

Over 25,000 Mizoram Youth Pledge Drug-Free Lives



Aizawl, Apr 02: The voluntary organisation “Foundation for Drug-Free Mizoram” held a rally through the streets of Aizawl to celebrate its 7th anniversary. Under the theme “A Better Life Without Drugs,” the group campaigned in Bawngkawn, Dawrpui, Khatla, and Mission Veng to draw public attention. The key speakers at the campaign included Rev. K. Lalpiangthara, Rev. C. Lalrochama, Captain Lalrinmawia, and Central YMA Vice President Prof. Lalnunluanga.

The Foundation for Drug-Free Mizoram was established on April 1, 2019, at V. Than-ga’s residence in Dawrpui by V. Lalnunthara and his team. Over the past seven years, through efforts led by the organisation, 25,113 teenagers

and children across 125 locations have voluntarily pledged to stay away from drugs. Currently, the organisation has 1,430 active members. The foundation’s motto is “Ruihhlo Tel Lo Nun Du-hawm Zaw” (A Better Life Without Drugs). To achieve its mission, the organisation conducts awareness campaigns with a team of resource persons comprising medical doctors, pharmacists, psychiatrists, psychologists, clinical psychologists, social workers, and educationists. Survivors of drug addiction also share their personal experiences to raise awareness about the dangers of drug abuse. The primary objective of the foundation is to counter the alarming rise in drug abuse among the youth of Mizoram, Alpha.

CM Lalduhoma Inaugurates Thenzawl PWD Road Division And Sets Higher Road Density Targets

Thenzawl, Apr 02: Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma on March 27, inaugurated the Thenzawl PWD Road Division at the PWD Complex in Thenzawl, marking a key step towards strengthening the state’s infrastructure and administrative capacity. Accompanied by Minister B. Lalhchanzova and MLA T. Lalhlipmua, the Chief Minister described the occasion as a major milestone for the Public Works Department and a significant development for the people of the region. Highlighting the state’s infrastructure challenges, Lalduhoma said Mizoram still lags behind the national average in road density, stressing the need for accelerated development. He noted that the creation of the Thenzawl division and the new Biate Sub-Division would help improve efficiency and execution of projects.

He also underlined Thenzawl’s growing importance as a proposed “Peace City,” with multiple projects in the pipeline, including tourism initiatives, a



greenfield city project, and infrastructure expansion. The Chief Minister urged officials and staff to work with dedication, stating that their role is crucial in shaping the future of the state. The event also featured remarks by local representatives, who expressed gratitude for the government’s continued focus on development in Thenzawl. The newly established division is expected to become fully operational from April 1, 2026. n a major push toward transforming the state’s infrastructure landscape, Mizoram Chief

Minister Lalduhoma officially inaugurated the newly established Public Works Department (PWD) Road Division at Thenzawl today. The event, attended by senior government officials, local community leaders, and representatives from the engineering fraternity, marks a strategic shift in how the Zoram People’s Movement (ZPM) government intends to handle rural and urban connectivity. During the inaugural ceremony, the Chief Minister underscored that the creation of the Thenzawl Road Division is not mere-

ly an administrative expansion but a targeted effort to decentralize development and ensure that the central belt of Mizoram becomes a hub for logistical efficiency. The highlight of the Chief Minister’s address was his ambitious call for a significant increase in the state’s road density. While Mizoram has made strides in connectivity over the last decade, Lalduhoma pointed out that many agricultural and remote pockets remain cut off from the main economic arteries. “Infrastructure is the precursor to prosperity,” the Chief Minister

stated. “By establishing this dedicated PWD Division in Thenzawl, we are laying the groundwork for a more interconnected Mizoram. Our target is clear: we must surpass current national averages for road density to ensure that every farmer can transport produce and every student can reach school without the hindrance of broken or non-existent roads.” The Chief Minister noted that higher road density is directly proportional to a rise in the Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP). He emphasized that the Thenzawl division would play a pivotal role in linking the Serchhip district more effectively with the state capital, Aizawl, and the southern commercial hubs. Thenzawl, often referred to as the handloom hub of Mizoram and a burgeoning tourism destination, has long required a localized PWD office to manage its expanding network. Previously, maintenance and new projects in the area were overseen by distant divisions, often leading to delays in repairs.

In Brief

Two madrasas in Imphal East in disarray

Imphal: Under the authority of the Waqf Board, Manipur, an inspection was carried out at two madrasas—Nahrul Uloom located at Mantripukhri and Zamia Islamia at Keirang Khomidok, Imphal East. During the inspection at Nahrul Uloom, several irregularities were observed. The madrasa premises were found not maintaining the prescribed norms and guidelines required for an educational institution. It was reported that portions of the madrasa land had been encroached upon, with residential houses constructed in the area. Basic infrastructure was also found lacking, including the absence of proper toilet facilities. Furthermore, a shop had been set up within the madrasa compound.

Fire Walking Festival wraps up in Moreh

Imphal: The annual firewalking festival of the Tamil community concluded on Wednesday with great devotion and traditional fervour in Moreh border town. The grand festival, known as the Fire Walking Festival, began on March 23 and continued for 10 days at the temples of Shree Angala Parameshwari and Shree Muneshwarar, located at Ward No. 2 in Moreh, a town along the Indo-Myanmar border. Celebrated every year with religious significance, the festival marks an important cultural and spiritual event for the Tamil community. This year’s celebration was observed as the 59th edition of the festival. On the concluding day, devotees, following traditional rituals, fulfilled their vows by performing acts of devotion. Many participants pierced their bodies and carried offerings, while others took part in various sacred ceremonies as part of the ritual practices.

Drug seized

Aizawl: Over the past week, Mizoram police have disrupted several smuggling modules and seized drugs, especially heroin and methamphetamine, valued at ₹25.01 crore at various sites throughout the state, according to a senior officer.

Fresh arrests expose use of Assam as transit route by foreign mercenaries to Myanmar

Guwahati, Apr 02: Recent arrests have revealed that foreign nationals are using Assam as a transit corridor to enter Myanmar, where they are reportedly training rebel groups—raising serious security concerns in the Northeast.

According to security sources, one American citizen and six Ukrainian nationals were recently arrested after returning from Myanmar. During interrogation, they admitted to providing training to insurgent groups, particularly in drone warfare, including cadres of the Kachin Independent Army (KIA).

Officials said that although several Northeastern states are designated as protected areas requiring special permits for foreign entry, Assam currently does not fall under such restrictions. This has made it a convenient entry point.

The accused reportedly arrived at Lokapriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport in Guwahati, avoiding direct travel to states like Mizoram, which require special permits. From Guwahati, they travelled by road to Mizoram and subsequently crossed into Myanmar through porous border areas.

Security agencies noted that similar incidents have occurred in recent years. In 2024, a British national was apprehended at Aizawl airport with ammunition, prompting authorities to reinstate protected area status in Mizoram and Nagaland.

While officials clarified that activities carried out in Myanmar fall outside India’s jurisdiction, they expressed concern over the misuse of Indian territory as a transit route and violations of laws related to restricted area entry.

Fire Walking Festival wraps up in Moreh

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ipation from devotees in and around Moreh. Meanwhile, Assam Rifles provided comprehensive support for the successful conduct of the 59th Fire-Walking Festival in Moreh, Tengenpual District. Organised by the Tamil Sangam, the significant event commenced on March 23 and culminated on April 1 at the Shree Angala Parmeshwari Shree Muneeshwarar Temple. This time-honoured tradition, symbolising faith, courage and resilience, drew widespread participation from Tamil, Meetei, Nepali and Bihari communities, as well as devotees from neighbouring Myanmar, transforming the temple into a vibrant hub of cultural and social harmony, said a press release of IGAR(S). Upon the request of the Tamil Sangam, a contingent of officials and personnel ensured a safe and peaceful environment through robust security arrangements and essential logistical support for all rituals. A key highlight of the assistance was the organisation of a langar which served approximately 450 to 500 devotees daily throughout the festival period. These efforts, complemented by community feasts organised by residents across various localities, reflected a collective resolve to restore peace and preserve regional traditions.

Mizoram gears up to host first-ever NCC Fest & Parasailing Camp

Aizawl, Apr 02: Preparations are afoot for organising the first-ever NCC Fest and Parasailing Camp in Mizoram from May 5 to 11.

The initiative is aimed at youth empowerment and nation-building.

During an interaction with Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma, Colonel Sagar K Mohanty, Commanding Officer of 2 Mizo Battalion NCC, apprised him of the recent developments and expansion of NCC activities in Mizoram including the organisation of the first-ever NCC Fest and Parasailing Camp

in Mizoram, at Lunlei from May 5 to 11.

The Fest and Parasailing Camp will be a pioneering initiative designed to spread awareness about NCC and motivate the youth to join its ranks. The event aims to instill discipline, confidence, and a spirit of adventure among young individuals, guiding them towards becoming responsible citizens and active contributors to nation-building.

The upcoming fest will feature interactive sessions with distinguished dignitaries of the state and senior military officials, providing

cadets and youth with valuable exposure and inspiration. A wide array of attractions will be set up, including informative NCC stalls, weapon displays by Border Security Force, Assam Rifles & Territorial Army Bn, NCC alumni interactions, and exhibitions showcasing local handloom and traditional crafts. Additionally, traditional food stalls will highlight the rich cultural heritage of Mizoram, making the event both educational and culturally enriching. The Chief Minister appreciated the visionary efforts of Col. Sagar K Mohanty

and commended the initiative as a significant step towards the holistic development and upliftment of Mizoram’s youth. He emphasised the vital role of NCC in shaping character, leadership and unity among the younger generation. He also conveyed his consent to grace the occasion at Lunlei, reflecting his strong encouragement for such initiatives. This historic initiative marks a new chapter in NCC activities in Mizoram, creating a vibrant platform to connect, inspire and empower youth through innovation, adventure and cultural pride.

Cong claims assault on its workers by BJP during campaigning in Jalukbari constituency

Guwahati, Apr 02: With the Assembly elections drawing close, pre-poll violence has escalated in Assam.

In the latest such incident, the Congress has accused the BJP of attacking its workers while they were campaigning for party candidate Bidisha Neog at the Maligaon-Pandu area in Guwahati under the Jalukbari Assembly constituency on Wednesday evening.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma is the BJP candidate from the Jalukbari seat.

A statement issued by Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) on Thursday said that the Congress workers were taking out an election rally when BJP goons obstructed the rally and assaulted the Congress workers, causing injuries to many of them.

The injured Congress workers were given first aid at a local hospital. Several cars and motorcycles were also damaged in the incident.

The APCC has strongly condemned the incident and urged the Election Commission and administration to take stern action against those involved in this attack.

It may be mentioned that the Congress yesterday filed a complaint with the EC against the Sonitpur SP over attack on its Naduar candidate allegedly by BJP workers.

The Opposition party accused the SP of wilfully failing to prevent the brutal assault on its candidate.

Two madrasas in Imphal East in disarray

Imphal, Apr 02: Under the authority of the Waqf Board, Manipur, an inspection was carried out at two madrasas—Nahrul Uloom located at Mantripukhri and Zamia Islamia at Keirang Khomidok, Imphal East. During the inspection at Nahrul Uloom, several irregularities were observed. The madrasa premises were found not maintaining the prescribed norms and guidelines required for an educational institution. It was reported that portions of the madrasa land had been encroached upon, with residential houses constructed in the area. Basic infrastructure was also found lacking, including the absence of proper toilet facilities. Furthermore, a shop had been set up within the madrasa compound. Local residents informed that no regular madrasa activities had been conducted since before the month of Ramzan. A teacher identified as Mufti Anwar reportedly stated that the madrasa is no longer functional and expressed no intention of resuming its previous operations. At Zamia Islamia, Keirang Khomidok, it was reported that six teachers had initially been appointed. However, only one teacher is currently active, while the remaining five are absent. It was also revealed that these teachers have not submitted the required declaration forms. During June and July 2025, teachers for subjects such as English and Mathematics were appointed without the knowledge or ap-



proval of the madrasa committee. Subsequently, when the committee attempted to regularise or reappoint teachers, disputes arose, leading to non-cooperation from the concerned individuals. Due to the absence of teachers, students admitted during 2025 reportedly discontinued their studies. These findings were observed during an inspection conducted by the Minorities Students’ Association (MSA), Manipur. In response, the MSA, Manipur strongly condemned the current situation and urged the Waqf Board authorities to take immediate and appropriate action against those responsible. The organisation has also appealed to the public to extend cooperation in addressing the issues faced by these madrasas. A Waqf Board is a statutory body in India, established under the Waqf Act, 1995, responsible for managing, protecting, and regulating waqf properties—assets permanently dedicated for religious, pious, or charitable purposes under Islamic law. These state-level boards oversee properties like mosques and schools, with the central government advised by the Central Waqf Council.

CLP leader Meghachandra questions delay in fund release, cabinet expansion

Imphal, Apr 02: Congress Legislature Party (CLP) leader Keisham Meghachandra has expressed serious concern over the delay in release of funds for the financial year 2025–26, not less than ₹600 crore allocated under the 15th Finance Commission. Addressing media persons at his residence in Babupara on Wednesday, Meghachandra stated that the failure to disburse funds on time has adversely impacted several welfare and development programmes in the state. He pointed out that many initiatives meant for public benefit are facing setbacks due to financial constraints arising from the delay. He observed that key schemes linked to Panchayati Raj institutions, including MGNREGA, as well as pension schemes such as old age, widow, and government employees’ pensions, are being affected, causing inconvenience to the beneficiaries. Raising questions over the non-release of the



15th Finance Commission grants, Meghachandra termed the situation as a matter of concern and sought clarification from the government on the reasons behind the delay. He cautioned that continued lapses in fund management could hamper the overall development process of the state. The CLP leader also voiced concern over the delay in expansion of the state cabinet, alleging that external factors may be influencing the decision-making process. He noted that the limited number of ministers currently handling multiple departments could affect

administrative efficiency. Referring to the provisions of the 91st Constitutional Amendment Act, he noted that the total number of ministers in a state should not exceed 15 pc of the strength of the Legislative Assembly, with a mandated minimum of 12. In contrast, he said, the present government has a four-member Council of Ministers, including two Deputy Chief Ministers. Meghachandra urged the authorities concerned to take immediate steps to release the pending funds and ensure that welfare schemes are implemented without further delay.

Security forces intensify PREPAK, PLA, and KCP cadres held

Search operations



Imphal, Apr 02: Security forces have intensified search operations and area domination exercises across fringe and vulnerable areas of Manipur, resulting in the arrest of four cadres linked to different underground groups and the recovery of arms and ammunition over the past 36 hours, according to a police bulletin issued on Thursday. An alleged extortionist and active member of the People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK), identified as Zabir Khan (26), alias Rohit, a resident of Paobitek Muslim in Imphal West district, was apprehended from Thongkhong Laxmi Bazar under Wangoi police station. A mobile phone and two SIM cards were seized from his possession. In a separate operation, security personnel arrested an alleged cadre of the proscribed People's Liberation Army (PLA), Nepram Lemba Meitei (24), alias Tomba, from the Khabeisoi

area under Heingang police station in Imphal East district. Two individuals identified as active members of the banned Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP) were apprehended from Lam-lai in Imphal East district. They were identified as Laishom Dandan Meitei (19), alias Nganba, and Leimapokpam Sanjit Singh (54), alias Naobi. In Thoubal district, security forces recovered a cache of arms and ammunition from Heirok Part-II. The seized items included two No. 36 hand grenades, five magazines of different weapons, and vehicles carrying essential commodities along National Highway-37 under heightened security arrangements, with convoys deployed along sensitive stretches to facilitate safe passage. A total of 115 checkpoints and nakas have been set up across various districts as part of intensified security measures, the police said.

The school education conference highlights the “Viksit Sikkim” plan

Gangtok, Apr 02: The School Education department on Wednesday organised a programme titled “Developing Human Capital for Viksit Sikkim – Quality School Education for All”, at Chintan Bhawan, bringing together policymakers, senior officials and education experts to deliberate on strengthening the State's school education system. The programme was graced by Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang-Golay as the chief guest, along with Minister, Education Department,

Law Department and Sports & Youth Affairs Department, Raju Basnet as the guest of honour. Describing the conference as the first of its kind in the State, the Chief Minister said he had envisioned it as a more interactive, two-way platform, and expressed hope that future conferences would encourage broader participation, idea-sharing and field-based experiences from officers and educators. He stated that such conferences should be organised periodically to review progress, assess

outcomes and identify remaining challenges. Addressing the conference, the Chief Minister said that the gathering marked a significant milestone in the State's efforts to strengthen and transform the education sector. Expressing satisfaction over the successful conduct of the conference, the Chief Minister said that the programme was not merely an administrative review, but a serious and collective exercise aimed at shaping the future of Sikkim through education. He remarked that

the presence of officers, educators and grassroots-level policy implementers from all corners of the State reflected the commitment and sincerity of the department and its personnel. The Chief Minister stated that education is the He underscored the importance of further strengthening Sikkim's education policy, stating that it must evolve into one of the finest systems in the world that's accessible, inclusive and uncompromising in quality.

Meghalaya Dumping of waste banned along NH-40 stretch in East Khasi Hills

Shillong, Apr 02: The District Magistrate of East Khasi Hills has imposed a strict prohibition on the dumping of waste, debris and construction material along a 16-km stretch of the Old National Highway-40, a key arterial route linking Shillong with the rest of the country. The order, issued by District Magistrate R.M. Kurbah, follows a formal complaint by the National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL), which flagged repeated instances of indiscriminate dumping along the road shoulder. The affected stretch extends from Barapani (Km 61.800) to KHADC Junction (Km 77.800), falling within the two-lane section of NH-40 that remains under state maintenance. Officials said debris, soil and household waste had been routinely discarded by unidentified persons along this corridor, ham-



pering ongoing repair and maintenance work while posing risks to motorists. The stretch marks a crucial transition point where the four-lane Jorabat-Barapani section narrows, increasing its vulnerability to disruptions. Acting under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik

Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023, the District Magistrate has prohibited three categories of activity with immediate effect: dumping of construction debris or soil along the roadside, unauthorised disposal of domestic or commercial waste, and any action that obstructs main-

tenance work or impedes traffic flow. Violators will face prosecution under Section 223 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). The order will remain in force until further notice. The directive follows a similar crackdown by the East Khasi Hills administration earlier in March, when unauthorised excavation and indiscriminate dumping were banned across the district after reports of soil and debris contaminating water sources during the monsoon. The enforcement assumes added significance given the proximity of the Umiam Lake catchment area along the corridor, which has long been affected by pollution and siltation. Authorities said stricter regulation of waste disposal along roads feeding into the catchment is essential to safeguard water quality and environmental health.

