

In Brief

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BJP to announce Assembly poll candidates on March 18

Guwahati: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday said that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) will release its complete list of candidates on March 18 for the upcoming Assam Assembly elections to be held on April 9. CM Sarma, accompanied by BJP state president Dilip Saikia and Cabinet minister Pijush Hazarika, left for New Delhi on a chartered aircraft to hold discussions with the party's central leadership to give a final shape to the list of candidates. The list will be announced after the BJP's Parliamentary Board puts its seal of approval on it. Speaking to reporters in Guwahati before departing for Delhi, Sarma stated that the party will announce all its nominees in a single list, signalling that the BJP has largely finalised its strategy for the crucial polls.

Hint of rift within NDA in Assam

Imphal Fissures seem to have appeared in the ruling NDA in Assam with one of its constituents writing to the BJP seeking to know its status in the alliance. In a letter to state BJP president Dilip Saikia, the United People's Party Liberal (UPPL), a key member of NDA in Bodoland Territorial Council, has asked the saffron party to clarify UPPL's Status in NDA for the ensuing Assam Assembly elections. The UPPL has been at unease after the entry of its rival BPF in the NDA.

TechnoStruct's Digital Engineering Powers Nature-Themed Terminal at Guwahati Airport



Guwahati, Mar 16: A new terminal at Lokapriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport in Guwahati, popularly known as the "Bamboo Orchid," has been brought to life with advanced digital engineering support from TechnoStruct. The terminal, inaugurated by Narendra Modi, is recognised as India's first nature-themed airport terminal and is designed to reflect the cultural and natural identity of Assam.

Built with an investment of about ₹5,000 crore, the terminal is expected to significantly boost aviation connectivity in Northeast India and strengthen the region's position as a gateway to Southeast Asia.

Designed to handle around 13.1 million passengers annually, the architecture of the terminal draws inspiration from As-

sam's iconic kopou phool (foxtail orchid) and indigenous bamboo varieties.

TechnoStruct, a global design and construction technology company specialising in BIM/VDC services, played a key role in the project by providing advanced Building Information Modelling (BIM) coordination during several stages of construction.

The company worked closely with contractors on multiple components of the project, including the arrival and departure façade, airside façade, cityside façade and drywall works.

Through structured BIM methodologies, TechnoStruct delivered highly coordinated LOD 400 execution models to support the construction phase, ensuring that the complex architectural design could be translated into an accu-

rate and build-ready digital model.

For the post-construction phase, the company also supported the preparation of LOD 500 as-built models integrated with asset coding. These digital models will help airport authorities manage operations, maintenance and long-term lifecycle planning more efficiently.

Commenting on the project, TechnoStruct Founder and Chairman Roy Aniruddha said the Bamboo Orchid terminal represents the future of infrastructure development. He said the project provided the company with an opportunity to contribute to India's aviation growth through advanced BIM technologies, enabling precise coordination between design, construction and long-term operational management.

Nagaland: Naga Students' Federation Holds Protest In Kohima Against 'Vande Mataram' Directive



Kohima, Mar 16: Thousands of students and residents participated in a rally in Kohima on Monday organised by the Naga Students' Federation (NSF) to oppose a directive issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs requiring the singing of Vande Mataram at official functions and in educational institutions. Breaking News Alerts Protesters marched from Kohima Town to Lok Bhavan carrying placards with messages opposing the directive and raising concerns about its implications for secularism and religious freedom. A memorandum addressed to Droupadi Murmu was submitted through the Government of Nagaland to the President.

In its statement, the NSF said the January 28 directive issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs conflicts with the religious and cultural sensitivities of the Naga community. The federation stated that elements in the revised version of the song contain devotional imagery which, according to the organisation, may affect freedom of conscience. The NSF also referred to interna-

tional frameworks including the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples while calling for the withdrawal of the directive and consultations with Naga representatives.

Addressing the gathering, NSF president Mteising Herang said the rally was organised to express concerns over the directive and to reaffirm the community's cultural and religious identity. He stated that the protest was not directed against any nation or community but focused on issues related to secularism and freedom of belief. India Travel Packages Representatives from the Naga Peoples' Movement for Human Rights, Nagaland Joint Christian Forum, Nagaland Christian Revival Churches, and Catholic Association of Nagaland also addressed the gathering and expressed support for the protest, highlighting concerns related to the protection of Naga cultural and religious practices.

