set up another warm-up match before to the tournament and will play a friendly match against Serbia in June. As the South American powerhouse aims to win back-to-back titles, Messi is certain to lead Argentina into what will be a record sixth World Cup final. The playmaker from Inter Miami once again proved his lasting impact on the Albiceleste with a usually pivotal role in a convincing victory.

After just four minutes, Alvarez gave Argentina the lead when Messi skillfully controlled a lofted pass on the edge of the field before threading a pass into the Atletico Madrid striker’s feet. Messi doubled Argentina’s lead with the 902nd goal of his career two minutes before half-time, working a clever one-two



with Liverpool midfielder Alexis Mac Allister before tucking a low finish past Zambia goalkeeper Willard Mwanza. Messi could have added to his goals tally just after half-time when Argentina was awarded a penalty following Albert Kangwanda’s foul on Thiago Almada. But rather than take the spot kick himself, Messi handed the ball to veteran defender Nicolas Otamendi, and the 38-year-old made no mistake from the spot for a 3-0 lead. An own goal from Dominic Chanda in the 68th minute put Argentina 4-0 up, before rising star Valentin Barco completed the scoring in stoppage time to make it 5-0.

For Atletico’s “Trilogy,” Barcelona needs Lamine Yamal at his best without Raphinha

New Delhi: Before the team’s tripleheader against Atletico Madrid, young sensation Lamine Yamal is under additional pressure due to the unfortunate injury of Barcelona winger Raphinha. The Spanish champions will play two more games against Diego Simeone’s squad in the Champions League quarterfinals after visiting Atletico on Saturday in an attempt to hold or even increase their lead at the top of La Liga. This season, Barcelona has already played Atletico three times; in December, they defeated them in La Liga, but they lost the two-leg Copa del Rey semifinal.

With Raphinha sidelined until May due to a hamstring injury, it will be up to 18-year-old winger Yamal to deliver the magic Barca needs to advance on two fronts in the upcoming, unavoidably fierce matches against Atletico. At the top of the table, Barca sits four points ahead of Real Madrid, who travel to Mallorca earlier on Saturday. This week, Yamal represented Spain in a goalless draw against Egypt at Espanyol’s stadium in Cornellà.

The game was remarkable for the home crowd’s Islamophobic chants, which the Muslim teenager denounced. Yamal posted on social media, “To those who sing these things:



using a religion as a form of mockery on a pitch shows you up as ignorant and racist.” Since making his debut at the age of 15, Yamal has demonstrated maturity beyond his years. He starred for Spain when they won Euro 2024 and continued to flourish when Barcelona won a domestic treble the previous season. The youngster, often compared to another graduate from Barca’s La Masia youth academy, Lionel Messi, seems to save his best

performances for the biggest occasions. Yamal netted six times for Barca in his last seven matches across all competitions, and the Catalan giants will hope he can continue that form into the final phase of the season. He admitted in February that he has not been happy this season, in part due to a long-running groin injury, but lately feels better. “I have that desire to smile on the pitch that I haven’t had for a long time and I’m very happy,

now I’m happy playing,” said Yamal after scoring the first hat-trick of his career, against Villarreal. In recent weeks Barca have been dependent on the forward in attack and goalkeeper Joan Garcia at the other end. Strikers Robert Lewandowski and Ferran Torres have struggled for consistent form, while Marcus Rashford has fallen somewhat out of favour. Raphinha’s injury opens the door for the England international, on loan from Manchester United, to start on the left again. Yamal’s pressing and off-the-ball work is an excellent example for Rashford, who despite his strong contribution in terms of assists, sometimes lacks the relentless energy and focus Flick wants from his forwards.

As well as Raphinha, Barca are also likely to be without Frenkie de Jong at the weekend, but Jules Kounde and Alejandro Balde may be able to return after injury. Simeone’s Atletico, fourth by a distance from fifth-place Real Betis, have little to play for in the league but will want to build momentum before Wednesday’s Champions League quarter-final first leg at Camp Nou. Los Che host Celta Vigo on Sunday looking to add to their run of three wins from their last four matches.