Leaders of the BJP campaign in Assam to intensify their effort for elections

Shillong, Apr 02: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday slammed the Congress at a poll rally in Assam, accusing it of having “abused” the talent and capabilities of the state's youths and urged people to never forgive the party. Alleging that the Congress was only concerned about Bangladeshi infiltrators, he claimed the grand old party had meted out “step-motherly” treatment towards Assam during its rule. Addressing two election rallies in support of NDA candidates in Tezpur and Dergaon, the senior BJP leader said, “The Congress has always abused the Assamese youths, their talent and capabilities. They should not be forgiven.” Claiming that Karnataka's IT Minister Priyank Kharge had opposed Assam's industrialisation, he said it was an “insult” to the northeastern state's youths, and demanded an apology from the Congress. “The only concern of the Congress is Bangladeshi infiltrators for its vote bank. Politics should not be done only for government formation; politics should be done for nation-building,” Singh said. He claimed that due to illegal immigration from Bangladesh, the population balance in a few districts of Assam has been distorted. “Under the BJP's rule, no illegal immigrant can stay in Assam. The state has welcomed its guests, but this has been misunderstood,” Singh said. Because of infiltrators, there has been a threat to Assam's culture, identity and pride as the Congress “crossed all limits” for its vote bank politics, he alleged. “The Congress always meted out step-motherly treatment towards Assam and neglected it. During the Congress' rule, Delhi kept Assam at a distance... Since Independence, the Congress has discriminated against Assam and abused its rights,” Singh alleged. During Congress rule, extremism, insurgency, blasts, killings, kidnappings, poverty and starvation dominated news in Assam, and even festivals were observed in an atmosphere of fear, he claimed. “But the situation changed after the BJP came



to power. Assam is now at the centre of development, and it is the northeast's development engine. India's development gains pace if Assam progresses... Now, everyone talks about the region's connectivity and prosperity with pride,” Singh added. He claimed that more than 7,500 extremists have laid down their arms in Assam to join the mainstream under the BJP's rule. “The BJP eliminated corruption and did justice to tea garden workers by giving land rights... Nobody can stop NDA from getting two-thirds majority in Assam... After losing the Assam elections, Congress will blame the EVM.” “Assam is going to be Congress-free. Like in the Centre, Assam will also witness a third consecutive BJP-led government,” the defence minister said. He said the Congress used to call border villages ‘last village of India’, while the BJP has termed those the country's first villages with a focus on development, showing a difference in the outlook.

Rifles talk about adopting next-generation weaponry and operational capability

Shillong, Apr 02: The Assam Rifles Commanders' Conference was held at the Headquarters Directorate General Assam Rifles in Laitkor, here today under the chairmanship of Director General Lieutenant General Vikas Lakhera. Formation Commanders, Battalion Commanders, and Staff Officers from the Directorate General Assam Rifles and various formations today deliberated on enhancing the operational capability and combat potential of the force. Discussions included formulating a roadmap for the induction of next-generation weapons and equipment, sharing of best practices across formations, and strengthening training and skill develop-



ment initiatives for personnel, a statement said. Addressing the conference, the Director General commended all ranks of the force for their professional conduct and performance under challenging circumstances. He stressed the importance of maintaining security and sanctity of the Indo-Myanmar Border

and Kashmir Valley. “The force should be prepared for all contingencies and security challenges arising in the future,” he added. The Director General further appreciated the efforts of Formation and Unit Commanders in maintaining peace and stability in their respective areas of responsibility and urged them to remain vigilant in view of the dynamic security environment. During the event, the Assam Rifles Rajbhasha Shield Yojna was also presented, wherein 23 28The conference concluded with a renewed commitment from all participants to uphold the highest standards of operational excellence and to continue striving for excellence in all domains.

Assam BJP chief Dilip Saikia hits out at Congress

Guwahati, Apr 02: Assam BJP president Dilip Saikia on Wednesday said a massive public rally addressed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi had drawn unprecedented support for the state's development, and alleged that while the Congress focuses on protecting infiltrators and Bangladeshis, the BJP is committed to removing them from the state. Speaking about the rally, Saikia said, “The Prime Minister addressed a massive public rally here... For the first time in independent India, Assam has received such extensive support for its development. The Prime Minister's rally has reassured the public, and people have expressed their trust in Prime Minister Modi and Himanta Biswa Sarma.”

Assam Elections 2026: ‘Double-ghulami government,’ Priyanka Gandhi slams BJP

Dibrugarh, Apr 02: Stepping up the Congress campaign in Assam, party general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Wednesday launched a sharp attack on the ruling BJP, accusing it of running a “double-ghulami (slavery) government” while campaigning for Leader of Opposition, Debabrata Saikia in the Nazira constituency. Following the rally in Nazira, she was scheduled to address additional public meetings in Tingkhong and Khowang as part of the party's intensified campaign in upper Assam.

Addressing a charged rally in Sivasagar district, Gandhi targeted both the Centre and the Assam government. “The BJP claims it has given a double-engine government. In reality, it is a double-ghulami government. PM Modi is engaged in slavery of the US, and Himanta Biswa Sarma is engaged in slavery of Modi,” she alleged. The Congress leader also levelled accusations of crony capitalism, claiming that Assam's natural



resources were being systematically handed over to select industrial interests. “One family is looting everything in Assam. And when they are not looting, mines, land and

other assets are being handed over to big industrialists,” she said. Criticising the implementation of welfare schemes, she alleged that beneficiaries, particularly women under

the Orunodoi scheme were being coerced into attending political events. “Be it the Prime Minister's programme or the Chief Minister's, women are being forced to attend rallies or are threatened with removal from beneficiary lists. That is not how welfare schemes should function,” she said, adding that “public money does not belong to the Chief Minister.” Highlighting the concerns of tea garden workers, a key voter group in upper Assam, she accused the BJP of failing to fulfil its wage promises. “The BJP had promised Rs 300–350. Even today, workers say only a marginal increase has taken place,” she noted. Gandhi also outlined five key Congress guarantees, including justice for singer Zubeen Garg within 100 days and financial assistance for women and senior citizens. “The Assam that Zubeen Garg dreamed of—a corruption-free state is within reach if people come together for change,” she said.

SCERT Nagaland publishes instructional materials

Dimapur, Apr 02: A series of significant educational publications developed by the Social Science and Mathematics Cells of the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT), Nagaland, was formally released on March 27, 2026 by SCERT Director, Keviralei Kerhio, in the presence of academic officers of the department.

According to DIPR report, the publications include: Pamphlets on Road Safety Education for school students; A Module on Road Safety Education for school teachers; A Coffee Table Book on the Traditional Arts and Crafts of Nagaland; A Teacher Resource Book on the Teaching of Social Science in the Middle Stage and A book titled Computational Thinking: Your First Steps. The Road Safety Education pamphlets and teacher training module, developed by the Social Science Cell, aim to promote awareness among students and support teachers in integrating road safety into classroom practices. The module, aligned with NEP 2020 and NCF-SE, emphasises responsible behaviour, safety consciousness, and

life skills among children and adolescents. The Coffee Table Book and Teacher Resource Book were prepared under the guidance of Joint Director and Cell Head, Vikedono Shurhiu Sesa. While the Coffee Table Book documents the rich cultural heritage of Nagaland's traditional arts and crafts, the Teacher Resource Book has been designed specifically for teachers of Classes VI to VIII. The Mathematics Cell contributed with Computational Thinking: Your First Steps, a jargon-free guide for elementary teachers and interested readers. Through “unplugged” activities requiring no digital devices, the book illustrates how computational thinking can be integrated across subjects, strengthening logical reasoning, problem-solving, and creativity among students. SCERT Nagaland stated that these publications reflect its continued effort to provide teacher-friendly, context-based, and culturally relevant learning resources for schools across the state. The release is expected to benefit teachers and contribute to improving classroom teaching and learning.

Grand Aoleang Festival Held at Kisama Heritage Village

Kohima, Apr 02: Aoleang Festival, one of the most important festivals of the Konyak tribe, was celebrated with great enthusiasm at Naga Heritage Village in Kisama on Thursday.

Organised by the Konyak Union Kohima, the festival marked the arrival of spring and the Konyak New Year, bringing together members of the community in a vibrant display of culture and tradition.

The celebration was graced by Achumbemo Kikon, MLA and Secretary General of Naga People’s Front, as the special guest.

Speaking on the occasion, Kikon said, “Aoleang is not just a festival, it is our identity, our culture, and our unity as Konyak people. Let us preserve our traditions and pass them on to the younger generation.”

Various dignitaries, community leaders, and cultural groups also attended the event.

The programme featured traditional rituals, folk songs, dances and indigenous performances, showcasing the rich heritage and identity of the Konyak tribe.

Participants from different regions added colour and diversity to the celebration through cultural presentations and traditional attire.

Speakers at the event highlighted the significance of Aoleang as a festival of renewal, prosperity and unity, and stressed the importance of preserving indigenous customs and cultural values.

Aoleang Festival is regarded as one of the most significant cultural events of the Konyak tribe in Nagaland, symbolising the deep-rooted traditions and communal harmony of the people.

The event witnessed a strong turnout, with attendees from across Nagaland joining in the festivities at Kisama.

UPPL Unveils Manifesto for Assam Assembly Elections

Guwahati, Apr 02: Regional party United People’s Party Liberal (UPPL) has unveiled its election manifesto ahead of the Assam Assembly elections, outlining key promises focused on inclusive development, peace and socio-economic uplift in Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR).

The manifesto was formally released on Thursday by party president Pramod Boro at the party’s central office in Kokrajhar in the presence of MP Urkhao Gwra Brahma and other party leaders.

Addressing party workers and supporters, Boro described the document as a “People’s Manifesto,” prepared through extensive consultations with stakeholders and reflecting the aspirations of diverse communities across the region.

Expressing confidence of a strong electoral performance, Boro said the party is optimistic about securing a resounding victory and playing a key role in forming a “pro-marginalised, people-centric government” in Assam.

“In our manifesto, we have pledged to work for providing equal rights for all 26 deprived communities of BTR. Simultaneously, we will focus on the unemployment problem and look to empower our youths through employment avenues in agri and allied sectors,” the UPPL chief said.

Notably, UPPL has chosen to opt out of the NDA and contest the elections on its own strength.

A key focus of the manifesto is sustaining



peace and harmony among communities through dialogue, inclusive governance and the formation of subdivision-level peace committees.

The party also pledged to expedite the full implementation of the BTR Peace Accord, 2020, and push for constitutional and institutional strengthening, including the creation of 60 MCLA constituencies and direct central funding to the BTR government.

On land and community rights, UPPL promised distribution of land pattas to eligible landless families and resolution of long-pending land issues. It also proposed promoting Rabha, Koch-Rajbongshi, and Santali languages as mediums of instruction

in schools, along with support for all religious institutions and leaders across communities.

In the education and healthcare sectors, the manifesto highlights plans to expand initiatives such as scholarships, establishment of institutions like a Central University in Baksa and NIT in Udalguri, and strengthening healthcare through ambulance services, cancer care support, and adequate staffing in hospitals.

The party also laid emphasis on social welfare, including financial assistance for senior citizens, support for persons with disabilities, and schemes for pilgrims of different faiths. Youth empowerment initiatives such

as skill training centres, fellowship programmes, and employment-linked training were also promised.

“BTR wants peace and only UPPL can deliver progress. With our mission of building a peaceful, united and harmonious BTR in mind, we launched our manifesto for the 16th Assam Assembly Elections 2026 this morning,” Boro later took to social media to further state.

“UPPL is a party devoted to peace, integrity and progress, and our manifesto reflects the aspirations of every community and every section of society in BTR. I’m confident that the people will bless us with a historic mandate to fulfil every promise,” he said.

Week-Long Operation Yields ₹25 Crore Drug Seizure in Mizoram, 8 Held

Aizawl, Apr 02: Over the past week, Mizoram police have disrupted several smuggling modules and seized drugs, especially heroin and methamphetamine, valued at ₹25.01 crore at various sites throughout the state, according to a senior officer. The crackdown, spanning from March 25 to March 31, resulted in the arrest of 8 people, including two Myanmar nationals, four from Manipur and one from Assam, Inspector

General of Police (Headquarters) H Ramthlengliana said.The most significant operation took place on the morning of March 25, when the CID (Special Branch) operation team intercepted a truck at Tuirial Bridge near Aizawl.

A meticulous search of the truck, which was proceeding towards Aizawl from Seiling in Saitual district, revealed 19.836 kg of Methamphetamine (Yaba) tablets valued at ₹15.86 crore, he said in a

statement on Wednesday. The 23-year-old driver, a resident of east Mizoram’s Champhai district on the Indo-Myanmar border, was taken into custody, he said.Ramthlengliana said that in three operations near Keifang in Saitual district between March 27 and March 29, police teams intercepted three vehicles, leading to the recovery of 4.46 kg of heroin altogether worth ₹8.93 crore.

Four residents of Mani-

pur and one from Assam were arrested in Keifang. In another operation on March 31, two Myanmarese nationals were arrested in Zembawk area in Aizawl for possessing 104 grams of heroin valued at ₹20.4 lakh.The IGP said that multiple cases have been registered against the eight accused under the Narcotic Drugs & Psychotropic Substances Act, the Arms Act, and the Immigration and Foreigners Act.

Assam Rifles Holds Drone Training for Central Industrial Security Force Staff

Guwahati, Apr 02: The Assam Rifles conducted a comprehensive drone awareness and training session for personnel of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF).

A press release issued on Thursday stated that the drone awareness and training session was conducted for CISF personnel at the Assam Rifles ground in Agartala, Tripura on April 1 to enhance preparedness against emerging aerial threats.

The session covered drone types, capabilities, security challenges and SOPs for identification, threat assessment and response. Live demonstrations and hands-on training provided practical exposure to drone handling and recognition. “With the increasing use of drones in both civilian and security domains, the training aimed to familiarise CISF personnel with the evolving challenges posed by unmanned aerial systems and equip them



with the necessary skills to respond effectively”, the release said.

The initiative strengthened inter-agency co-

ordination, improved technical awareness and enhanced readiness to tackle drone-related scenarios, it added.

Cong handed over Kaziranga to infiltrators: Amit Shah

Kaziranga, Apr 02: Union Home Minister Amit Shah today alleged the Congress did nothing for Assam’s development during its 15-year rule in the state.

Addressing an election rally at Kaliabor, he alleged the Congress handed over the Kaziranga National Park to infiltrators who encroached on forest land and endangered the one-horned rhinoceros.

“It was the NDA government that evicted the encroachers and ensured Kaziranga was once again on the world tourism map,” he said.

Shah targeted Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, who is also on a visit to the poll-bound state today, saying, “What did the Congress

do for the state during its rule?”

“Prime Minister Manmohan Singh represented Assam, but neither the then Central government nor the state government did anything for its development,” he alleged.

When infiltrators are removed from encroached land, the Congress tries to portray it as faith-based politics, the Union minister alleged.“I want to make it clear that the BJP is against infiltrators and is not opposed to indigenous Muslims in Assam”.

On a two-day visit to the state, Shah campaigned for the BJP’s alliance partner Asom Gana Parishad’s (AGP) candidate and Minister Keshab Mahanta in Kaliabor. He will address three rallies on Friday.

Probe into Zubeen Garg’s death has concluded, no evidence of foul play: Singapore police

Guwahati, Apr 02: The Singapore Police Force (SPF) has confirmed that investigations into the death of singer Zubeen Garg in Singapore on September 19, 2025, have concluded and there is no evidence of foul play.

In accordance with the Singapore Coroners Act 2010, the SPF investigated the case thoroughly, and examined available evidence and recorded statements from all relevant witnesses, a statement issued by SPF’s Public Affairs Department stated.

“SPF’s investigations established that Zubeen Garg was on a yacht trip in the waters off Lazarus Island. He had initially worn a life jacket while swimming but later removed it and returned to the yacht without his life jacket on

him. When he entered the water the second time, he swam alone and away from the yacht without a life jacket, despite being offered one before entering the water. Subsequently, while swimming back towards the yacht, he was observed to have become unresponsive,” the statement said.

“He was promptly rescued by the captain of the yacht and members of his group and brought back to the yacht, where cardiopulmonary resuscitation was immediately administered. A Police Coast Guard boat was dispatched shortly after the emergency call, and officers arrived promptly to render assistance. Zubeen Garg was attended to by paramedics upon reaching shore and was conveyed promptly by ambulance to Singapore General

al Hospital, where he subsequently passed away,” it said.

The SPF statement further mentioned that post-mortem findings, including toxicology analysis and autopsy results, were consistent with a case of death by drowning. The toxicology analysis revealed a high concentration of ethanol (333mg/100ml) in his blood sample, which would have caused severe intoxication, impaired coordination and reflexes in an individual not habituated to ethanol. Other substances detected were within therapeutic ranges and consistent with his existing medical conditions of epilepsy and hypertension.

The findings were submitted to the State Coroner for the Coroner’s Inquiry (CI), which is a fact-finding process led by the State Cor-

oner to establish the cause and circumstances of death. The State Coroner considered all evidence, including the SPF’s investigation findings, and ruled the death of Zubeen Garg as an accidental drowning with no evidence of foul play, consistent with what SPF had found through its investigations. The Coroner also found no evidence to suggest that Zubeen Garg’s death was caused by an anaphylactic reaction to medications, substances, food, or drinks.

“The SPF extends our deepest condolences to the family and loved ones of Zubeen Garg. Members of the public are reminded to refrain from comments that impugn the integrity of the Court’s judgment or the judicial process,” the statement added.

Rahul Gandhi Vows to Implement Article 244(A) in Karbi Anglong



Karbi Anglong, Apr 02: Congress leader and Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, today promised to implement Article 244(a) in Karbi Anglong if his party comes to power

Gandhi is on a tour of Assam to campaign for party candidates in Karbi Anglong and Jorhat ahead of the ensuing Assembly elections. Addressing a poll ral-

ly at Bokajan in Karbi Anglong district, he said the Indian National Congress believes in decentralisation of power.

Article 244A provides for the formation of an autonomous state comprising all or part of the tribal areas in Assam, as listed under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, along with a local legislature or council of ministers. The Sixth Sched-

ule enables the creation of autonomous district councils (ADCs) in tribal areas of Assam, Mizoram, Tripura and Meghalaya.

Gandhi added that local leaders should govern the region, not authorities from Delhi or Guwahati, stressing that meaningful change must come from the grassroots. He accused the BJP of trying to run this State from Delhi.

Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma Officially Kicks Off The Digital Self Enumeration Exercise For The 2027 Population Census

Aizawl, Apr 02: Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma on Wednesday completed his self-enumeration under Phase I of the Census 2027, marking an early adoption of the country’s first fully digital census process, officials said. The Chief Minister carried out the houselisting and housing census at his official residence in Aizawl using the newly launched online census portal. The process was facilitated by officials from the Aizawl Municipal Corporation, the General Administration Department, and the Directorate of Census Operations. Following his lead, other senior leaders, including Home Minister K. Sapdanga and PWD Minister Vanlalhlana, also completed their self-enumeration during the day. Senior officials from the state government and the Census Department supervised the exercise to ensure the smooth rollout of the digital interface.