Mizoram may extend 'Operation Jericho' as govt steps up border drug crackdown

Aizawl, Mar 16: The Mizoram government is considering extending its anti-drug campaign 'Operation Jericho' beyond the current March deadline as authorities review the situation along the state's border with Myanmar, officials said. The operation was launched on September 1, 2025, as a joint initiative of the Mizoram Police, the state excise department and the Young Mizo Association (YMA). The campaign was started to check the growing problem of cross-border drug trafficking and illegal move-

ment of narcotics through the porous border areas. Initially, the operation was planned for four months and was scheduled to end in December 2025. However, due to continued concerns about the movement of drugs along the border, the state government later extended the campaign until March this year. Now, officials said the government is reviewing the progress of the drive and may extend it further. Authorities said the decision is being considered as Mizoram shares a 510-kilometre-long border with



Myanmar, which has remained vulnerable to illegal activities including drug trafficking. Security agencies believe that continued surveillance and coordinated enforcement are necessary to prevent smuggling networks from using the border routes. As part of the ongoing re-

view, State Home Minister K. Sapdanga recently visited the India-Myanmar border at Zochachhuah in Lawngtlai district and carried out a security assessment of the southern border region. During the visit, Sapdanga indicated that the government may continue the operation beyond March in order to strengthen vigilance in the border areas. Officials said the government is closely monitoring the situation before taking a final decision on the extension. The Home Minister also stressed the need for stron-

ger monitoring systems along the frontier. He said the state requires a dedicated mechanism to carefully track the movement of people crossing the border. "Mizoram government requires a dedicated system to meticulously track individuals crossing the border," Sapdanga said. Officials said that tighter surveillance, regular patrolling and cooperation among different agencies remain key steps in preventing drug trafficking and ensuring security in the border areas.

Hawaijar production training held for IDPs

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able livelihood activity, particularly for women entrepreneurs who wish to generate income from home-based enterprises. He noted that Hawaijar produced in Manipur is widely appreciated for its distinctive flavour and quality, and the growing demand across the region presents promising opportunities for small-scale food processing industries.

Dr. Anand further assured that CAU will continue extending support to people residing in relief camps by organizing skill-based training programmes and providing follow-up technical guidance to promote livelihood opportunities. Another resource person, Dr. Heisnam Nandita Devi, Senior Scientist at CAU, explained the process of preparing value-add-

The Central Agricultural University (CAU) organized a training program on fermented soybean (Hawaijar) production for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the Lamboikhongnangkhang relief camp, as part of the All India Coordinated Research Project on Post-Harvest Engineering and Technology (AICRP on PHET).

ed products such as pickles and other fermented food items from Hawaijar, stressing the importance of maintaining hygiene and proper fermentation techniques for quality production. Approximately 50 participants attended the training programme, during which Sanasam Menthobibi Devi conducted a live demonstration on practical Hawaijar preparation techniques, allowing participants to gain hands-on experience.

BJP to announce Assembly poll candidates on March 18 as Assam CM, state president heads to Delhi

Guwahati, Mar 16: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday said that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) will release its complete list of candidates on March 18 for the upcoming Assam Assembly elections to be held on April 9.

CM Sarma, accompanied by BJP state president Dilip Saikia and Cabinet minister Pijush Hazarika, left for New Delhi on a chartered

aircraft to hold discussions with the party's central leadership to give a final shape to the list of candidates. The list will be announced after the BJP's Parliamentary Board puts its seal of approval on it.

Speaking to reporters in Guwahati before departing for Delhi, Sarma stated that the party will announce all its nominees in a single list, signalling that the BJP has largely finalised its strategy

for the crucial polls. "The BJP will release the list of all its candidates on March 18. The entire list will be declared together," Sarma said.

He also indicated that he will file his nomination for the Jalukbari constituency in Guwahati on March 20.

Sarma spoke to reporters during his visit to the Durga temple at Rani on the outskirts of Guwahati. The Chief Minister sought bless-

ings at the temple as political activities intensify ahead of the election.

The announcement comes after the Election Commission of India on Sunday declared the schedule for the Assam Assembly elections. Polling for the 126-member Assembly will be held in a single phase on April 9, while the counting of votes will take place on May 4.