Borussia Dortmund will defeat rising Stuttgart to put an end to their big-game woes



New Delhi: Borussia Dortmund’s 2025-26 Bundesliga season has been strong statistically, currently sitting second with 61 points, but they trail Bayern Munich by nine points. Despite only losing twice, both to Bayern, Dortmund struggles against top teams, securing just two wins in nine matches against the top eight clubs. Upcoming matches are critical, partic-

ularly against third-placed Stuttgart, who have a favorable record against Dortmund under coach Sebastian Hoeness. As Stuttgart’s striker Deniz Undav shines with 23 goals and 13 assists this season, Dortmund’s coach Niko Kovac acknowledges the challenge ahead, asserting the need for significant effort in the match.

Gennaro Gattuso sobs and apologizes as Italy loses the FIFA World Cup for the third time in a row



New Delhi: After Italy’s national football team lost to Bosnia and Herzegovina in a penalty shootout in Zenica and failed to qualify for a third straight FIFA World Cup, a tearful Gennaro Gattuso apologized to the country. The four-time champions’ playoff match at Stadion Bilino Polje ended in sadness as they lost 4-1 on penalties after a fierce battle ended in a draw at the end of extra time. After taking an early lead, Italy was cut to ten players

before halftime, a blow that turned the tide in Bosnia’s favor. In the 79th minute, Bosnia equalized when goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma was passed by Haris Tabakovic, who had risen above the Italian defense. Misses from Francesco Esposito and Bryan Cristante proved costly as Bosnia converted with confidence to seal their place, leaving Italy stunned and eliminated. Speaking after the match, Gattuso expressed his disappointment and

apologised to supporters, insisting the result was hard to accept given his team’s performance. “I don’t want to talk about anything else right now,” he said. “Today it’s unfair. We wanted to go to the World Cup, and that was what mattered most. I’m sorry.” Gattuso defended his players, pointing out that they had competed well despite going down to 10 men and had limited Bosnia’s chances for much of the contest. “The boys didn’t deserve this. We had our chances and they didn’t trouble us much. But this is football. It’s a blow that is very difficult to digest,” he added. Despite the historic setback, the Italian Football Federation has thrown its support behind Gattuso. Federation president Gabriele Gravina confirmed that both the head coach and Gianluigi Buffon, who now holds a managerial role within the setup, have been asked to continue. “I’ve asked him to stay and asked Buffon to remain in charge of the football side,” Gravina said. Italy’s failure to qualify for three consecutive World Cups marks an unprecedented low for one of football’s most decorated nations. The Azzurri last appeared at the tournament in 2014 in Brazil, where they exited in the group stage. Their last triumph came in 2006, when they defeated France, led by Zinedine Zidane, on penalties. Since then, however, Italian football has struggled to maintain its traditional dominance on the global stage, with this latest setback raising further questions about the future direction of the national team.

Tiger Woods enters a not guilty plea to DUI in a collision

New Delhi: After entering a not guilty plea to DUI charges related to his rollover collision in Florida last week, Tiger Woods announced on Tuesday that he is taking a break to pursue therapy and concentrate on his health. The best golfer of his generation and a 15-time major champion, Woods was detained last Friday afternoon on suspicion of driving while intoxicated when his Land Rover overturned on a two-lane road close to his Jupiter Island residence.

Later that evening, Woods was freed on bond; no one was hurt in the collision. “I am aware of the gravity of the circumstances I am in today,” Woods wrote on social media. “I’m taking a short break to get therapy and concentrate on my health. This is essential for me to put my health first and strive for a long-term recovery,” he continued.

The 50-year-old Woods asked for privacy and stated that he was determined to take the time necessary to return in a “healthier, stronger, and more focused place, both personally and professionally.” Augusta National Golf Club, the site of the year’s first major, announced after Woods’ declaration that the five-time Masters champion will not be there next week. According to court records submitted on Tuesday, Woods entered a not guilty plea to DUI charges and asked for a jury trial. Woods’ next court appearance was scheduled for May 5, though he does not have to appear in person for any proceeding prior to a trial, court records show. Woods had just returned to competitive golf for the first time since missing the cut at the British Open in July 2024 when he joined his team for the TGL Finals last week, an indoor league that combines simulated golf with real chipping and putting, and so requires significantly less walking than traditional golf. After the match, Woods said he was trying to get his battered body ready for the April 9-12 Masters at Augusta National. Even if he decided against



competing, Woods planned to be at Augusta National for next week’s Champions Dinner, but the club confirmed on Tuesday that he will not be present at all during the year’s first major. “Augusta National Golf Club and the Masters Tournament fully support Tiger Woods as he focuses on his well-being. Although Tiger will not be joining us next week, his presence will be felt here in Augusta,” Augusta National Chairman Fred Ridley said in a statement.