The Census of India 2027 represents a significant shift in data collection, being the first to be conducted entirely through digital means. The exercise will be carried



out in two phases. The first phase—Houselisting and Housing Census, commenced on April 1, while the second phase, Population Enumeration, is scheduled for February next year. In a first, citizens have been given the option to self-enumerate. In Mizoram, the self-enumeration window will remain open from April 1 to April 15. This will be followed by the broader houselisting and housing census conducted by officials from April 16 to May 15. Residents can complete the process

by visiting the official census portal, registering with their mobile number, selecting their location, and submitting household details. Upon completion, a unique Self-Enumeration ID (SE ID) is generated, which must be shared with enumerators during their visit to ensure proper inclusion in the census database. The Mizoram government has urged residents to actively participate in the digital initiative, highlighting its importance in ensuring accurate data collection and enabling the efficient conduct

of the nationwide census exercise. Speaking at a function of the ruling Zoram People’s Movement (ZPM) in Aizawl to announce the names of candidates for the upcoming Aizawl Municipal Corporation (AMC) elections, the Chief Minister broke his silence on the recent claims made by the Mizoram Pradesh Youth Congress Committee (MPYCC).

The MPYCC had accused Lalduhoma of an unprecedentedly rapid accumulation of massive wealth through the strategic acquisition of vast tracts of land near key development zones within his constituency in Serchhip district. Lalduhoma argued that veteran MLAs would understand the unique pressures of representing a constituency, where leaders are often approached by residents facing extreme financial hardship. “I have been elected from this (Serchhip) constituency three times. I acquired these lands not because I needed or wanted them, but because people in distress pleaded with me to buy their farms so they could stay afloat,” the Chief Minister explained. He claimed that these trans-

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The Importance of Long-Term Thinking

In many aspects of life, decisions are often influenced by immediate benefits. However, long-term thinking is essential for sustainable progress and stability. Long-term thinking involves considering the future impact of present actions. It requires individuals and institutions to look beyond short-term gains and plan for lasting outcomes. In personal life, long-term thinking helps individuals make decisions that support future goals. Whether in education, career, or financial planning, considering long-term consequences leads to better results. In governance and policy-making, long-term thinking is crucial for addressing issues such as environmental sustainability and economic development. Short-term solutions may provide temporary relief but fail to address underlying problems. In professional environments, organisations that focus on long-term goals are more likely to achieve stability and growth. Strategic planning ensures that resources are used effectively. Education systems should encourage long-term thinking by promoting planning and goal-setting. Understanding the importance of future consequences helps individuals make informed choices. A lack of long-term thinking can lead to unsustainable practices and repeated challenges. Balancing immediate needs with future considerations is essential. A society that values long-term thinking becomes more stable and forward-looking. By planning for the future, individuals and institutions can achieve sustainable progress.

Safeguarding Bangladesh’s energy prospects

In recent weeks, energy has been one of the most discussed topics—whether in the news, seminars, articles, or the global stock market—not just for Bangladesh but for the rest of the world. Securing energy resources is key, as it determines how the economy will prosper in the years ahead. Before exploring our potential energy opportunities, I would like to briefly share our current state based on the chart above. The green area in the chart reflects Bangladesh’s domestic gas production, which in recent years has included both national companies—Bangladesh Gas Fields Company Limited (BGFCL), Sylhet Gas Fields Limited (SGFL), Bangladesh Petroleum Exploration & Production Company Limited (BAPEX)—and international oil companies such as Chevron. In the last six fiscal years, gas production has declined by about 30 percent. This sharp decline has led to increased dependence on liquefied natural gas (LNG) imports. Based on Petrobangla’s daily production report (available on the Energy and Mineral Resources Division site), the trend continues in 2026, with domestic gas production in the range of 1,700–1,750 mmcfcd.

According to the Hydrocarbon Unit, Energy and Mineral Resources Division (EMRD) annual report (2024–2025), major sector gas consumption was as follows: power (41 percent), industry (19 percent), captive (17 percent), domestic (11 percent), fertilizer (6 percent), and the remainder by CNG and commercial. It will be important to develop a comprehensive asset plan and carry it through to reach the full potential of each gas field. Some fields may require workovers, debottlenecking, new compressor projects, or better management of production losses through predictive maintenance. Robust planning and the use of technology can also improve the efficiency of turnarounds—for example, by using robots for tank inspections, drones for flare inspections, and reducing the number and duration of shutdowns. In the oil and gas industry, we often say that every barrel matters. In addition, each asset should carry out an exercise to identify any additional resources that could potentially be converted into reserves and ultimately into production, without applying constraints such as gas pricing, costs, budget limits, or other resourcing challenges. Running an unconstrained exercise like this helps shift the mindset from “what cannot be done” to “what we can do.”



The opportunities identified through this process, even those not currently economically viable under existing terms or blocked by other constraints, should be prioritized and escalated for discussion so that those barriers can be addressed quickly. LNG spot prices are currently several times higher than domestic gas. Given this gap, onshore opportunities should be accelerated with urgency as part of our broader energy security strategy. We will need to entice IOCs with

the right fiscal incentives; otherwise, every bid round will fall behind in terms of timeline. Several technological advancements have taken place in recent years, including modern OBN (ocean bottom node) seismic, the use of AI for faster prospect maturation and better imaging, the first high-pressure (20K PSI) wells drilled in the anchor project, future cost-effective tieback opportunities when discoveries are too small for standalone facilities, and advanced remote operations. Offshore projects remain some of the longest and most complex in the oil and gas portfolio. It is important to understand how the LNG trade flow is shaping up now. The majority of the world’s LNG demand is in Asia. In other

regions, Europe used to be dependent on Russia. Since the Russia-Ukraine war, Europe has rapidly shifted and started relying on LNG from the U.S. According to the American Petroleum Institute (API), Europe has become the largest destination for U.S. LNG, with a record 67 percent going to the EU and UK between January and April 2025. This trend is most likely to continue in the near future. Reuters reported that about 90 percent of Australia’s LNG exports go to Japan, South Korea, and China. LNG expansion from the African region will likely target Europe and other Asian countries. According to the IEA, Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan imported almost two-thirds of their total LNG supplies through the Strait of Hormuz in 2025. As our contracted LNG is now impacted, we are increasingly dependent on the spot market. According to various newspaper reports, it is encouraging to see that Bangladesh is managing to secure several LNG cargoes for April. Going forward, as Bangladesh continues to compete for LNG with other Asian countries, it would be a good strategy to limit our exposure to spot prices. Along with Qatar, which will likely remain a longer-term, affordable supplier, we must secure backup options by arranging term contracts from non-Middle Eastern countries. Shahid Shamsu is an oil and gas professional with more than 20 years of experience. Views expressed in this article are the author’s own. He can be reached at: sshamsu@alumni.harvard.

As military exercises increase, the transfer of weapons to Taiwan exacerbates tensions between the US and China

On October 13, 2025, the US approved the sale to Taiwan of spare parts for fighter jets and other aircraft for \$330 million. The US has said that the proposed sale would improve Taiwan’s capability to meet current and future threats by maintaining the operational readiness of its fleet of F-16, C-130, and other aircraft. The US is bound by its Taiwan Relations Act of 1979 to provide Taiwan with arms of a defensive character. This was the first such transaction since President Donald Trump took office in January. It would be recalled that when Trump and Chinese President Xi met late last month in South Korea in an effort to secure a trade deal, there were fears that for securing the trade deal, there could be some sort of “selling out” of Taiwan’s interests by Trump to Xi. It would also be recalled that in September this year Trump had declined to approve \$400 million in military aid to Taiwan while negotiating on trade and a potential summit with the Chinese President. Naturally, Taiwan has welcomed the proposed US arms sales and expressed gratitude for it, viewing them as crucial for enhancing its self-defence capabilities against China’s military threats. Taiwan’s Presidential Office Spokesperson Karen Kuo stated that Taiwan is sincerely grateful to the US government “for its unwavering commitment to continue the policy of normalising arms sales to Taiwan, strengthen the cooperative security relationship between Taiwan and the US, and support Taiwan in enhancing self-defence capabilities and resilience.” However, China has expressed anger. A Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson stated that the move seriously violates the one-China principle and warned that China will take “all necessary measures” to defend its sovereignty. The Chinese Foreign Ministry

spokesperson said that “the Taiwan question is the core of China’s interests and that it is a red line that must not be crossed in China-US relations,” adding that the arms sales would send a “gravely wrong signal” to Taiwan’s separatist forces. China claims Taiwan as its own territory and has not ruled out the use of force to take control of the island. On the other hand, Taiwan’s government strongly objects to Beijing’s sovereignty claims and says that only Taiwan’s people can decide their future. In this background, the potential for escalation is a constant concern for the region, and US policy becomes an important factor. Taiwan was not part of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) from the beginning. The PRC was established in 1949 after the Chinese Civil War, while the government of the Republic of China (ROC) retreated to Taiwan, which has been the ROC government’s effective jurisdiction ever since. The ROC had previously governed mainland China before the war, and prior to that, Taiwan had been a Japanese colony from 1895 to 1945, having been returned to ROC administration after World War II. America’s policy toward Taiwan is defined by strategic ambiguity, as the US deliberately does not state whether it would intervene militarily if China attacked Taiwan. This ambiguity is intended to deter China from attacking and to prevent Taiwan from unilaterally declaring independence. Even though the US does not formally recognise Taiwan as an independent state, it maintains unofficial ties through organizations like the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT), which functions as a de facto embassy. The Taiwan Relations Act (TRA), passed by the US Congress in 1979, mandates that the US provide Taiwan with defensive arms and maintain the capacity to resist any resort to force that would jeopardize

Taiwan’s security. The US acknowledges Beijing’s position that there is “one China” and that Taiwan is part of China. However, the US does not explicitly endorse Beijing’s claim of sovereignty over Taiwan. The US has increased military cooperation with Taiwan, though it does not have a permanent military presence there. This cooperation includes joint exercises and training, with small numbers of American military personnel sometimes present on the island in an advisory capacity. A core part of US policy is to provide Taiwan with arms of a defensive character. While Washington maintains that these sales support Taiwan’s defence and are part of a long-standing policy, military sales remain a recurring source of friction in the already complex US-China relationship. China has been conducting war drills near Taiwan. The drills have included naval and air force patrols, as well as simulated strikes on key Taiwanese infrastructure. China states that the drills are a stern warning against what it views as separatism. Recent drills have involved sending numerous military aircraft, warships, and coast guard vessels to surround Taiwan. Some exercises have included long-range live-fire drills practicing precision strikes on Taiwanese targets such as ports and energy facilities. Therefore, US sales of jet and other aircraft parts significantly help Taiwan by enabling it to maintain the operational readiness of its air force, bolster its air defences, and strengthen its self-defence capabilities against potential aggression from China. China’s threat to Taiwan is serious, driven by Beijing’s goal of “reunification” and a rapidly modernising military. China’s posturing toward Taiwan is one of increasing military, diplomatic, and economic coercion, asserting its claim of sovereignty while preparing for potential forceful

unification. Beijing views Taiwan as a breakaway province and has not ruled out the use of force to achieve its goal of “reunification”, a goal President Xi Jinping considers an “inevitable requirement”. China has significantly escalated its military pressure, conducting frequent and large-scale military exercises resembling “dress rehearsals” for an invasion around the island. These actions include regular incursions of People’s Liberation Army (PLA) aircraft and naval vessels into Taiwan’s air defence identification zone (ADIZ) and across the Taiwan Strait’s median line, which China no longer formally recognises. Drills in May and October 2024, titled “Joint Sword,” simulated a full-scale blockade and precision strikes on key targets. Beijing’s efforts are to normalise a high tempo of military activity, creating a “new normal” in the Strait to wear down Taiwan’s defences and reduce its warning time for a real attack. This involves systematic preparation of military and civilian infrastructure for a potential cross-strait operation, including developing amphibious landing capabilities using civilian ferries and stockpiling resources. The Taiwan issue is also a major source of tension between Japan and China, with recent events demonstrating a significant escalation in diplomatic and security friction. Taiwan is located just over 110 km from Japanese territory, and key maritime trade routes critical to Japan’s economy run through the area. A conflict in the Taiwan Strait is viewed by Japan as a direct threat to its own national security, potentially a “survival-threatening situation”. While officially maintaining strategic ambiguity and hoping for a peaceful resolution, some Japanese leaders have stated that Japan could not stand by if China invaded Taiwan, suggesting potential military involvement alongside the United

States. This view is often described as “a Taiwan emergency is a Japan emergency”. China, which claims Taiwan as its territory and has not ruled out the use of force for reunification, views any Japanese involvement as gross interference in its internal affairs and a challenge to its core interests. Beijing has issued stern warnings, with its military cautioning Japan of a “crushing defeat” if it intervened militarily. Comments by Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi, suggesting that Japan could use its self-defence forces in the event of a Chinese attack, led to an intense “war of words”, diplomatic protests, and the summoning of ambassadors by both sides in November 2025. A Chinese diplomat even made an inflammatory social media post that was interpreted as a physical threat to the Japanese Prime Minister, further worsening relations. Thus, Japan’s security concerns over a potential Taiwan conflict clash directly with China’s sovereignty claims, creating a volatile dynamic that significantly heightens tensions between the two regional powers. The issue touches on existing historical grievances between the two nations, which remain a sensitive point in bilateral relations and add to the current friction. Taiwan is economically crucial to the US and the world, primarily due to its dominance in the global semiconductor industry, producing most of the world’s advanced chips essential for modern technology. Its importance extends to other supply chains for goods like apparel and bicycles, and it is a significant trading partner for the US and many other countries. America sees Taiwan as a secure and trusted partner in diversifying supply chains away from China, particularly for advanced technology products. Taiwan’s role as a global leader in advanced semiconductor manufacturing makes its production critical for

economies worldwide. The disruption of these chips would affect the supply of numerous technologies globally. Beyond semiconductors, Taiwan is a key player in other high-tech supply chains for a variety of products, making it an indispensable link in the global economy. Taiwan is a significant trading partner for many nations, with major exports including electronics, metals, plastics, and chemicals. Its key export markets include China, the US, Japan, and other Southeast Asian and European countries. Taiwan is also an important trading partner for India, with their bilateral trade growing steadily, reaching around \$11.78 billion in 2024-2025. India’s imports from Taiwan are crucial, especially for items like semiconductors, electronics, precision machinery, and solar cells. Over 300 Taiwanese companies have invested in India, creating around 200,000 jobs across various sectors like IT, electronics, and machinery. The partnership is evolving beyond just trade to encompass technology, manufacturing, and innovation. Taiwan’s advanced manufacturing expertise is seen as complementary to India’s large consumer market and industrial goals. Summing up, the US sale of aircraft parts to Taiwan will likely strain US-China relations, increasing tensions as China views such sales as interference in its internal affairs and a threat to regional stability. The sale will improve Taiwan’s ability to maintain its existing fleet of F-16 and C-130 aircraft, bolstering its self-defence capabilities. While China has warned of serious consequences and may impose sanctions, the US frames the sale as a necessary sustainment measure for existing aircraft rather than an escalation. The issue is a core flashpoint that requires careful diplomatic management by both sides to prevent miscalculation.

Is democracy in decline

We assume that we are living in a democratic society. However, what if it is merely a delusion, and in fact, we are living in an authoritarian, totalitarian society where democracy is falling apart? Indeed, we are now witnessing a worldwide crisis of democracy. Recently, scholars of political science have diagnosed the decline of democracy as a global phenomenon. They argue that in the past, it was either military coups or tyrannical rule that threatened and crushed democracy. Today, however, they say that democracy is waning silently before we become aware of it, even under lawfully elected governments. What, then, are the factors that make democracy decline these days? In his book, “The Crisis of Democracy,” Weixiong Li argues that democracy today is threatened by socialism, populism, polarization, ideological brainwashing, teachers’ unions and government debts. Granted this definition, democracy is vulnerable in any country that is divided by mutually antagonizing ideologies or ruled by leaders who adopt political or economic populism. Some experts perceive the following as the reasons for the recent downfall of democracy in Korea: extremism, rule by law, no transparency, political vengeance, election manipulation and fabrication of data to deceive the public. Others add the following: no separation of powers, weakening of judicial independence, manipulating the National Assembly, and seeking a single-party system by ignoring or eliminating the opposition party. Indeed, we are now living in a polarized society where extremism is rampant, and democracy is deteriorating and disappearing. We are also living in a deceptive, vindictive society where fake news and lies are ubiquitous, and political vendettas are constantly recurring. In such a society, we are subjected to a “rule by law” that denounces democracy. We know that “rule by law” effectively means politicians are using legislation as a tool for political revenge and control. The problem is that the crisis of democracy is so subtle and clandestine that we do not even realize it until it has ruined our country completely. In the US TV drama “Homeland,” US President Elizabeth Keane addresses the American people. “When we think of democracy dying, we think of revolutions, of military coup d’etats, of armed men in the street,” she says. “But that’s less and less how it happens anymore. Democracy now dies when we’re not looking, when we’re not paying attention. And the end rarely comes in an instant, but arrives slowly, like twilight. At first, our eyes don’t notice.” As Keane says, people do not notice it, even though democracy is dying in their country. Indeed, we do not realize it, even though our political leaders defy democracy to control people and stay in power. We do not feel the crisis because such a phenomenon happens in subtle and inconspicuous ways and because we have elected our politicians through fair elections. In fact, democracy can be threatened by many factors. Undoubtedly, populism is one of them.

To mobilize supporters, political leaders always use populism to undermine democracy. Both left-wing and right-wing populism can irreparably damage the foundations of democracy. For example, left-wing populism may damage not only a country’s economy, but also its democracy by using “people power” for political gain, antagonizing economic elites and distributing money in the name of social justice. Right-wing populism, too, can cause the decline of democracy by pursuing ultranationalism. Political commentators have noted that right-wing populism usually targets cultural elites and ethnic minorities who they say stand in the way of a monocultural and homogeneous national identity. Of course, democracy has its own downsides, too. For example, democracy’s “rule of the majority” may end up being another type of dictatorship by suppressing minority rights, even though it is a cornerstone of democratic decision-making. It can also contribute to electing dictators or incompetent political leaders because voters can be irrational or ignorant and thus easily manipulated by propaganda. Democracy also may inadvertently create extreme divisions, polarization, and chaos because it allows different opinions and factions. Still, however, democracy is the best option available to us because the opposite of democracy is tyranny or dictatorship.