NE/EAST

New gunfire in Manipur's Tangkhul village

Imphal, Mar 16: Sanakeithel (Sinakeithe), a Tangkhul (Naga) village in Manipur's Ukhrul district came under attack once again on Sunday. Since the fresh tension erupted between the Naga and Kuki tribes in Ukhrul district after 21 passengers were held captive by Kuki groups on March 11, armed miscreants suspected to be Kuki militants have been firing toward the village randomly. Highly reliable sources said that the armed miscreants once again fired at the village, causing fear and anxiety among the villagers. There were, however, no reports of casualty. The reports said that the firing was initiated around 7.40 am while the villagers started converging at the church for Sunday worship, disturbing church service of the day. Reports quoting the villagers said that the armed miscreants allegedly fired from Lungter hill range using automatic weapons toward the village. After prayer service was disturbed, the armed miscreants once again fired several rounds of guns around 11 am when children of the village started gathering for their Sunday school

classes. As the incessant firing continued until afternoon created panic and trauma among the children, the day's session had to be stopped, the reports said. Heavy exchange of fire has been reported at Sanakeithel village ever since fresh tensions flared in Manipur's Ukhrul district after a series of unfortunate incidents between the Naga and Kuki tribes on March 12. Following the firing on Sunday, the village authority had even imposed strict restrictions to villagers venturing outside the village while asking any civilian not to enter within village jurisdiction as a precautionary measure. It may be mentioned that fresh tensions flared in Ukhrul district earlier on Wednesday after a passenger service vehicle (Winger Van) was hijacked and the passengers, travelling from Ukhrul to Imphal, were held hostage allegedly by suspected Kuki militants at Shangkai village. All the passengers were released unharmed in the wee hours of the next day following intense negotiations involving the state government and civil organizations from both the communities.

Chandan Brahma resigns from UPPL ahead of Assembly elections

Guwahati, Mar 16: Senior leader Chandan Brahma has resigned from the United People's Party Liberal (UPPL), delivering a setback to the party as Assam prepares for the upcoming Assembly elections. Brahma submitted his resignation to UPPL president Pramod Boro on March 15. The veteran leader had joined the party in April 2024 after leaving the Bodoland People's Front (BPF), bringing along a large number of supporters.

His induction into the UPPL had taken place during a public ceremony in Kajalgaon in Chirang district and was seen as a major political development in the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR), signalling shifting alliances in the region. Brahma's resignation comes shortly after another prominent UPPL leader, Kampa Borgoyary, stepped down from the party, raising concerns about internal challenges within the organisation. Political observers say the departure of two influential leaders within a short span could affect the UPPL's electoral prospects in the BTR, where political activity has intensified ahead of the Assembly polls.

While the reasons behind the resignations have



not been officially confirmed, the timing has sparked speculation about possible political realignments in the region as parties begin preparing for the upcoming elections.

Govt signs MoS with Kuki, Hmar groups; welfare councils planned



Guwahati, Mar 16: The Government of Assam on Saturday signed two Memorandums of Settlement (MoS) with several Kuki and Hmar organisations to promote peace, rehabilitation and development in their communities. The agreements on behalf of the state government were signed by Additional Chief Secretary Ajay Tewari of the Home and Political Department. Senior officials, including former Special Additional Director General of Police (SB) Hiren Ch. Nath and Home and Political Department Secretary Masanda Pertin, were also present at the event.

The agreements were signed at Dispur in Guwahati in the presence of Assam Education Minister Ranaj Pegu. The MoS were signed with the United Kukigam Defence Army (UKDA), Kuki Revolutionary Army (KRA), Kuki Liberation Organization/Kuki Liberation Army (KLO/KLA), and the Hmar Peoples' Convention Democratic (HPC-D). According to officials, the move follows years of dialogue after these groups laid down arms in 2012 and entered into Suspension of Operations (SoO) agreements with the

state government. Since then, several rounds of tripartite talks were held, eventually paving the way for the final settlement. Pegu further noted that efforts are underway to bring back individuals still living in forest areas and resolve their issues through dialogue. He also said the government plans to introduce education and training programmes in local languages and establish new educational institutions in underserved areas. Highlighting the broader peace process in the state, Pegu said militancy in Assam has significantly declined in recent years. He noted that the Government of India and the Assam government have signed multiple peace agreements with groups such as the United Liberation Front of Asom factions and other insurgent outfits, leading to the rehabilitation of more than 9,000 surrendered cadres. Under the agreement, the state government will establish a Kuki Welfare and Development Council and a Hmar Welfare Development Council in Kuki- and Hmar-dominated areas of the state. Both councils will have a chairman, deputy chairman, chief executive member, executive