MS Dhoni does range hitting even as Gaikwad remains non-committal



New Delhi: Before the team’s IPL 2026 match against Punjab Kings here at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium on Thursday, Chennai Super Kings (CSK) wicketkeeper-batter MS Dhoni was spotted batting in the nets during the team’s practice session. Broadcasters first saw Dhoni training on Wednesday night after he was previously ruled out of the first two weeks of the tournament due to a calf ailment. He then joined the team early on Thursday for its practice on the main field, but he didn’t exercise at first; instead, he went about and spoke with different team members. But by the end of the practice, the 45-year-old looked padded up and spent over thirty minutes with Urvil Patel taking only throwdowns. The legendary CSK player had a slightly scratchy touch at first, but he quickly found his range and sent several powerful hits several rows back into the bleachers. Until asked about the timing for Dhoni’s return earlier in the day, CSK skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad remained evasive, stating that he would be able to respond “just when the 13th day is done” regarding Dhoni’s development following an initial 14-day prognosis.

India defeats Hong Kong to win the AFC Asian Cup 2027 Qualifiers thanks to goals from Ryan Williams and Akash Mishra

New Delhi: First goal, first shot. This would have undoubtedly surpassed every scenario Ryan Williams could have dreamed for his debut in India. Within four minutes of kickoff, India took the lead as the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium exploded and the ground trembled. After the break, the process was repeated, and this time, Akash Mishra scored as India defeated Hong Kong, China, 2-1 here on Tuesday to salvage some honor in its final AFC Asian Cup qualifying match. Even though Everton Camargo’s goal for the visiting calmed the boisterous crowd, the host controlled the action for most of the match.

The Blue Tigers came into the match with nothing at stake, having missed the opportunity to make it to three successive Asian Cups. Moreover, India had never won a match at this venue. But Khalid Jamil’s boys delivered, putting in its best performance of the campaign and ensuring smiles for thousands of fans who had turned up at the venue on a humid Tuesday evening. The Indian coach used ambiguity as an arm from the beginning, pushing Anwar Ali, a centre-back, to a defensive midfielder position, while refreshing his full-back options with Akash Mishra and Abhishek Singh Tekcham to flank the experienced duo of Rahul Bheke, Sandesh Jhingan in a back four.

Lallianzuala Chhangte dictated the right flank and often dropping deep, allowing



Manvir Singh to run the channels. Debutant Williams shifted between being a poacher and a creative playmaker.

Work done on the training ground came to fruition as early as the fourth minute, which opened the scoring for the home side. Ch-

hangte released Abhishek, who played the ball into acres of space for Manvir to run into and the Mohun Bagan Super Giant forward’s cross was guided into the net by an alert Williams, prompting pandemonium in the stadium. Williams’ flamboyance with the ball was

on full display as he calmly received long balls, played one-twos with Chhangte and Manvir, underlining his quality.

By half-time, Hong Kong could muster just three shots, while India had six. Jamil was not coaching defence anymore. Williams’ threat continued to draw the attention of Hong Kong defenders, enabling India to double its lead early in the second half, this time from a long throw. Bheke’s long throw missed Williams, who was sandwiched between two opponents, but Mishra followed up by lashing the bouncing ball into the roof of the net from a tight angle for his first goal for the national team. By the hour mark, drums had started beating louder, ‘Let’s Go India, Let’s Go!’ was being sung in tempo, and fans had flashlights out to show their support for India.

Complacency seemed to have seeped in, and the visitor caught India napping in the 65th minute. Camargo received a through ball in the box, beat Jhingan and shot past Gurpreet Singh Sandhu, making it 2-1. The visitor tried to grow into the match after that, prompting two crucial saves from Gurpreet, who caught one and punched the other away to end the night on a victorious note. It also settled scores for the Blue Tigers, who had lost the return fixture at the Kai Tak Stadium in Hong Kong last year, while for coach Jamil, it was his first win on home soil.