Motilal Oswal sees 22% upside as ‘Digital-first’ brands scale

Mumbai: Marico is in focus after Motilal Oswal reiterated a ‘Buy’ rating on the stock with a target price of Rs 900, implying an upside of about 22% from current levels. The brokerage is positive on Marico’s core business stability and the growth in its newer segments, like foods and digital brands. Marico: Core business remains resilient

According to Motilal Oswal, the India business delivered high single-digit volume growth and around 30% value growth in the first nine months of FY26. The international business, which contributes roughly a quarter of total revenue, grew about 18% during the same period. Low exposure to the MENA region, which contributes less than 5% of revenue, has further limited geopolitical risks, the report explained. Marico is in focus after Motilal Oswal reiterated a ‘Buy’ rating on the stock with a target price of Rs 900, implying an upside of about 22% from current levels. The brokerage is positive on Marico’s core business stability and the growth in its newer segments, like foods and digital brands. Marico: Core business remains resilient According to Motilal Oswal, the India business delivered high single-digit vol-



ume growth and around 30% value growth in the first nine months of FY26. The international business, which contributes roughly a quarter of total revenue, grew about 18% during the same period. Low exposure to the MENA region, which contributes less than 5% of revenue, has further limited geopolitical risks, the report explained. In comparison, crude derivatives and packaging account for only about 18–20% of raw materials. This positions Marico among the few FMCG players expected to see margin expansion in FY27, with management guiding for a 150–200 basis point improvement, the report said. Revenues from the food

segment have already scaled significantly, crossing Rs 900 crore in FY25, and are expected to expand further to nearly 15 times FY20 levels by FY30, the report noted. Growth is being driven by brands such as Saffola Oats and True Elements, along with newer additions like 4700BC and Cosmix, the report said. These acquired brands are expected to scale 3–3.5 times by FY30, according to the brokerage firm. The report noted that operational improvements, including supply chain efficiencies and go-to-market refinements, have already led to significant margin expansion in the segment. Digital brands gather momentum

Marico’s digital-first portfolio, which includes brands such as Beardo and Plix, continues to scale rapidly. Beardo has grown around five times between FY21 and FY26, while Plix has expanded about six times since FY24, as per the report. These brands are also improving profitability, with the digital-first personal care segment expected to deliver double-digit EBITDA margins by FY27 and improve further over time. Margins and profitability outlook Marico’s margins were impacted in FY26 due to elevated copra prices, but the outlook is improving. With input costs easing and a higher share of premium products, EBITDA margins are expected to recover to about 18.8% in FY27 and 19.1% in FY28, as per the report. Motilal Oswal expects the company to deliver a revenue, EBITDA and adjusted profit CAGR of about 12%, 18% and 16%, respectively, over FY26–28. Marico is also expanding its distribution reach through Project SETU, and acquisitions such as 4700BC, Cosmix and Candid are expected to contribute around 5% of total revenue by FY30. Motilal Oswal values the stock at 50 times FY28 earnings, maintaining its ‘Buy’ rating.

US stock investors profited 25% as the S&P 500 rose 14% and the rupee fell 10%

Mumbai: INR-USD exchange rate. Over the last decade, returns in the US and Indian stock markets have been identical their own independent due diligence and seek advice from a SEBI-registered financial advisor. The rupee-dollar exchange rate was another significant benefit for Indian investors in the last year. S&P 500 returned 14% in the last year, compared to a negative 4% in a way, in dollar terms, the S&P 500 has outperformed the BSE 500 by nearly 30% in FY 2025-26. And this may not be a one-time story. Historically, the INR has kept depreciating against the dollar.



“INR depreciation has been persistent, driven by factors like trade deficit, inflation differential, and re-

liance on dollar-linked imports such as crude and electronics. 14%, and because the two compound rather

than add, an Indian investor who simply put On April 1, paying Rs 85.6 and invested it in a US stock. But when you sell the stock and bring your funds back to India, you get the exchange rate applicable on March 31, 2026 — Rs 94.6. Ignoring taxes and forex charges, the gain even when the stock price stays flat is Rs 94.6 minus Rs 85.6 = Rs 9, or 9.5%. Even after adjusting for that, the effective return would still be in the approx 23–24% range. The key point is that currency does not add linearly; it compounds. It acts more like a multiplier on returns over time.

Will the Stock of IDBI Bank Reach Rs 50

Mumbai: The Indian stock markets have experienced a steep decline over the past few weeks, with several stocks, including prominent blue-chip companies, hitting 52-week lows. Among the notable laggards is IDBI Bank, which has faced an even sharper downturn during this period. The stock has witnessed a significant erosion in investor wealth, tumbling from its 52-week high of Rs 118.28 in January to its current trading price of Rs 64.66 on 27 March 2026. This marks a substantial drop of nearly 45% within just three months. In the editorial let’s examine some of factors that could determine the direction of the stock. The privatisation (disinvestment) setback was the main trigger for the sharp decline in the stock. Investors had already priced in a “privatisation premium”. They expected better management, higher

profitability and improved governance post the sale. When privatisation looked unlikely, that premium disappeared overnight, causing a sharp correction. Reports suggested that the Government of India and LIC may scrap or pause the stake sale of IDBI Bank. The sale failed mainly because bids came below the expected valuation (reserve price). The revival of privatisation remains the single most powerful catalyst because it changes how the market values the bank entirely. If the government and LIC move ahead with stake sale and attract a credible private buyer, the market will immediately begin pricing in swifter decision making, faster loan growth, and improved return ratios. Even partial progress—such as renewed bidding interest or clearer timelines—can trigger a strong rally because investors anticipate

future transformation well in advance. Sustained profit growth is the next critical factor, but what matters is the consistency and quality of earnings. IDBI Bank has already done the hard work of cleaning up its balance sheet and exiting its stressed phase. If the bank demonstrates predictable earnings growth over many quarters, the market could assign it a higher multiple, treating it less as a turnaround case and more as a stable financial a different class of investors—those seeking steady income along with moderate growth. Improvement in core banking metrics is essential for any sustained rally. Investors will closely track indicators like loan growth, CASA ratio, and fee-based income. Strong loan growth signals demand and expansion, while a higher CASA ratio reduces funding costs and improves margins.

Eight warships, a huge 129% dividend, and a record

Mumbai: .BEL shares jump 7%: FY26 revenue jumps 16%, orders hit Rs 30,000 crore—“FY26 saw key milestones in naval shipbuilding, with the commissioning of five vessels during the year, including INS Himgiri, the first Project 17A Advanced Frigate, INS Ikshak, the third Survey Vessel (Large) and the first three Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Crafts (ASW-SWC)—INS Amala, INS Androth and INS Anjadip,” GRSE said in its regulatory release. GRSE delivers 8 warships to Indian Navy in FY26 GRSE delivered a total of eight vessels to the Indian Navy during the year. These included two Project 17A frigates,

two Survey Vessel Large ships and four ASW Shallow Water Crafts. The shipyard is also in advanced stages of finalising a major contract for five Next Generation Corvettes, which could further boost its order book. Beyond defence, During the year, GRSE launched a first-of-its-kind Modular Foot Suspension Bridge, an indigenous structure capable of spanning up to 400 feet without requiring piers. The company also delivered seven 30mm Naval Surface Gun systems to the Indian Navy and carried out multiple refit projects. Ltd, Kalyani Strategic Systems Ltd, SWAN Defence & Heavy Industries Ltd and Reintjes GmbH.

The directive left banks scrambling to unwind arbitrage trades, where they had been buying dollars locally and selling them offshore. As those positions were reversed, the gap between onshore and offshore forwards surged to the highest since 2020. With only one trading session left this week on Thursday, volumes are expected to stay subdued at least for now. Banks have sought a delay to the deadline, but if the RBI offers no leeway by April 6, there will be sharper moves ahead. Requests for flexibility are still being made, the traders added. Overnight implied volatility on the dollar-rupee climbed this week to the highest levels seen since

As banks the rupee is expected to descend into pandemonium

Mumbai: The biggest shock to India’s currency market in years is set to worsen as banks prepare to unwind billions of dollars more in arbitrage trades. The Reserve Bank of India’s decision to clamp down on bearish rupee positions late Friday sparked a race by bankers to plead for a rethink as they fielded anxious client calls and gamed out ways to limit losses on trades estimated to be worth at least \$30 billion. The RBI’s move is one of its boldest attempts in more than a decade to rein in currency speculation. After an initial jump, the rupee changed course and slid to a fresh low, highlighting the deeper pressures — from elevated oil prices to persistent capital outflows and a widening trade deficit. India is particularly exposed to the fallout from the Iran war and surging energy costs due to its reliance on imports. The currency closed around the 94.80 per dollar level on Monday, with the gap between the day’s high and low the widest since 2013.

November 2020, signaling traders are bracing for exaggerated price swings. The traders and bankers Bloomberg News spoke to have asked not to be identified as they aren’t authorized to speak publicly. Exit Strategies The early market moves followed a weekend of intense calls across treasury desks, as teams mapped out scenarios after the RBI’s announcement. Some were flooded with enquiries from offshore investors seeking clarity on how positions would be handled. At one foreign lender, staff fielded near-continuous calls through Saturday, with some spending more than half a day on the phone. By Monday morning, many had already identified the need to reduce their exposures. Dealing rooms that would typically come alive closer to the market open were staffed before dawn, as banks rushed to assess exposures and prepare exit strategies. One dealer said they began cutting risk as early as 8 a.m. in Mumbai, an hour before the official open, after spotting a sharp dislocation between offshore non-deliverable forwards and the domestic

BHIM launches ‘Mahi Way’ campaign with MS Dhoni to drive trust-led digital payment adoption

Kohima: BHIM Payments App, developed by NPCI BHIM Services Limited, has unveiled its new ‘Mahi Way’ campaign, aimed at reinforcing simplicity, security and reliability in digital transactions. The campaign positions BHIM as a dependable platform enabling users to complete payments instantly, while strengthening trust among both existing and new users. The 360-degree campaign features brand ambassador Mahendra Singh Dhoni, aligning his calm and dependable persona with BHIM’s user experience. Built around the thought “BHIM App se karo pay, it’s the Mahi Way,” the campaign highlights everyday payment scenarios where users choose a simple and reliable option amid multiple choices. The films showcase BHIM’s scan-and-pay functionality and instant rewards, emphasising



ing quick and worry-free transactions. Lalitha Nataraj, MD & CEO of NBSL, said trust remains central to digital payment adoption in India, adding that the campaign reflects consumer preference for secure and seamless transactions. Conceptualised by Tilt Brand Solutions, the campaign will roll out across television, digital platforms, cinema and outdoor media. The flagship film will be released in a 25-second format, supported by 10- and 15-second edits, and will

be available in 11 languages including Hindi, English, Assamese and other regional languages. In Kohima, the campaign is expected to gain traction as digital payment adoption rises among small businesses and young consumers in Nagaland. BHIM’s multi-lingual outreach and focus on ease of use could support wider acceptance of QR-based transactions, particularly in semi-urban pockets where trust and simplicity remain key drivers of fintech adoption.

Amir Chand Jagdish Kumar shares list at 5%

Mumbai: Amir Chand Jagdish Kumar share price listed at a significant discount to the issue price of Rs 212 per share. The shares listed at Rs 200 per share, a 5% discount on NSE. On BSE, the shares listed at Rs 195 per share. Amir Chand Jagdish Kumar IPO: Subscription details A quick look at the issue. This was a book-built issue of Rs 440 crores. The issue is entirely a fresh issue of 2.08 crore shares. The issue was subscribed 3.41 times. The retail category was 1.44 times while the QIB section and the NIIs were subscribed 1.18 times and 13 times respectively. Sai Parenterals lists at 2% premium to issue price; shares up over 1% in a falling market Amir Chand Jagdish Kumar: IPO objectives The company proposes to utilise net proceeds from fresh issue towards its working capital requirements and general corporate purposes. Incorporated in 2003, Amir Chand Jagdish Kumar (Exports) is an India-based processor and exporter of premium basmati rice, operating under the flagship brand ‘Aeroplane’. The company is engaged in the sourcing, processing, aging, packaging, and distribution of basmati rice across domestic and international markets,

catering to both retail (B2C) and institutional (B2B) customers. Emkay Global Financial Services and Keynote Financial Services are the book running lead managers to the Issue. KFin Technologies Limited is the Registrar to the Issue. Incorporated in 2003, Amir Chand Jagdish Kumar (Exports) is an India-based prThe company is engaged in the sourcing, processing, aging, packaging, and distribution of basmati rice across domestic and international markets, catering to both retail (B2C) and institutional (B2B) customers. On the export front, the company has established a presence across multiple geographies, particularly in the Middle East, Europe, and North America, leveraging long-standing customer relationships and distribution networks. Its international business is largely B2B-driven, supplying to distributors, retailers, and private label clients, while its domestic business IPO: Expert take The company ranks among the top three players by revenue in the Indian basmati rice segment, driven by its flagship ‘Aeroplane’ brand, which includes over 40 sub-brands and benefits from more than four decades of market presence.



Hegseth claims suspensions were removed for helicopter operators that hovered over Kid Rock’s residence



Washington: According to Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, the crews of two US Army AH-64 Apache helicopters that hovered over musician Kid Rock’s swimming pool while he applauded and saluted on Saturday are no longer suspended.“No penalty. “No investigation,” Hegseth stated on social media. “Carry on, patriots.” Hegseth’s declaration came just hours after a US Army spokeswoman stated that the aircrew had been stopped from flying awaiting an inquiry.“The army has confirmed that on 28 March, two Apache helicopters from the 101st Combat Aviation Brigade at Fort Campbell conducted a

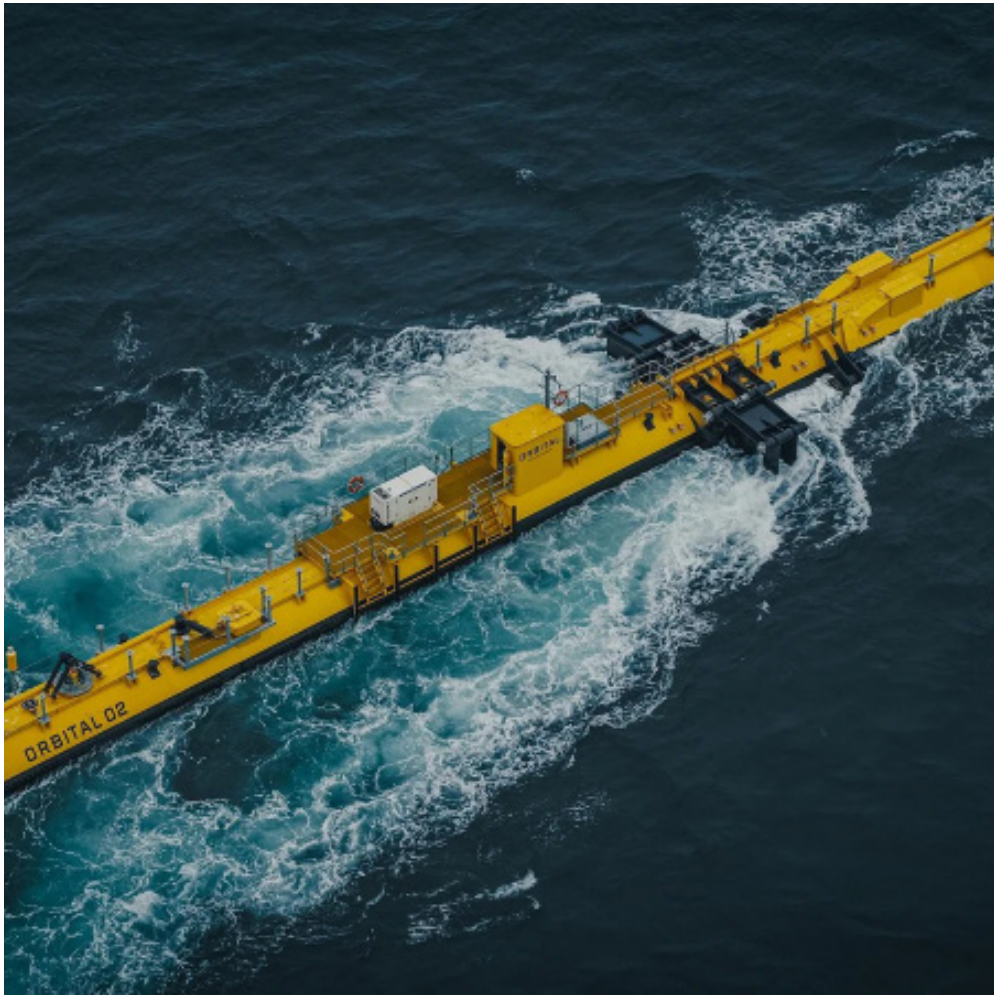
flight in the Nashville area that has attracted public and media attention.” according to a statement released by the service on Tuesday.The military stated that it was evaluating “the circumstances surrounding the mission, including compliance with relevant FAA regulations, aviation safety protocol, and approval requirements” . Kid Rock, a Donald Trump supporter, told WKRN-TV on Monday that helicopters from neighboring Fort Campbell frequently flew over his home. He stated that he was a strong supporter of the military. He has played for foreign troops in Afghanistan, Iraq, and other places.“I think they know

this is a pretty friendly spot,” he told me. He stated that he spent last Thanksgiving at Fort Campbell, a vast army facility on the Tennessee-Kentucky border, with Vice President JD Vance.“I’ve talked to a few of these pilots. I informed them, ‘You guys notice me waving when you come by the house?’ ‘I’m like, ‘You guys are always welcome to cruise by my house anytime,’” he remarked. Kid Rock posted two short videos on social media Saturday. Each shows a helicopter hovering alongside his swimming pool while the entertainer claps, salutes and raises his fist in the air. One post included a caption by Kid Rock disparaging Democratic California governor Gavin Newsom, a frequent Trump critic.Speaking at the Oval Office on Tuesday, Trump suggested perhaps the crews should not have done what they did, before adding:

“I like Kid Rock. Maybe they were trying to defend him. I don’t know.”In the videos, Kid Rock stands next to a replica of the Statue of Liberty and a sign by the pool that reads The Southern White House. His home on a hill overlooking Nashville was built to resemble the White House. The helicopters were on a training mission when they stopped by Kid Rock’s house, said Maj Jonathan Bless, public affairs officer for the 101st Airborne Division. The helicopters also flew over a No Kings protest against Trump in downtown Nashville, but Bless said their presence had nothing to do with the protest.Kid Rock said he thought it was “really cool” that they stopped to hover at his house.“If it makes their day a little brighter for their service to our country, protecting us, I think that’s a great thing,” he said.Asked about possible repercussions for the crews, he said: “I think they’re going to be all right. My buddy’s the commander-in-chief.”