members and other nominated members, with their headquarters located in Guwahati. The councils will receive financial allocations from the state government and will prepare development proposals for their respective communities. These plans will be submitted to the state's Transformation and Development Department for approval. The MoS also outlines a range of development initiatives aimed at accelerating socio-economic progress in Kuki and Hmar inhabited areas while preserving their cultural, linguistic and ethnic identities. The government has also committed to rehabilitating surrendered cadres in accordance with existing policies. Families of individuals who lost their lives during the armed conflict will receive financial compensation. Speaking after the signing ceremony, Minister Ranaj Pegu said the councils would be provided with dedicated funds to implement development programmes for the communities. He added that the government would also work to rehabilitate former members who had surrendered arms and extend support to affected families.

Election Commission warns against AI deepfakes in election campaign

Guwahati, Mar 16: The Election Commission of India on Sunday announced the schedule for Assembly elections in Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Puducherry, while cautioning political parties and campaigners against the misuse of artificial intelligence and deepfake content during the election campaign.

Addressing a press conference in New Delhi, Chief Election Commission-

er Gyanesh Kumar said the poll body would closely monitor misinformation and AI-generated deepfakes that could mislead voters. He said nodal officers in every state would keep a watch on such cases and take swift action, including ordering content takedowns and registering FIRs wherever necessary.

According to the schedule announced by the Commission, Assembly elections in Assam and Kerala will be held

in a single phase on April 9. Polling in Puducherry will also take place on the same day.

In Tamil Nadu, voting for all 234 Assembly constituencies will be conducted in a single phase on April 23. "Elections in four states and one Union Territory shall be violence- and inducement-free. The Commission will take strict action if anything contrary is noticed," he said.

Baptist Church and Thahekhu Village commemorate their silver anniversary

Guwahati, Mar 16: More than 4,000 people gathered Sunday to celebrate the three-day platinum jubilee of Thahekhu Village Baptist Church (TVBC) and Thahekhu Village at the new church premises under the theme "God of Generations." Delivering the theme message, executive secretary of Western Sumi Baptist Akukuhou Kūhakhulu (WSBAK), Rev. Dr. Phughoto Sema reflected on Daniel 4:34, where King Nebuchadnezzar declared God's kingdom everlasting and His dominion enduring from generation to generation. Recounting the biblical account of King Nebuchadnezzar, Rev. Dr. Sema said the king, at the height of his reign, attributed his kingdom to his own wisdom and strength. Because of his pride, he was driven from his palace and made to live like an animal in the fields for seven years. However, when the king realised his mistake and acknowledged God's sovereignty, he looked up to heaven, sought God's mercy and declared that all glory belonged to God alone. Rev. Dr. Sema said the account reminded believers that

while generations, lifestyles and cultures change, God remains constant and unchanging. "The God who led the pioneers—late Thahekhu and late Hejeto—continues to guide the people today as the village marks its 75 years of existence," he said, adding that while kings rise and fall and kingdoms come and go, God's kingdom stands forever. Highlighting the legacy of the pioneers, he said they had generously donated land for the welfare of the people on which the Akuvuto Mission Centre was established. He also noted that WSBAK was incepted there, describing the act as a demonstration of faith that continues to bear fruit even today. Rev. Dr. Sema further said that Thahekhu had produced officers in various fields, including IPS, IRS, NCS and NPS, which he described as blessings from God. Urging the congregation to remain humble, he cautioned believers against pride and reminded them not to attribute success solely to human strength while forgetting God. Delivering jubilee greetings, head GB of Thahekhu Village, K. Kakheho Yephthomi,



recalled that the village was established in March 1951 by late Thahekhu with just 14 houses and 61 people. He acknowledged the hardships faced by the early settlers and the contributions of past and present leaders in shaping the village.

From a small settlement, he said the village had now grown into a large community with thousands of residents and nearly 10 colonies. He attributed the progress to the prayers of parents and early servants of God and expressed hope that the community would celebrate its centenary in the present church premises. He also challenged the youth to live in the fear of God and strive

for success.

Earlier, the programme was chaired by women pastor of TVBC, Dr. L. Phitoli Khala, while invocation was pronounced by Rev. Dr. James I. Swu, associate professor, TTC. Convener of the platinum jubilee planning board, H. Atokhe Aye, delivered the welcome address. A dedicatory prayer for the jubilee souvenir was offered by Rev. Tovishe Sema, secretary DoME, and the souvenir was released by Thahekhu Village GB 'gen.' Samson Aye. Prior to the commencement of the programme, a flag hoisting ceremony was held. The village flag was hoisted by head GB K.