Demand for hydropower rises as Trump restricts sustainable energy

Washington: Submersible hydropower technology installed throughout the Great Lakes might play an important role in sustainable energy initiatives, according to advocates, as electricity demand and costs rise.The Great Lakes area is home to one of the world’s greatest freshwater resources, as well as some of North America’s largest cities, including Chicago, Toronto, Montreal, and Detroit, where energy consumption is increasing. While none of the five Great Lakes have substantial tides or currents to generate electricity, numerous of the rivers that connect them do. Last month, the Ocean Renewable Power Company (ORPC), which has long run underwater hydroelectric projects in Alaska and Maine, unveiled its first urban venture on the St Lawrence River in Montreal, which will begin operating two hydroelectricity devices later this year.“The Saint Lawrence River is one of North America’s finest chances for our technology since it offers constant, high-velocity water for hundreds of miles. The Montreal region alone has 60-90 megawatts of resource potential,” says Stuart Davies, CEO of ORPC.“The Niagara River, the St Lawrence River are big powerful rivers driven by the hydrology of the lakes draining out.” Current- and tidal-powered hydroelectric generators have been growing in popularity and efficiency across the world. In Scotland, the world’s most powerful tidal hydro generator can power up to 2,000 homes. In Korea, the Sihwa Lake tidal power station generates about 550GWh (gigawatt-hours) of electricity annually, the equivalent of 862,000 barrels of oil. Orbital Marine Power, the company running the Scotland project, announced in November that it plans to deploy up to three O2-X tidal devices in the Bay of Fundy’s Minas Passage in Nova Scotia.ORPC is expected to begin a second Great Lakes project on a section of the Niagara River in Buffalo, New York, later this year.The rise in marine power generation is happening at a time when, across the Great Lakes, electricity prices for residential and industrial consumers have surged.Last September, the New York public service commission approved rate and delivery charge increases that saw residents of western New York, including Buffalo, hit with significant electricity bill hikes. More rate increases are scheduled for later this year and in 2027. Similar stories are playing out for millions of people in Michigan and Ohio, where divisions between public administrators and communities brought about by datacenters are fueling major fissures in rural America.Davies says that while the enormous electrical demands of large data storage centers are far greater than the half a megawatt to five megawatts ORPC’s devices can generate, there are business applications for its technology.“If you’re an industrial customer and you’re thinking about the growth of AI ... We can be that 24/7 electricity resource that’s part of a baseload in normal times and if the grid goes down for some reason, that river still runs,” he says.“You’re going to have that level of emergency power.”But these efforts are not without challenges and controversy.While administrative authorities in Montreal and Quebec already have a longstanding culture of deploying hydropower that results in low-cost electricity for customers, Great Lakes cities and states in the US do not. In the US, it takes an average of eight years for a hydroelectricity facility to become fully licensed. The presence of spinning



turbines in waterways that are home to dozens of fish species and other wildlife has drawn concern from some environmentalists.“With regard to hydrokinetic energy in general, we are not opposed to it at all. Responsible, sustainable energy sources need to be encouraged,” says Anne KC McCoey of the Black Rock Riverside Alliance in Buffalo.“However, the key word is responsible. You can’t put something up just for the sake of harnessing the energy, while at the same time doing harm [or potentially doing harm] to the environment and the human and non-human life that depend on that environment.”ORPC says that at a site in Alaska where its turbines have been deployed since 2019 to provide electricity for a small community, there has been no record of fish injuries caused by the devices on a waterway through which tens of millions of grown and juvenile sockeye salmon migrate each year.Moreover, other environmental factors play a significant role in deciding where this technology is suitable. While the St Lawrence and Niagara rivers are fast-flowing waterways situated toward the end of the Great Lakes watershed, the rivers and straits linking lakes upstream are largely slow-moving. But scientists are working to bridge that gap.

Where Lake Huron flows into the St Clair River 50 miles (80km) north of Detroit, Michael Bernitsas, a professor at the University of Michigan, has tested a hydroelectricity generating technology called Vivace that can harness hydro energy from water that moves as slow as half a meter per second.“The current there gets to about 2.3 to 2.5 knots, which is pretty slow for turbine technologies. But it’s very easy for Vivace to harness that power,” he says.As water moves, it pushes cylinders which oscillate up and down on the device, generating kinetic energy. Bernitsas says the devices can be man-

ufactured in sizes starting from under a meter in width and height to a scale suitable for larger projects. “The immediate market for our small technology would be portable applications in situ in the ocean, for example powering NOAA buoys,” he says.He estimates it would take up to two years, depending on funding, to get the devices to a point where they are available to be sold commercially.A significant advantage to operating in Great Lakes water is the absence of salt, meaning that corrosion, an issue that can trouble ocean-based projects, is not a concern and allows materials to last far longer and thus reduces the overall cost.Some tidal projects, particularly those operating in northern Europe, can be anchored to the bed of a river or lake, eliminating problems that may arise due to surface ice in winter. ORPC, whose Alaska project saves the village of Igigiug the equivalent of almost 23,000 gallons of diesel or 414 metric tons of carbon dioxide annually, is also planning on going down that route.Davies say the company is in the planning stage of a project on the lower Mississippi River, potentially between Baton Rouge and New Orleans, for late next year.“The biggest [challenge] is just the lack of awareness of our solution, but that’s really flipped in the last nine months. We still keep our 40-50% tax credit, while wind and solar [equivalents] are sunseting,” says Davies, referring to the Trump administration eliminating Biden-era federal subsidies for solar and wind energy ventures. According to the National Hydropower Association, investment and production tax credits for marine energy in the US will remain in place until at least 2033.“All of a sudden, our relative competitiveness has changed dramatically. We’ve had a lot more interest. Entities from over 70 countries have reached out to inquire about the technology.”

Japan permits divorced spouses to negotiate shared custody of their children for the first time



Japan: Divorced couples in Japan will be able to negotiate shared custody of their children beginning Wednesday, marking the first significant modification to the country’s child-rearing rules in more than a century.Previously, Japan’s Civil Code obliged spouses to pick which parent would have custody of their children after divorce. However, criticism from critics, who claim that the tug-of-war between parents caused psychological injury to children and unfairly penalized the “left-behind” parent, resulted in a 2024 parliamentary vote to amend the law.

The amendment allows parents to choose whether to arrange for shared or solo custody of their children. According to the Asahi Shimbun, parents can ask a family court to amend the terms of a divorce that has already been concluded and sole custody awarded. The amendment, the first since marriage arrangements were formalized in the Civil Code in the late 1800s, encourages parents to respect each other’s positions and work together “in the best interests of

their child”.

The legislative move brings Japan, the only G7 member that does not recognize joint custody, in step with the majority of other nations, where collaborative child-rearing after divorce is usual. Supporters of the change said the previous system prevented the non-custodial parent from playing a role in important decisions affecting their children, including their choice of school, where they live and whether or not they receive vaccinations.Critics, however, say that joint arrangements could allow an abusive former spouse to exploit greater access to continue abusing their former partner or child.Others have said the revision places too much power into the hands of family courts, which will be called on to rule on custody arrangements when divorcing parents are unable to decide themselves.Emi Ishikawa, a domestic abuse survivor, told the Japan Times she had fled from her marriage five years ago when her son was a year old, and now fears that her ex-husband could exploit a provision

allowing parents who divorced before 1 April to apply for joint custody. Although family courts are not permitted to grant joint custody when abuse is cited as a factor in a divorce, Ishikawa, who did not want to use her real name, was not reassured.“To be honest, I am truly scared,” she said. “For the next 12 years [until her child reaches adulthood], I will have to live in fear of when my ex-husband might file for joint custody.”Under the current system, mothers were granted custody in 85% of cases, according to health ministry data from 2020.

The sole custody system has drawn criticism from divorced parents, including foreign nationals who struggle to maintain relationships with their children if their former partner takes them back to Japan. About 200,000 children in Japan are affected by divorce every year – double the number of 50 years ago. A 2021 government survey found that one in three children with divorced parents said they eventually lost contact with the non-custodial parent.

Australia wants to promote its social media ban to the globe, but are the restrictions actually effective

Australia: When the age assurance technology experiment delivered its final report before Australia’s under-16s social media prohibition went into force last year, the first conclusion was that age assurance can be done quietly, efficiently, and successfully. Four months after the ban went into place, we can conclude it was, to quote Yes Minister, a brave remark.The country’s eSafety commissioner revealed on Tuesday that more than two-thirds of teens were still using the banned platforms, children were easily bypassing facial age estimation technology if they were under the age of 16, and half of the banned platforms were being assessed for noncompliance. eSafety also discovered that 66% of parents whose children remained on social media said that the platforms had not asked their child to go through age verification, while others reported that if the age on an account was stated to be 14 or 15, the platforms asked users to go through facial recognition and adjust their age rather than deactivating the account.Many of the complaints to eSafety came from parents who had reported their teen’s account to the site but received no response. The story stated that Guardian Australia’s reporting had confirmed this. Many of those who had been pushing for the ban had simply accepted the technology trial report in terms of how simple it would be to implement, but those who dug deeper into the data discovered that facial age estimation would be less accurate for those aged 14 and 15 - exactly the age group the platforms were supposed to block. According to eSafety’s own reports, “facial age estimation is known to have



higher error rates for children near the age threshold of 16 years”, as many had warned. However, when asked about it last year, age insurance firms dismissed the prospect.

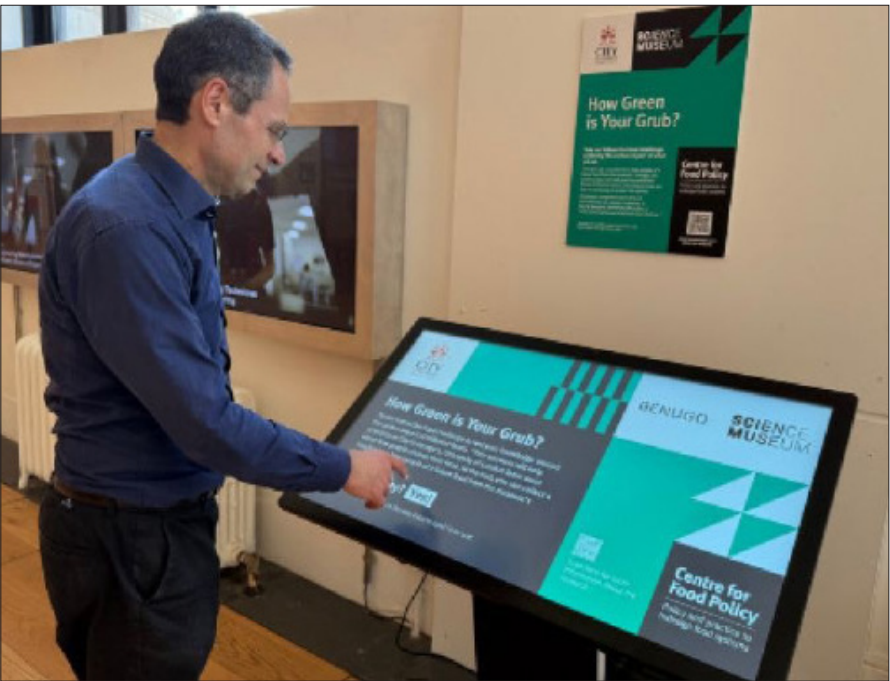
The ban has also had unintended side effects for the government. On the day new research found vaping could lead to cancer, Guardian Australia exclusively obtained documents from the health department that showed some of the social media portion of its anti-vaping ad campaign targeting teens had to be diverted to gaming platforms and audio platforms such as Spotify to reach 14 and 15-year-olds. To attract this group, just 10% of ad expenditure was redirected to gaming, despite the fact that many of them continue to use social media.The Albanese administration has been eager to pitch the world on its early success with the social media ban, with over 5 million accounts now canceled, but these early issues should cause other nations to think twice before following suit. Anika Wells, the communications minister, stated on Tuesday that she expects eSafety to “throw the book at” non-compliant technol-

ogy platforms. That would entail taking legal action in the coming months to seek A\$49.5 million in fines for a violation. However, Wells did not respond to a query about when this might happen. That could be because high court challenges over the validity of the social media ban – one from Reddit and another from a digital rights group – have yet to be heard. The federal government has now filed its defence in the latter case, but it’s unlikely the matter will be heard until later this year.If, ultimately, fines are issued to bring the tech companies to heel, there is the possibility we could see a big over-correction, with platforms switching to more intrusive methods of validation – not just of teens but all new accounts – such as using ID checks.The platforms had already designed specific safety features and parental controls designed to keep teens safe online. Since the ban, the teens who have managed to bypass age checks are no longer given the bare minimum of safety features the platforms have included for teens, given their account now appears to be held by someone older.

Placing fruit and veg near store entrances can improve sales and diet quality

Placing fruit and vegetable sections near supermarket entrances increases the amount purchased and may improve the quality of women’s diets, according to a new study funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR).Published in the journal PLOS Medicine, the results of the study showed that the placement of such produce near store entrances led to approximately 2,525 extra portions of fruit and vegetables being purchased per store, per week. This contrasted with substantial declines in population-level fruit and vegetable purchasing and intake over the study period, which coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis.The researchers say that Government regulations to curb the promotion of unhealthy foods should consider requiring the placement of a fruit and vegetable section at store entrances – as well as limiting the placement of unhealthy foods in locations such as checkouts, aisles and store entrances to maximise their health benefit.

The study was led by researchers from the Centre for Food Policy at City St George’s, University of London and the MRC Lifecourse Epidemiology Centre at the University of Southampton, and working with other researchers from the University of Southampton, University of Leeds and Deakin Uni-



versity, Australia.Obesity and poor diet are major public health concerns and retailers’ marketing strategies, often through product placement in stores, have a major impact on food choices. Previous studies have shown that less than 1% of placement promotions are for fruit and vegetables. Many supermarkets do place fresh fruit and vegetables where customers encounter them on entering the store, but it is less common in discount and small supermarket chains.The researchers carried out the trial in 36 stores (18 intervention and 18 control) of a discount supermarket chain in England, between March 2018 and May 2022. In total, 580 women customers aged 18 to 60 years took part in the study (280 in the intervention, and 300 in the control). This group was

targeted because improving their diets improves their own health, and the short and long-term health of their children. Women within this age group are also still primarily responsible for domestic food-related tasks that influence their partners’ and families’ diets.Analysis showed that differences in the intervention group compared to the predicted store-level sales of fruit and vegetables were equivalent to around 2,525 extra portions per store, per week. These figures could translate to clinically meaningful improvements to population health because an increase of 50g of fruit and vegetables per day (1 portion is 80g) has been associated with 20% reduction in all-cause mortality.

The results also suggest that after six months of ex-

posure to the intervention, the nutritional benefit may be slightly higher for families who mostly shopped at the study store and where the woman shopper has no formal post-school educational qualifications. Women’s dietary quality improved after six months of exposure to the intervention, compared to women not exposed to the intervention.Professor Christina Vogel, lead author of the study and Director of the Centre for Food Policy at City St George’s, University of London and Adjunct Professor at the University of Southampton, said:“The food industry and the public are trapped in a ‘junk food cycle’, where unhealthy foods are cheap to make, profitable to market, appealing to eat and affordable to buy. To counter this, our study shows that plac-

ing fruit and vegetables at the entrances of discount supermarkets increased fresh fruit and vegetable sales.“These results are important given population-level declines in fruit and vegetable sales and intake in the UK over the period of the study, due to COVID-19 and other issues. During the same period, UK household purchasing of fruit fell 7.2% and 5.3% for vegetables. On average, households are purchasing fewer than four portions of fruit and vegetables per day for the entire family.

“Given our findings, the Government should consider expanding the UK Food (Promotions and Placement) regulations in England to require the positioning of fresh produce sections near store entrances in all large food stores to boost fruit and vegetable sales and improve the nation’s diet.”Professor Adam Briggs, Director of NIHR’s Public Health Research (PHR) Programme, said: “Poor diet remains a leading cause of ill health and inequalities in the UK and tackling this requires action across a range of policy areas. WRAPPED’s promising results show how small changes in our supermarket layouts can impact our shopping habits and encourage healthier diets that can help prevent obesity and diet-related disease. It’s a great example of how carefully involving retailers in research can help deliver practical real-world insights.”

Farting comet seen reversing its spin for the first time ever—and it may soon ‘self-destruct’

For the first time ever, an astronomer has witnessed a comet changing the speed and direction of its own spin, thanks to newly analyzed Hubble Space Telescope photos. The unexpected reversal was triggered by “outgassing” jets that shot an icy mix of gas and dust into the solar system, according to a new study.

The comet, dubbed 41P Tuttle-Giacobini-Kresák (41P for short), was discovered by American astronomer Horace Parnell Tuttle in 1858, before being rediscovered by French astronomer Michel Giacobini in 1907 and again by Slovak scientist L’ubor Kresák in 1951 (hence its lengthy name). Comet 41P likely originates from the Kuiper Belt—the ring of asteroids, comets and dwarf planets beyond the orbit of Neptune—and likely spent the majority of its long life circling the sun on a timescale of decades to centuries.

But around 1,500 years ago, 41P was tugged off its usual course by a close interaction with Jupiter. Now, it is locked in a much tighter orbit, circling our home star every 5.4 years. As the comet reaches its closest point to the sun, known as perihelion, it also passes by Earth and becomes clearly visible with a telescope. Its last flyby of the sun occurred in 2022, but it was also studied extensively in 2001, 2006, 2011 and 2017. During the 2017 flyby, astronomers noticed that 41P’s rate of rotation slowed significantly as the comet shot past Earth—which scientists had previously attributed to a standard outgassing event. Hubble also captured extensive photos of the flyby. However, these images were filed away and had not been studied properly.

Now, in the new study published March 26 in The Astronomical Journal, an astronomer has analyzed the Hubble images from 2017 and discovered that the sudden slowdown was followed by a previously unrecognized acceleration event. By comparing the Hubble images to data collected by ground-based telescopes, study author David Jewitt, an astronomer at UCLA, estimated the changes in 41P’s rotation throughout 2017. He found that by May of that year, the comet’s spin had slowed to around one rotation every 46 to 60 hours, which was around three times slower than it was spinning in March 2017. But by December 2017, the comet was completing a rotation once every 14 hours, which was a much quicker return

to form than previously realized, according to Live Science’s sister site Space.com.

But if outgassing had slowed the comet’s spin, how could it speed it up again so quickly? The only thing that makes sense, Jewitt argues, is if the direction of the comet’s spin was completely reversed. “It’s like pushing a merry-go-round,” he said in a statement. “If it’s turning in one direction, and then you push against that, you can slow it and reverse it.”

With the Hubble data, Jewitt also constrained the true size of 41P’s nucleus, which is approximately 0.6 miles (1 kilometer) across—around three times wider than Paris’ Eiffel Tower is tall. That might sound impressive, but it is actually quite small for a comet. And its diminutive size may prove key in explaining its unusual behavior. Almost all known comets have been observed “outgassing” at some point in their lifetimes. This phenomenon occurs when ice, gas and dust from the comet’s interior shoots out of small cracks that appear in its nucleus—normally due to an increased proximity to the sun, which allows solar radiation to sublimate the comet’s innards and crack its icy shell. In recent years, we have seen several stunning examples of outgassing in action, including the demonic horns of the explosive “devil comet” 12P/Pons-Brooks, which slingshotted around the sun in 2024, and the multiple jets and “anti-tail” of the interstellar object 3I/ATLAS, which was spotted shooting through the solar system last year. Scientists previously knew that outgassing could alter the spin of a comet, but most of these objects are too large for an outflowing jet to make much of a difference before it fades away. However, 41P’s relatively small size likely enabled the comet’s jets to make a greater impact. “Jets of gas streaming off the surface can act like small thrusters,” Jewitt said in the statement. “If those jets are unevenly distributed, they can dramatically change how a comet, especially a small one, rotates.”Experts are unsure if 41P’s extreme outgassing event was caused by multiple jets or a single massive outflow. But if repeated events occur over the comet’s next few perihelia, the icy ball could end up ripping itself apart, similar to Comet C/2025 K1 (ATLAS), which spectacularly broke apart in late 2025.

“I expect this nucleus [41P] will very quickly self-destruct,” Jewitt said.

New study uncovers surprises in urban Peruvians

Latin American people are represented in fewer than four percent of genetic epidemiological studies around the world. When they are included, they’re often lumped together as one group, despite the rich diversity among different Latin American populations. This lack of data has impeded genetic discoveries in Latin Americans and has stalled advances in the clinical use of precision medicine.

To better understand the fine-scale ancestry of one specific Latin American population—Peruvians—researchers from the University of Maryland School of Medicine (UMSOM), along with colleagues from the Peru Institute of National Health (Instituto Nacional de Salud), undertook the largest study to date to examine the genetic makeup of individuals from urban areas throughout Peru. They published their study in Communication Biology.

“We were surprised to discover that despite historical events—like the slave trade or Spanish colonization—over the past few centuries, urban Peruvians resemble more of ancient Indigenous populations from nearby regions, including the Andes and the Amazon, rather than a single melting-pot population,” said lead author Victor Borda, PhD, Research Associate at the Institute for Genome Sciences (IGS) at UMSOM and faculty at the University of Maryland Institute for Health Computing, who is also a native Peruvian.

The researchers collected blood from more than 400 volunteers in 13 regions across Peru and did genome-wide studies, examining more than two million genetic markers in each participant.

The study also showed that women were more likely to transmit Indigenous ancestry, while men contributed more European ancestry. This reflects the uneven mixing between the sexes during colonial times, when European men frequent-

ly partnered with Indigenous women, often under coercive conditions. Because the X chromosome is transmitted twice as often through females, it preserves a stronger signal of maternal Indigenous ancestry.

“This pattern is consistent with colonial social hierarchies and power dynamics and can be distinguished genetically through differences in X chromosome and autosomal ancestry,” said Timothy O’Connor, PhD, a scientist at IGS, Associate Professor of Medicine at UMSOM, and corresponding author on the paper. “Our study shows that history can be written in the genome and isn’t erased just by moving to a city.”

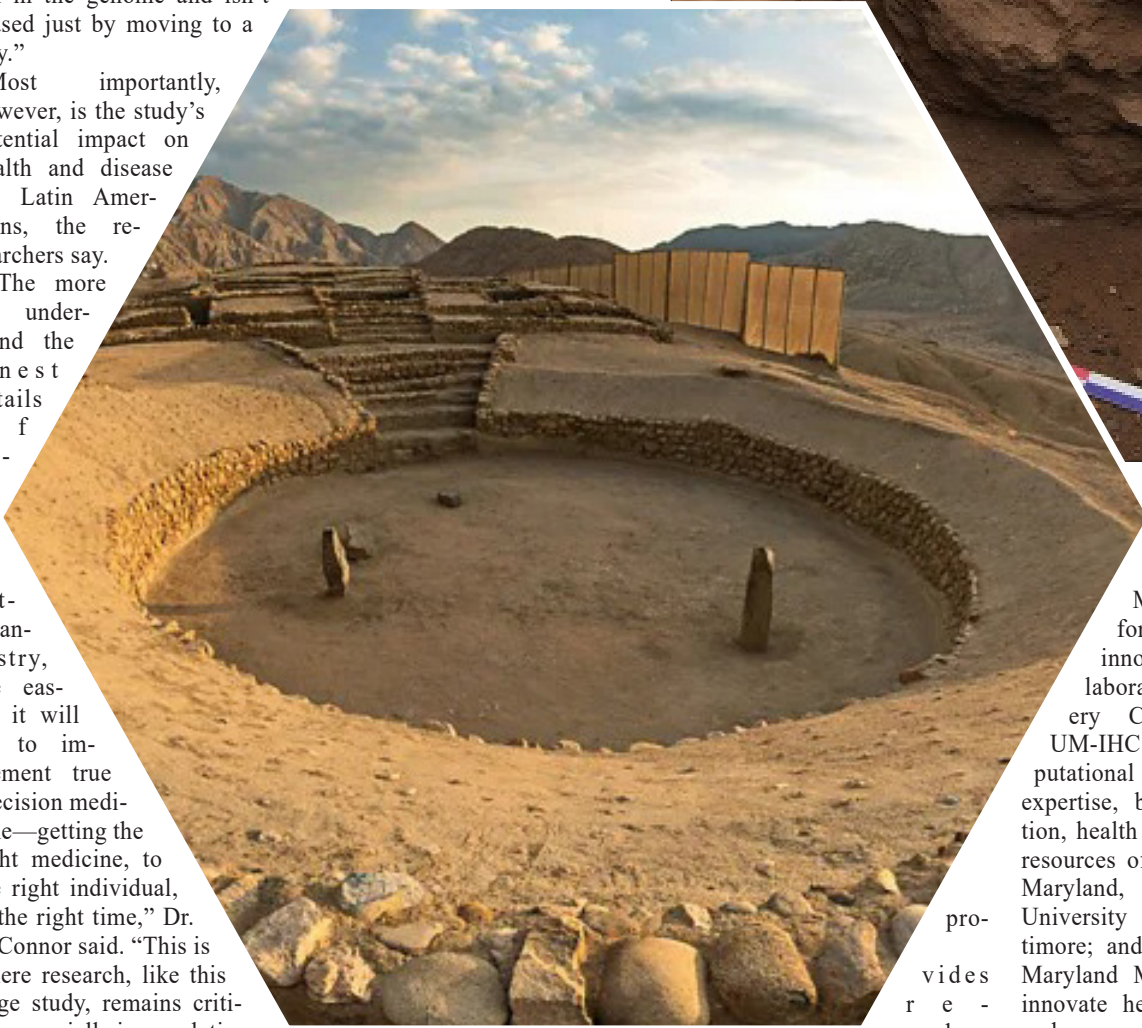
Most importantly, however, is the study’s potential impact on health and disease for Latin Americans, the researchers say.

“The more we understand the finest details of genetic ancestry, the easier it will be to implement true precision medicine—getting the right medicine, to the right individual, at the right time,” Dr. O’Connor said. “This is where research, like this large study, remains critical, especially in populations that tend to be put into one uniform category, such as Latin Americans or Asians, when we know there is much diversity in their genetic ancestry.”

About the Institute for Ge-

nome SciencesThe Institute for Genome Sciences’ (IGS) has been part of the University of Maryland School of Medicine (UMSOM) since 2007.

IGS scientists work in diverse areas, applying genomics and systems biology approaches to better understand health issues to create a healthier Maryland and world. Our research spans multiple areas including cancer and precision medicine; parasitic, fungal, and bacterial diseases; sexual and reproductive health; the underpinnings of aging; and neuroscience areas including brain development, addiction, and mental health IGS



land Institute for Health Computing (UM-IHC), in North Bethesda, Maryland, is the hub for health computing innovation and collaboration in Montgomery County, Maryland. UM-IHC merges the computational expertise, clinical expertise, biomedical innovation, health data and academic resources of the University of Maryland, College Park; the University of Maryland, Baltimore; and the University of Maryland Medical System to innovate health care delivery and support the Montgomery County life science community. It is a signature initiative of the University of Maryland Strategic Partnership: MPowering the State, which provides funding support along with Montgom-

ery County.

About the University of Maryland School of MedicineThe University of Maryland School of Medicine, established in 1807 as the first public medical school in the U.S., continues today as one of the fastest growing, top-tier biomedical research enterprises in the world. The School has nearly \$500 million total research funding, 46 departments, centers, and institutes, more than 2,200 student trainees and over 3,000 faculty members, including notable members of the National Academy of Medicine.

As the largest public medical school in the DC/MD/VA region, faculty-physicians are working to help patients manage chronic diseases like obesity, cancer, heart disease and addiction, while also working on cutting-edge research to

address the most critical generational health challenges. In 2024, the School ranked #12 among public medical schools and #27 among all medical schools for R&D expenditures by the National Science Foundation. With a \$1.3 billion total operating budget, the School partners with the University of Maryland Medical Center to serve nearly 2 million patients annually. The School’s global reach extends around the world with research and treatment facilities in 33 countries.

In Maryland, the School of Medicine is spearheading new initiatives in AI and health computing and partnering with the University of Maryland BioPark to develop new medical technologies and bioengineering ventures. For more information, visit medschool.umaryland.edu.

Ravie Dubey was Laxman in the Ramayana when wife Sargun Mehta said she had No Clue



Mumbai: The teaser for Nitesh Tiwari’s Ramayana Part 1 was released today, and it is creating a lot of excitement. Important characters like Laxman (played by Ravie Dubey) and Sita (played by Sai Pallavi) were presented, however they were not as prominent as Rama. Actress and wife Sargun Mehta discussed how Ravie Dubey never talked to her about the shoot in an old interview that has surfaced. Sargun Mehta stated, “We don’t really talk about work at home,” on Ranveer Allahbadia’s podcast last year. I don’t learn about his work until it is made public, just as he doesn’t know what I’m doing until my ideas are publicized.”

“I was told at random, ‘Congratulations, Ravie is...,’ and I said, ‘Sssh,’”

she went on. I have no idea what you’re talking about; please don’t tell me as we are not permitted to share information. “I can’t even ask because he didn’t even tell me,” I thought after reading it someplace. She further disclosed how Ravie Dubey was evasive about being on a movie shoot and never disclosed anything.”Every time I asked Ravie where he was going, he would just say, ‘Kaam pe ja raha hoon,’ without mentioning it was a film shoot,” she continued. I had no idea what was going on on the set. I even asked the driver once or twice, “Set par mahol kaisa hai?” Ravie Dubey chuckled and said, “Woh bhi mere bare mein nahi, Ranbir (Kapoor) ke bare mein.” The eagerly anticipated teaser for Nitesh Tiwari’s Ra-

mayana has been out. The first and several views of Ranbir Kapoor as Lord Rama are presented to the audience in the teaser. Ranbir Kapoor portrays the legendary figure of Lord Rama with poise, grace, serenity, and celestial majesty from the coronation to the banishment in the Panchavati forest. Don’t miss Yash’s brief appearance as Raya (Ravan) at the conclusion of the teaser.Alia Bhatt said she would post the teaser on her social media channel by posting a video message on social media before to its release. Additionally, she urged viewers to lend their support to her husband Ranbir Kapoor’s labor of love.”The Ramayana unit will be out tomorrow,” Alia stated in the video message.

The unit in question is known as the Rama unit. I’ll share it on my social media, so please spread the word and show your support. I’m excited for you all to see the great work that Ranbir has done. It’s fantastic. The movie will be released in two parts: the first will be released globally in October 2026, ahead of Diwali, and the second will be released on Diwali 2027.

For the first time, Oscar-winning Hans Zimmer and AR Rahman have worked together on this project.In addition to Ranbir Kapoor, Yash, Sunny Deol, Ravi Dubey, and Sai Pallavi all have significant parts in the movie.

The Shroud of Turin is more hilarious despite having a connection to India



Mumbai: The Shroud of Turin has lingered in that peculiar area between religion, science, and conspiracy for centuries. The 4.4-meter-long linen, which many believe to be the burial garment of Jesus Christ, has been examined, discussed, and even rejected.It has now returned to the news for an unexpected reason: an Indian connection.According to recent reports, around 40% of the human genetic material on the fabric comes from Indian ancestry. Gianni Barcaccia, an Italian scholar, and his colleagues at the University of Padova conducted the investigation, which looked at samples taken from the shroud as early as 1978.Their results present a complex picture. The cloth contains traces of fish and animal species, including Atlantic cod, as well as environmental contaminants that have collected over generations, in addition to human DNA. “Our findings highlight its preservation conditions and environmental interactions,” the team wrote.Indeed, there is a connection to India. However, it sounds far more dramatic than it actually is. Researchers

speculate that the Indus Valley region may have produced the linen or thread used to create the shroud. Long before the cloth itself acquired religious importance, it would not be out of the ordinary for textiles to move across continents due to the strong trade links between ancient India and the Mediterranean.Human touch is a much simpler alternative. Numerous people, pilgrims, and clerics have handled the shroud over the ages. Over time, traces of DNA may have been left by some of them if they were of Indian descent.The researchers themselves observed that “The Shroud came into contact with multiple individuals, thereby challenging the possibility of identifying the original DNA of the Shroud.” However, as usual, the internet had different opinions.A much more dramatic interpretation that had nothing to do with old trade routes or genetic remnants was discovered by some X users within hours of the report going viral. Rather, they headed directly to Bollywood, notably the 2013 movie Race 2.The Abbas-Mustan thriller, which starred Saif Ali Khan and John Abraham, focused on high-stakes deceit, betrayals, and—most importantly—a heist involving the Shroud of Turin itself. In the movie, Saif Ali Khan’s character Ranvir devises a complex scheme to “steal” the holy garment from a Turin church. The plan is intended to ruin Armaan (John Abraham), his adversary, who spends billions on what he thinks is the genuine relic. However, nothing is as it seems in traditional Race fashion.In reality, Ranvir never pilfers the original. Rather, he sets up a fictitious heist, causes havoc, and replaces the relic with a duplicate. The movie maintains that the genuine Shroud is “too holy” to be sold on the illicit market, hence it is kept unaltered in the church. The whole incident was summarized up by one X user: “The Shroud of Turin may have Indian origins because Saif Ali Khan stole the original in Race 2 and replaced it with a fake one.”Bollywood logic suddenly clashed with centuries of theological discourse.

Enrique Arce of Money Heist is eager to see Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara

Mumbai: As Enrique Arce and I stroll outside to the India Gate, it starts to rain. The classic autorickshaw saves the day as our plans for a fun shoot start to actually fall apart. The affection he gets from Indians for his role as Arturo in the international smash film Money Heist continues to astound Enrique. “I’m astounded. I shot for that show when I was 45, and I am currently 53. The Spanish actor, who was invited as a special guest at the recently finished 1st International Film Festival Delhi (IFFD), says, “I didn’t anticipate that my show would travel to such distant places.” He is visiting India for the first time. He admits, “I have watched a little... it’s such a big country,” when we question if he watches anything from this region of the world. You all produce content for your own people; the film business is sufficient for you.

I will now make sure to see Bollywood as well as all other languages, including independent Indian

films. I am aware that this region has industry similar to those in the South. I’m more interested.

Indian films aren’t always seen on television. He actually has a list ready, saying, “Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara is the movie that most interests me.” Many of the events depicted in that movie, including La Tomatina, actually occur in the area I’m from! Because so many Indians traveled to Spain, you have no idea how much it affected tourism. It’s a win-win situation—money for Spain and culture for you people. Then there are a few names whose movies I’d like to see: Aamir Khan, Anil Kapoor, and Shah Rukh Khan. He describes his time at IFFD as feeling like a “Bollywood film,” adding, “They called me on stage and made me dance.”

They played Bella Ciao, and I was unprepared! I would like to return to India. Fantastic if it involves work! I wouldn’t hesitate to accept any offer made here. I also went to the Yash Raj Films Studio in Mumbai.

The wife of Chaudhry Aslam commends Sanjay Dutt’s performance

New Delhi: In Aditya Dhar’s spy thriller, Bollywood actor Sanjay Dutt played Pakistani police officer Chaudhry Aslam, and his portrayal obviously resonated with viewers. Even Chaudhry Aslam’s wife, Naureen Aslam, has applauded his performance, saying that she felt as though she was seeing Chaudhry Aslam on screen in one specific scene.Naureen praised Sanjay Dutt’s performance as her husband on a podcast with AajTak Radio, adding, “When he stands near the car and raises his eyes, for a moment it felt like Aslam himself.” She went on to discuss how her spouse used to suggest that a movie would be created about his life after he passed away. Naureen added that she thought his demeanor and the complexity of his role were not fully captured in the movie. “They could have at least called me, the police, or journalists to understand both his positive and negative sides if they were making a film,” she continued.

He completed duties that the other police officers were never able to.Naureen claimed to have only seen snippets of the movie. She also made light of the character’s use of profanity,

pointing out that although it might not be suitable for a family audience, it is very typical in police circles and worked well for the part. Ranveer Singh, Arjun Rampal, R Madhavan, Sara Arjun, Rehman Dakaity, and others have significant roles in Aditya Dhar’s film Dhurandhar. In order to exact revenge for the 26/11 attacks and address more serious dangers, an undercover Indian intelligence operative infiltrates Pakistani politics and criminal syndicates in Karachi.

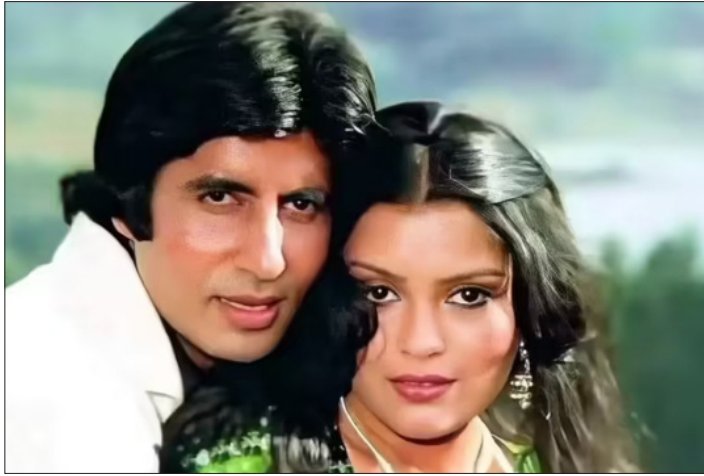
The movie connected with viewers and became a global hit, earning nearly ₹1,300 crore. On March 19, the movie’s second installment, Dhurandhar: The Revenge, opened in theaters. In just its first week, the movie exceeded the lifetime collection of the first half, living up to the hype. It is still having a fantastic run at the box office, earning over ₹1,400 crore globally and over ₹900 crore domestically. The movie follows Hamza as he completes his undercover job and rises up Lyari’s political hierarchy to become the kingpin. Additionally, it delves into Ranveer’s character’s beginnings, providing insight into the motivations for his decision to become a spy.

Zeenat Aman Remembers the Horribly Tough Don Scene

Mumbai: One of Zeenat Aman’s most famous roles is Roma in Chandra Barot’s Don. However, in a certain moment where she had to push Amitabh Bachchan, who played the title character, on a wheelchair, what appeared flawless on television might not have been the case.

Zeenat Aman posted a brief clip of the scene on Instagram, writing, “I assume there’s such a thing as antique video Wednesday? Yes, this is THAT scene from Don (the original 1978). Roma, ever resourceful and bold, tricks the cops and flees from a hospital room with an unconscious

Don. ”Now, I had already worked with many of the cast and crew in previous productions, so I was at complete ease through the making of the film,” the post went on. Roma’s character appealed to me as well; she was astute, bold, and sophisticated. Who wouldn’t want to be a woman like that? Sadly, it wasn’t easy to be smooth on set that day! You might wonder why. Because it was quite difficult to maneuver that relic of a wheelchair, especially with Mr. Bachchan’s dead weight. I had to push as hard as I could while maintaining my poker look for the part. ”I really liked the pre-



vious Don reboot, so I would be quite interested in seeing another

At first glance, Ranbir Kapoor’s portrayal of Lord Rama is royal and gives goosebumps



Mumbai: The filmmakers of Ramayana have finally released Rama, the eagerly anticipated first look from the movie, giving viewers a first peek at Ranbir Kapoor in the role of Lord Rama after months of anticipation. Fans have praised the teaser’s magnitude, emotion, and visual grandeur on the internet since it was unveiled at a major event in Mumbai.Ranbir’s initial appearance as Lord Rama was revealed in the teaser. “Rama is the greatest of all time because he lived a life where the choices he made were always in the benefit of the greater good, duty over desire, and sacrifice over self,” Namit Malhotra wrote, sharing the teaser. Over time, his legacy has continued to uplift and empower people and spread the conviction that all conflicts can be resolved and world peace can be achieved through the kindness of the human spirit.”Ranbir Kapoor makes a spectacular entrance into Ayodhya at the beginning of the teaser, where he is greeted with an abundance of flowers and immediately establishes his regal presence as Lord Rama. Along with scenes from his vanayana with Sita and Lakshmana, it also provides glimpses of him in warrior mode. Fans’ excitement is increased when the

filmmakers hint to Yash’s appearance as Ravana near the finale. Both the teaser and Ranbir’s portrayal of Lord Rama impressed the audience. “This is so peak,” said a fan. “Out of the world, what a fab fab first look,” said another. “Incredible! Gave me goosebumps,” wrote someone else. eagerly anticipated. “This is iconic,” said another commenter.Director Nitesh Tiwari stated, “Ramayana’s greatness lies in its emotional richness,” in reference to the two-part movie trilogy. It is fundamentally about decisions, repercussions, and the weight of doing what is right rather than just good and evil. We have attempted to be faithful to the profoundly human nature of Rama’s journey. In a reflection on his role as Lord Rama, Ranbir Kapoor remarked, “I don’t think I’m here to represent Rama.” I’m here to absorb his knowledge. It has been incredibly humbling to attempt to comprehend and absorb his uncommon simplicity and purity.”The power of Rama’s story is not in what he conquers, but in what he lets go of,” stated Namit Malhotra, producer, filmmaker, and creative architect of the Ramayana. He stands for a standard that is essential yet difficult and inconvenient. He prioritizes sacrifice over ego, duty over want, and truth over comfort. For this reason, his tale has persisted for millennia and is still relevant today. During a virtual conversation with fans, Alia even applauded the Ramayana teaser, saying, “It’s absolutely fabulous.” I think Ranbir did a fantastic job, and I’m eager for you all to watch it. It is simply unbelievable. One of the most ambitious movies in Indian cinema history is Ramayana.

According to producer Namit, the two movies have a combined budget of roughly ₹4000 crore, making it by far the most costly Indian film production. The film, which is directed by Nitesh Tiwari, features Yash (Ravana), Ranbir Kapoor (Lord Rama), Sai Pallavi (Sita), Sunny Deol (Monkey God Hanuman), and Ravie Dubey (Lakshmana). Oscar®-winning composers Hans Zimmer and A.R. Rahman composed the soundtrack for the Ramayana, which was adapted by renowned playwright Shridhar Raghavan.

Producers of Bhole Baba Par Karega lament Rahul Banerjee’s passing and promise a thorough investigation

Mumbai: Actor Rahul Arunoday Banerjee passed away on Wednesday, and the makers of the Bengali television series Bhole Baba Par Karega stated they would welcome a representative from his family or industry associations to participate in the investigation.

Banerjee allegedly drowned during a shot at Talsari Beach in Odisha’s Baleswar district, close to the West Bengal border, and passed away on March 29.His wife, Priyanka Sarkar, and son survive him.The production company said in a statement that every member of the cast and crew was “in profound mourning” and that attempts were being made to talk with people who were there when the tragedy occurred in order to determine the chronology. ”We request a few days to gather accounts from the cast and crew present at the time of the tragedy, in a neutral and structured manner, so that we can present a comprehensive and accurate report,” stated the statement.The West Bengal Motion Picture Artists’ Forum, the actor’s family, or friends might choose a representative to oversee the procedure and guarantee impartiality, the producers noted. According to the statement,

Banerjee was retrieved from the ocean alive and was making an effort to speak, based on preliminary information. After being brought to a neighboring clinic in Talsari, where there was no physician on duty, he was eventually transferred to Digha State General Hospital, where he was pronounced dead. Additionally, the firm attempted to refute rumors in several media outlets, specifically allegations that the actor spent a long time underwater, claiming that such reports are “in all probability incorrect.”

It further stated that “no possibility of negligence, however small, will go unexamined” and that all authorizations, correspondence with authorities, and pertinent documents will be provided as part of the ongoing inquiry.According to the production house’s statement, director Saibal Banerjee, who was in Mumbai at the time of the occurrence, hurried to Kolkata after learning of it and spent the same evening at the actor’s home. The production company described Banerjee as “not only our colleague but also our friend” and stated that it is still dedicated to cooperating fully with the authorities and maintaining transparency.

Aditya Chopra advised Divya Dutta to return the signing money



New Delhi: As a teenager, Divya Dutta started her career in Bollywood. The actor rose to fame in the 1999 Punjabi film Shaheed-e-Mohabbat Boota Singh. She was only 16 when she made her screen debut in Ishq Mein Jeena Ishq Mein Marna. However, she acknowledges that employment was scarce for many years. Now that Veer Zaara and Divya were inundated with offers, she found success. After speaking with Aditya Chopra, she signed up for up to 20 films, but she later returned the money for several of them.

Divya discusses her work and the reasons she now prioritizes quality over quantity in an interview. Divya recalls how her career in movies started in the middle of the 1990s. She acknowledges, “I felt out of place. Finding my place was a journey in itself.” You come to understand what you want along the route. Ki mujhe kya chahiye (what do I desire) is the moment when you have clarity of thinking as life unfolds. You’ve discovered your calling and niche, and you know what to do next. The actor remembers a period in 2007 when she signed around 20 films at once after receiving an overwhelming number of movie proposals. “I recall seeing about 20 movies because I had none at one point. “I took them all because I was offered so many all of a sudden,” she remembers. But following a fortuitous encounter

with Aditya Chopra, with whom she had collaborated on Veer-Zaara and Aaja Nachle, Divya ultimately decided to abandon all the movies she had not yet begun work on. I went to see Aditya Chopra one day merely to have a cup of chai. We had just had Aaja Nachle. I informed him that I had signed 20 movies. I asked him, “Aren’t you excited for me?” when he remained silent. “Do you have a lack of work or money?” he asked. I was shocked and declined. He then questioned me about why I was signing so many movies. Divya remembers, “You are an excellent actor; why don’t you leave a legacy behind?” The actor claims that the discussion with Adi Chopra altered her perspective on prospects and employment. “It really got to me,” she adds. “I hadn’t considered it in this manner.” I had to decide whether to pay attention to him or keep earning money from those twenty movies. The stakes were high. However, I went back and gave back the signup fees for the movies I hadn’t yet begun. I only did things that I enjoyed after that. I took that stance. In addition to starring in commercially successful movies like Bhaag Milkha Bhaag, Badlapur, and Chhavaa, Divya ultimately received a National Award for Best Supporting Actress for Irada in 2017. The actor’s most recent appearance was in the JioHotstar online series Chiraiya.

AAP Removes Once-Key Face Raghav Chadha as Deputy Leader of the Rajya Sabha



New Delhi, Apr 02: Ashok Mittal, the Punjab MP for the Arvind Kejriwal-led Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), has replaced Raghav Chadha as the party's deputy leader in the Rajya Sabha. The chancellor of the Lovely Professional University, Mittal takes Chadha's place as the AAP's deputy leader in the Upper House of Parliament. The

leader of the AAP in the House is MP Sanjay Singh. The AAP now has ten members in the Rajya Sabha: three from Delhi and seven from Punjab. After the BJP, Congress, and Trinamool Congress, the party is the fourth largest in the House. The development of today is noteworthy and raises concerns about Chadha's future in the AAP. Chadha

was formerly regarded as the party's top leader and a member of Kejriwal's inner circle. Chadha, 37, has been a member of AAP from its founding. He is a chartered accountant and a graduate of Delhi's Modern School. When Kejriwal and others were discussing whether or not to form a party during the final phase of the India Against Corruption campaign, Chadha met Kejriwal. The Delhi Lokpal Bill was Chadha's first political assignment after he joined the AAP at the age of 23. As the AAP's national spokesperson, Chadha took center stage and frequently participated in TV discussions. At the age of 26, he was named national treasurer of the AAP. Chadha was named vice-chairman of the Delhi

Jal Board after winning the Rajinder Nagar seat in the 2020 Delhi elections. He was chosen by the AAP for the Rajya Sabha in 2022. Buzz regarding Chadha's position inside the party has been circulating for months, even though the AAP has not formally stated the cause for what is perceived to be his demotion. There was conjecture in the halls of power due to Chadha's absence from important party events and his silence on events like the clean chit to Kejriwal and AAP leader Manish Sisodia. However, Chadha has been bringing up important problems in the Rajya Sabha, such as the rights of gig workers, excessive airport food pricing, and traffic congestion in big cities.

Despite the Delhi Capitals' victory over the Lucknow Super Giants, Axar Patel admits to making a mistake

New Delhi: During the Delhi Capitals' first game against the Lucknow Super Giants, Axar Patel acknowledged that he could have misjudged his bowling changes because he did not finish all of his allotted overs. Early in the powerplay, the captain made his debut and bowled two clean overs, taking Aiden Markram's crucial wicket. Later, he came back to bowl the eleventh over, but he did not return, leaving one over unused by the end of the innings—a decision he believed he could have handled more skillfully. In his three overs, the DC captain bowled just 17 runs at an economy of less than 6. After finishing the game short of his quota, Patel acknowledged that he could have handled his overs more skillfully. In the post-match presentation, Axar stated, "You see how the match is going, there was a bigger and smaller boundary, and I was seeing who I can bowl. In the end, I might have miscalculated 1-2 overs (ek over idhar-udhar ho gya)." Uncapped Sameer Rizvi, meanwhile, was the game-changer with the bat, leading the Delhi Capitals to a pivotal victory following an early collapse. Before Rizvi took over, Delhi was struggling at 26 for 4 while pursuing a small target. Tristan Stubbs, who scored 39*, provided him with strong support as he stayed undefeated on 70. Together, they put together an uninterrupted 119-run partnership, reconstructing the innings with poise and leading Delhi home.

Regarding the team's strategy regarding the Impact Player rule, Axar clarified that the Delhi Capitals had retained Ashutosh Sharma and Rizvi as flexible choices based on the outcome of the game, eventually relying on Rizvi to step up and perform under duress. The idea was to play Rizvi, but Ashutosh Sharma was also an option. Perhaps things might have turned out differently if we



hadn't lost those early wickets. However, Ashu did a good job winning the opening game last year, and this time it's Rizvi. Axar remarked, "He (Rizvi) puts a lot of effort into his game and is constantly asking how he can get better." Axar Patel acknowledged the pressure during the middle phase after taking early wickets, but he praised the team's cool-headedness and potent bowling performance for keeping them in the game. It ended early, but it got close in the middle.

We discussed our desire for a single partnership over the break. Extremely pleased with the bowling effort. We knew there was some assistance for the bowlers when we first started with the ball, and we told everybody was going to bowl about it," he continued.

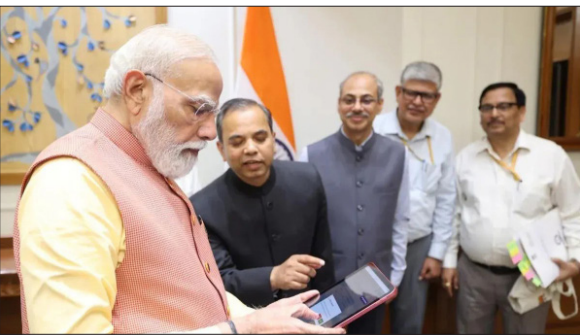
Without Pat Cummins, Ishan Kishan's SRH appears doomed

New Delhi: Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) faces significant challenges as they prepare to compete against Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) without their captain Pat Cummins, who is sidelined due to a back injury. This absence leaves SRH's bowling lineup considerably weakened, necessitating an increase in scoring from their batsmen, who must aim for 230+ runs regularly. The performance of openers Travis Head and Abhishek Sharma is critical; both have struggled recently, with Head underperforming in the T20 World Cup and Sharma being criticized for his play. Their dependency on this pair heightens the pressure, particularly after a poor showing against Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB). Historically, SRH set the standard for high scores in the IPL, further complicating their situation given their weak bowling attack. Heinrich Klaasen is another uncertainty, given his recent retirement from international cricket, which raises concerns about his current form. Ishan Kishan, who is also captaining the team in Cummins' absence, is under considerable strain that may affect his batting. While other bowlers like Jaydev Unadkat and Harshal Patel could provide support, they need Cummins' return to stabilize the team. Overall, SRH's success heavily depends on their top-order batting performance until Cummins recovers.

Census 2027 starts: PM Modi and President Murmu choose self-enumeration

New Delhi, Apr 02: President Droupadi Murmu, the first citizen of India, exercised the option of self-enumeration under the first phase of Census 2027, the largest statistical operation in the world, which formally began on Wednesday. According to a government release, "the national enumeration exercise was initiated with the enumeration of the President of India, Smt Droupadi Murmu, through the option of self-enumeration, upholding the proud tradition of starting the national count with the First Citizen of India." On Wednesday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi finished his self-enumeration and urged people to take part in the census. "The first phase of Census 2027, which relates to house listing and housing activities, starts today. For

the first time, computerized methods are being used to collect data for this census. Additionally, it gives Indians the ability to self-count the details of their households. He stated on X, "I urge the Indian people to self-enumerate their household details and take part in the Census process." Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Vice President CP Radhakrishnan, and India's Registrar General and Census Commissioner Mritunjay Kumar Narayan also finished their self-enumeration. Eight states and Union territories—Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Goa, Karnataka, Lakshadweep, Mizoram, Odisha, Sikkim, and the Delhi Cantonment Board and New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) parts of Delhi—have started the self-enumeration



tion process. According to the administration, about 55,000 households used the facility on its first day. According to an official, 1,000 persons in Delhi's NDMC and Cantonment Board regions started the self-enumeration procedure, which they all finished. Before the house-listing process begins, there is a 15-day window during which the self-enumeration phase takes place. Respondents can com-

Focus on US LPG imports, renewable energy, and PNG expansion Lok Sabha is informed by the Center



New Delhi, Apr 02: The Indian government is implementing a series of strategies to reduce the country's reliance on imported Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) and enhance energy security over the medium to long term, as stated by Minister of State for Environment Suresh Gopi in the Lok Sabha. Currently, India imports around 60% of its LPG, with approximately 90% of these imports transiting through the geopolitical volatile Strait of Hormuz, which poses vulnerabilities to supply disruptions.

Immediate measures include directing oil refineries to exclusively allocate key hydrocarbon streams toward LPG production, thereby increasing domestic output by 40%. Moreover, public sector oil marketing companies (PSU OMCs) have made arrangements to import 2.2 million metric tonnes of LPG from the United States for 2026, amounting to

about 10% of India's LPG needs and indicating a shift from traditional Gulf suppliers. To alleviate supply pressures, the government encourages the expansion of piped natural gas (PNG) connections for commercial entities alongside promoting cleaner energy sources like solar, wind, bioenergy, and green hydrogen. This initiative responds to inquiries from Rajya Sabha member Amar Singh regarding the impact of global energy disruptions on LPG imports, the government's strategies to manage LPG supply chains, and initiatives aimed at strengthening LPG supply resilience. In a short-term response to boost domestic LPG production, the government has mandated all oil refining companies to utilize their entire output of C3 and C4 hydrocarbon streams solely for LPG production—preventing diversion for petrochemical or downstream usages. Oil marketing compa-

nies are tasked to ensure that produced LPG is directed only toward domestic consumers. While this prioritization initially limited commercial LPG supplies, the government later reinstated partial supplies, which increased from 20% to a total of 50%, integrating 10% for PNG expansions. Key sectors benefiting from this LPG allocation include restaurants, hotels, and community kitchens. Gopi indicated that geopolitical developments have influenced the availability of imported LPG, prompting the government to adopt proactive measures to stabilize supplies, such as balancing domestic consumption, diversifying import sources, and managing stock dynamically. Additionally, the Centre has advised city gas distribution (CGD) companies to prioritize PNG connections for commercial use and to assess potential demand rigorously while ensuring efficient processing of applications.

The government is also championing the use of alternative fuels, increasing natural gas inclusion in the energy mix, and advancing renewable energy initiatives, including the promotion of ethanol blending and other biofuels, to diminish import dependency and foster energy sustainability. Through these measures, the government aims to strategically diversify LPG import sources, particularly by securing contracts for US-origin LPG to bolster national energy resilience against potential regional disruptions.

A man from Delhi arranges and carries out an armed robbery against his father

New Delhi, Apr 02: A 21-year-old guy from Delhi allegedly plotted and carried out an armed robbery on his father to take ₹10 lakh in an attempt to make easy money for an opulent lifestyle. The victim's son, Tavleen, also known as Rehat, and his two companions, Mohit Kumar Tiwari and Pankaj, both 22, planned the crime. All three males have apparently been taken into custody, according to an official. Tavleen and Mohit, who were wearing masks and riding a scooter, ambushed



the complainant as he was riding a two-wheeler in the Laxmi Nagar neighborhood of east Delhi. To frighten the victim, Mohit, who was seated behind Tavleen on the scooter, fired two rounds into the air. The third defendant, Pankaj, actively participated

in organizing and carrying out the armed robbery. A case was filed at the Laxmi Nagar police station after the event was reported on March 31. In order to find the suspects, police started an investigation and looked through over 200 CCTV footage from the region and surrounding routes. Tavleen, the complainant's son, turned out to be the main suspect in the case, according to an officer. According to reports, he was apprehended attempting to escape from Mukherjee Nagar. According to the

officer, Tavleen and his colleagues had planned the armed robbery in order to obtain quick cash for an opulent lifestyle. Mohit and Pankaj, the other two suspects, first took a private bus from Anand Vihar to Bihar.

Nevertheless, the two suspects were taken into custody when police tracked the bus and stopped it at the Lucknow Toll Plaza. During the probe, police also found that Mohit had obtained the weapon used in the crime from Bihar's Munger for ₹45,000.

Defamation Case Against Nirmala Sitharaman Dismissed by Delhi Court

New Delhi, Apr 02: The wife of former Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MLA Somnath Bharti, Lipika Mitra, filed a criminal defamation action against Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, but it was dismissed by a Delhi court on Wednesday.

The Rouse Avenue Court's Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate Paras Dalal rejected the complaint, stating that there were insufficient grounds to consider the accusations. The judge rejected the plea, saying, "I do not see anything in this matter to proceed further and I am denying cognisance." Mitra filed the case, which claimed that during a press conference on May 17, 2024, in the lead-up to the Lok Sabha elections, Sitharaman made malicious, false, and defamatory

remarks about her marriage to Bharti. Mitra had said that the comments were widely disseminated on digital and television platforms with the intention of damaging her husband's reputation and hurting his chances of winning the New Delhi parliamentary seat as an INDIA Bloc candidate. The appeal claims that because Bharti is an IIT Delhi graduate with a large global network, the claimed allegations caused him great mental suffering and damaged his reputation both domestically and abroad. In an attempt to take legal action, Mitra had asked the court to order the removal of the allegedly defamatory content from numerous platforms, summon Sitharaman for trial, and prohibit her from making or disseminating similar remarks in the future. In accordance with Sections 356(1) and 356(2) of the BNS, 2023, the complainant claimed that defamatory, disparaging, and libelous statements about her had been made and published in print and electronic media.



Nevertheless, the court dismissed the complaint after determining that the case did not achieve the threshold necessary for taking cognizance of the alleged offenses after reviewing the material submitted.

After India won the 2011 World Cup, Dhoni was demonized for indisputable reasons

New Delhi: How quickly time passes! It's hard to realize that India's second 50-overs World Cup victory in 2011 was 15 years ago today. MS Dhoni's spectacular match-winning six into the stands during the Wankhede Stadium final versus Sri Lanka left everyone with pleasant recollections.

But there was more to that World Cup victory than just happy recollections. Almost immediately after the victory, some of the best Indian players were also put on the sidelines. And for many years, that led to a great deal of animosity in Indian cricket. Gautam Gambhir, Harbhajan Singh, Zaheer Khan, Virender Sehwag, Sachin Tendulkar, and a few others did not participate in another World Cup. Given his elderly age, Tendulkar was the only person who would not have considered participating in another tournament—for cricket, of course. It would not have occurred to the other players that this would be their final World Cup. There are a lot of players in the dark! However, it is precisely what took place. Only three players from the 2011 final's playing XI remained when India won the Champions



championship in England two years later, their third ICC white-ball championship in six years: Dhoni, Virat Kohli, and Suresh Raina. For a number of years, Indian cricket was plagued by despair and animosity due to the retirement of numerous elite players. Nearly all of the

aforementioned have at some stage placed the blame on Dhoni. In numerous interviews since then, Gambhir—who is currently India's head coach and has won two ICC trophies in that capacity—has been very scathing of Dhoni. He is right, too. The most important inning of that game was his 97 in the final. When India lost Virender Sehwag and Sachin Tendulkar early in a high-stress match, the hosts thought the game was over. However, Gambhir made one of the most crucial knocks in One-Day Internationals (ODIs) to help India not only get back into the game but also take it to a point where there was no chance of losing. His 83-run third-wicket partnership with Kohli served as a lesson on how to withstand pressure on the largest international cricket platform. But Dhoni got the Man-of-the-Match award instead. Harbhajan and Sehwag have often stated that they believed they still had a lot of cricket left in them, but they were informed the squad was moving on from them and was now searching for younger players. In actuality, Dhoni's unwavering support during this time came from N Srinivasan, the BCCI president who was

appointed months after the World Cup victory. Dhoni continues to play for the Chennai Super Kings (CSK) of the Indian Premier League (IPL), which is owned by Srinivasan's company, India Cements. Even if I've fully ran out of steam, can you believe it? In spite of strong opposition, Srinivasan has admitted on record that he once saved Dhoni's captaincy. Therefore, there were compelling and legitimate reasons why he was despised. Eleven years after winning the Champions title, India won their second ICC title in 2024. There have been two more since then, the most recent being last month's T20 World Cup. It must be admitted that the criticism of Dhoni has somewhat subsided. The players seem to have moved on. Shortly after India's victory in the T20 World Cup in Ahmedabad, Gambhir and Dhoni had a touching conversation on social media. The players have moved on. Indian cricket has evolved. Many people's cold relations have warmed up. However, there are still times when Indian supporters are reminded that Indian cricket wasn't always what it is today by all those painful memories.

Kerala Sports Minister Lashes Out At Lionel Messi's Argentina Over Claims Of Cheating



New Delhi: Kerala Sports Minister V Abdurahiman has accused Lionel Messi's Argentina of "cheating" the state after allegedly failing to honour a commitment to play a football match despite receiving payment. Speaking to a local TV channel on Thursday, Abdurahiman said the state government had gone to great lengths to bring the world champions to Kerala, calling it a project driven as much by ambition as by emotion. I really wanted the Argentina team and Lionel Messi to come to Kerala and play a match here.

We held several discussions for that. It was not easy to find sponsors to arrange the Rs 250 crore required to bring an international team of that stature," he said. The minister, however, alleged that despite the financial arrangements being put in place, the team

did not follow through on its commitment. "But after receiving the money, the Argentine team cheated us. We did not expect such a betrayal from them. Not coming after promising to do so," he added. Abdurahiman further claimed that Kerala was not an isolated case, suggesting a pattern in Argentina's recent international engagements. "When we enquired, we found that they had done this to five other countries as well.

They took money but never went there to play. It is a situation where a case will have to be filed, and they will have to pay compensation," he said. The remarks mark a sharp escalation in what was initially seen as a marquee opportunity for Kerala to host one of world football's biggest teams. Back in November last year, the minister had publicly

announced that Argentina, led by Messi, would travel to the state in March 2026 for an exhibition match, a development that had generated significant excitement among fans. That plan, however, appears to have collapsed entirely. The idea of bringing Argentina to Kerala had been in the works for some time. The state government had earlier held exploratory talks with the Argentine Football Association as well as FIFA to host a high-profile friendly in 2025. Those discussions were part of a broader push to position Kerala as a viable destination for international football events.

Despite initial optimism, those negotiations did not materialise into a confirmed fixture, and the more recent attempt to bring the team in 2026 has now ended in controversy.

Sangram Singh Aims To Elevate Indian Mixed Martial Arts On The Global Stage In His Second Act At Forty

New Delhi: When Sangram Singh decided to venture into the world of MMA, there were doubts about whether he truly belonged inside the cage. It wasn't just among fans—Sangram himself had those questions. Starting at 38, an age when many MMA athletes decide to call it quits, it was a bold step into the unknown. Sangram had already overcome a battle with rheumatoid arthritis before becoming a wrestler. In wrestling, he was crowned the World's Best Professional Wrestler and later clinched the Commonwealth Heavyweight Championship titles in 2015 and 2016. Now 40, he holds a 2-0 record, with wins over Pakistan's Ali Raza Nasir and Tunisian wrestler Hakim Trabelsi in Amsterdam. Sangram stands on the cusp of history as he prepares to become the first Indian to compete in Argentina, where he will face Florian Coudiere in Tigre, Buenos Aires.

But now, Sangram realises his aim in MMA goes beyond just racking up wins. It is about putting India on the global MMA map. With a deeper understanding of the sport, along with a bigger team and more intense preparation ahead of his third fight, his outlook has evolved. "When I made my debut in Tbilisi in October 2024, I genuinely did not know what to expect. I had spent decades as a wrestler, but MMA is an entirely different space. It is faster, more demanding on both body and mind, and requires a much wider range of skills than traditional wrestling. That



first fight was about stepping into the unknown and understanding whether I belonged there." "By the time I fought in Amsterdam at Levels Fight League against Hakim Trabelsi, my understanding of the sport had deepened. I had started working more seriously on combinations, Jujutsu, and transitions. Now, as I prepare for Argentina, I have six coaches, a full support team, and I have gone through some of the most intense preparation of my life.

My understanding of what this sport demands has evolved significantly, and it has changed me as a fighter," said Sangram. Sangram is witnessing a shift when it comes to MMA in India, and he believes

he can act as a bridge connecting aspiring athletes in the country to the global stage. I see the change. My nephews no longer follow wrestling, they follow MMA and can name every UFC fighter. That is where the sport is heading, and I want to act as a bridge between where Indian combat sports have been and where they need to go. Every fight I win starts a conversation, and every conversation has the potential to inspire a young athlete to step into the sport," said Sangram. However, despite the growing interest in the sport, Sangram remains vocal about the challenges in creating a pathway for MMA fighters in India. He believes a lack of structured acad-

emies and limited sponsorship is hindering the progress of talent. "The real gap lies between interest and opportunity. A large portion of sporting talent in India, especially in smaller towns and villages, never finds the right pathway. Many young athletes do not know where to train, who to approach, or how to access quality coaching." While institutions like the Sports Authority of India exist, awareness and accessibility remain limited. In MMA specifically, there are very few structured academies, limited sponsorship, and no clear pathway from amateur to professional competition. Athletes may train for years, but without financial support and a proper system.

KKR Head Coach Explains The Recent Slump In Performance From Spinner Varun Chakravarthy

New Delhi: Varun Chakravarthy's dip in form has started to raise questions within Kolkata Knight Riders' campaign, but head coach Abhishek Nayar has made it clear that the franchise continues to back their mystery spinner. Despite a run of underwhelming performances, Nayar remains confident that Chakravarthy will find his rhythm again. The struggles have been visible across formats, with opposition teams increasingly taking him on during crucial phases.



Before," Nayar said. We are trying and we are hoping, and in every way backing him. I hope the fans of the world do too. Whether it's this game or in the future, it's inevitable that he will bounce back like he has in the past. I honestly believe mentally he's in a very good space — actually in a better space than he's been in previous years," he added. Chakravarthy's recent outings, however, reflect the challenges he is currently facing. After a dif-

ficult start to the IPL against Mumbai Indians, where Rohit Sharma and Ryan Rickelton took him apart for 0 for 48, the pressure around his role has only grown. Even in the subsequent game against Sunrisers Hyderabad, he was tested in the middle overs as batters looked to disrupt his control early. A closer look at Chakravarthy's recent numbers highlights the dip. During the T20 World Cup, he went at an economy rate of 9.24, even though

he finished with 14 wickets, joint-highest alongside Jasprit Bumrah. His struggles were particularly evident against South Africa, where he conceded 47 runs in a heavy defeat. A key factor behind this phase has been the way opposition teams are approaching him. Once considered difficult to decode, Chakravarthy is now being targeted more proactively, especially in the middle overs where teams aim to break momentum.

Aditya Secures A Dominant Victory At The Twenty Twenty Six Asian Boxing Championships Today



Ulaanbaatar: India's Aditya delivered a commanding performance to register a dominant win on Day 4 of the Asian Boxing Championships 2026 in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. Competing in the men's 65kg category, Aditya, the National Champion who recently clinched gold at the 9th Elite Men's National Boxing Championship in January 2026, secured a 5-0 unanimous decision victory over Moussa Alhawsaw (KSA), showcasing control and precision throughout the bout, accord-

ing to a press release. With this win, Aditya advances to the next round, where he will face Uzbekistan's Abdulloh Madaminov in what promises to be a competitive contest. Earlier in the tournament, India's Vishvanath Suresh and Sachin registered impressive wins on Day 3 of the Asian Boxing Championships 2026 here in Ulaanbaatar on Wednesday. In the men's 50kg category, Vishvanath Suresh produced a dominant display to claim a 5-0 unanimous decision win over Bekzat Ergeshov

(Kyrgyzstan), showcasing sharp technique and ring control throughout the contest. He will next face Kazakhstan's Sanzhar Tashkenbay, a formidable opponent who comes in as the reigning World Champion (2025) and a World Cup winner (2025), setting up a highly anticipated clash. In the men's 60kg category, Sachin registered a confident 4-1 split decision victory over Mongolia's Buyandalai Bayarkhuu, maintaining composure in a competitive bout to advance further in the tournament.

Vettori: SRH Don't Miss Pat Cummins

New Delhi: SunRisers Hyderabad are not missing their mercurial captain Pat Cummins on the field, head coach Daniel Vettori said ahead of the team's second match of the season. Speaking at Eden Gardens before their clash against Kolkata Knight Riders, Vettori praised stand-in skipper Ishan Kishan, saying he was very happy with the wicketkeeper-batter's leadership. Australia's Pat Cummins is set to miss the match against KKR due to a nagging back injury that has kept him out of action since the T20 World Cup 2026. Cummins has spent more than six months on the sidelines, dating back to Australia's away series in the West Indies last year. The fast bowler played just one Test in the Ashes in December 2025 before being ruled out again by Cricket Australia. The fast bowler is currently bowling in the nets but is not fully fit to play yet. He is expected to return to the line-up midway through the season. In Cummins' absence, Vettori backed Ishan Kishan to deliver for SunRisers, adding that the batter was exceptional against Royal Challengers Bengaluru in the opening game, a match that SRH lost by a massive margin. "We're fortunate enough that Pat has been around the group and he's been able to have conversations with Ishan about his captaincy style," Vettori said. "But Ishan has been highly successful in his captaincy career so far. So whilst it can be slightly different, we don't look at it as a negative at all from the point of view of captaincy," he added. Ishan Kishan was the lone bright spot in SRH's game against RCB at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium on March 28. He scored 80 off just 38 balls in an otherwise faltering innings. It took a sensational catch from Phil Salt at deep cover to dismiss Kishan, who looked set for a century that evening. Vettori said that Kishan tries to lead by example, which can have a positive impact on the team's morale.

Indian Hopes Fade Early At Candidates 2026 Despite Promising Cyprus Start

Cyprus: 120 minutes on the clock. On an average, 4-6 hours of intense action. Tactics change with colour. Planning is different. A double round-robin ensures that pressure, tactics, planning and mindset are tested at varying levels. That is the nature of the Candidates Chess tournament. Whoever wins the Candidates goes on to challenge the World Champion. It is the benchmark to determine who is the rightful challenger.

In Candidates 2026, being played at the magnificent Cap St Georges Hotel & Resort in Cyprus, four rounds have been completed in both the Open and Women's categories. The tournament now heads into its first rest day on Thursday, April 2. For many players, it offers a chance to recover and plan for the remaining 10 gruelling rounds. The rest day could not have come at a better time for Praggnanandhaa, Divya

Deshmukh and Vaishali Rameshbabu. All three Indians are striving to earn the right to challenge Gukesh and Ju Wenjun respectively.

While there have been moments to cheer, the overall picture suggests that the dream of an all-Indian World Chess Champion may be slipping away. If there is one serious hope for India at Candidates 2026, it is Praggnanandhaa. Having already featured in the Candidates in 2024 in Toronto and qualified by winning the 2025 FIDE Circuit, he began the tournament in impressive fashion. In Round 1, he outplayed Anish Giri using the Sicilian Grand Prix opening. His quick and precise moves reflected deep preparation and confidence against elite opposition. Against Wei Yi, Praggnanandhaa showed adaptability with the French Defence and held a solid draw in a positional battle.

Kolkata Smell Blood As Hyderabad Face A Very Tough Test In The Impending High Stakes City Of Joy Cricket Tournament



Kolkata: Kolkata Knight Riders began their IPL 2026 campaign with a defeat to Mumbai Indians at the Wankhede Stadium. However, the three-time champions will feel they have a golden opportunity to bounce back when they take on Sunrisers Hyderabad in their first home game of the season at the iconic Eden Gardens on Thursday. Sunrisers Hyderabad performed reasonably with the bat against Royal Challengers Bengaluru in the tournament opener at Chinnaswamy, but their bowling unit let them

down badly as RCB chased down 202 with more than four overs to spare.

SRH's bowling looked vulnerable, and that presents a big opportunity for KKR's batters to cash in and inflict the same kind of damage that RCB managed in the opening game. Ishan Kishan, leading SRH for the first time in the IPL, appeared to be under pressure, and the visitors could face a stern test at Eden Gardens, where a roaring home crowd will be firmly behind the Knight Riders. Both teams endured disappointing starts

to their campaigns, making this clash an early chance for redemption. With Kolkata and Hyderabad still searching for their first win of the season, Thursday's contest could prove crucial in helping one side build early momentum and start climbing the points table.

The Sunrisers need to rethink their bowling tactics. Against RCB, they opened with Nitish Kumar Reddy, who did not bowl badly, but the bigger question is whether he is really their main wicket-taking option. Probably not. SRH have Eshan Malinga, but he was only introduced after the powerplay, which felt like a missed opportunity. Malinga is a genuine wicket-taking bowler because of his ability to consistently nail yorkers. That makes him a strong candidate to bowl at least one, if not two, overs in the powerplay before returning at the death. However, if Brydon Carse returns to the XI, SRH will face a selection dilemma between Malinga and David Payne. Payne made a strong impression against RCB, picking up two wickets and even putting

himself on a hat-trick, which certainly strengthens his case.

But Carse offers greater all-round value. His inclusion would not only add pace and variety with the ball, but also provide extra depth with the bat, given his T20 strike rate is close to 140. At the same time, it is high time experienced campaigners Jaydev Unadkat and Harshal Patel stepped up. SRH need their senior bowlers to take more responsibility, execute better under pressure, and provide greater control in key phases of the innings. The Sunrisers need their openers to fire. Travis Head and Abhishek Sharma have been two of their key run-scorers over the past couple of seasons, but both failed against RCB. Once they were dismissed and SRH lost three wickets inside the first five overs, posting a formidable total was always going to be a challenge. It was Ishan Kishan who gave the innings some momentum, but with Kolkata expected to offer another excellent batting surface, Head and Abhishek will see this as a chance to get some quick runs under their belt.