Mizoram govt urges public to conserve fuel, cooking gas amid Middle East tensions

Aizawl, Mar 16: Mizoram's Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Department has urged the public to conserve fuel and cooking gas following directives from the Centre.

The department's advisory came in the wake of a communication from the Union Ministry of Consumer Affairs, acting on behalf of the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas. While the ministry maintained that India currently holds sufficient national reserves of fuel and cooking gas, it emphasised the need for proactive conservation.

The move is largely seen as a safeguard against potential supply chain disruptions caused by the ongoing conflict in the Middle East. Although the current supply flow remains stable, the Central Government has reportedly set specific import quotas as a contingency



measure. To avoid unnecessary public anxiety, the state supply department clarified that the import of fuel and cooking gas is currently

proceeding as usual, and there is no cause for panic regarding fuel supplies.

However, it said that because

the global geopolitical climate remains volatile, "it is essential to start practising conservation now to prevent any future hardships."

TMC MDCs unite to seek leadership change in GHADC

Guwahati, Mar 16: TMC are planning to remove the current Chief Executive Member (CEM) and establish a new Executive Council to run the GHADC. Sources also indicated that the legislators supporting this initiative recently met C. H. Vijayashankar, the Governor of Meghalaya, and informed him about the ongoing developments related to the proposed leadership change. These political developments come at a time when the current council's term is due to expire on April 18. However, the state government will ultimately decide the next course of action regarding the council. Sources further revealed that the government is considering whether the tenure of the council should be extended given the present circumstances. Legal provisions governing autonomous district councils allow their terms to be prolonged under exceptional conditions, including emergencies or natural disasters, provided the Governor grants approval. TMC currently stands at 23, which gives them a clear majority in the council. Meanwhile, the GHADC is scheduled to convene a special sitting on Monday to consider a no-confidence

motion after the Governor received a representation signed by 21 MDCs. In the petition, the members stated that they no longer have faith in the present CEM, Albinush Marak. The request for the special meeting was submitted on Saturday, and permission for the session was granted soon after. Later, the District Council Affairs Department (DCA) issued an official notification announcing the decision. According to party insiders, MDCs from both the NPP and TMC are planning to remove the current Chief Executive Member (CEM) and establish a new Executive Council to run the GHADC. The notification stated that, using the authority provided under sub-rule (5) of Rule 36 of the Assam and Meghalaya Autonomous Districts (Constitution of District Councils) Rules, 1951, as amended by the GHADC, the Governor has called a council meeting on March 16 at 11 am at the District Council Hall in Tura. The session will primarily take up proceedings under Rule 22(1), along with any other matters that may arise. As per the established rules, the Chairman of the council will conduct the proceedings during the session.

Assam MP Hands Over Medical Equipment Worth ₹52 Lakh to Silchar Medical College Hospital

Silchar, Mar 16: Silchar Lok Sabha MP and Chairman of Silchar Medical College and Hospital, Parimal Suklabaidya on Monday distributed several essential medical equipment for the benefit of patients at the hospital under his first CSR initiative.

The equipment, worth approximately Rs 52 lakh, were provided through CSR support from Numaligarh Refinery Limited.

The initiative aims to strengthen medical facilities and improve treatment services for patients from Silchar and the entire Barak Valley.

Under this CSR initiative, the MP handed over four cardiac treadmills, one electromyograph (EMG); four ECG machines; two EEG machines and four patient monitors.

Speaking to the media, MP Suklabaidya highlighted the importance of the essential medical equipment for improving patient care.

Suklabaidya expressed his sincere gratitude to Numaligarh Refinery



Limited for accepting his first proposal to provide CSR support to Silchar Medical College and Hospital.

He further informed that another CSR project worth around Rs 2.5 crore is in the pipeline and is expected to be granted soon for additional infrastructure development at the

medical college.

The MP also stated that he has sanctioned Rs 20 lakh from his MPLADS fund for the construction of a resting facility for attendants of ICU and CICU patients at the hospital to ease the hardship faced by families of critical patients.

CPI(M) Announces Candidates For Two Seats In Assam Assembly Polls

Guwahati, March 16:

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M)) on Monday announced its candidates for two assembly constituencies in Assam ahead of the April 9 polls. India Travel Packages State CPI(M) secretary Suprakash Talukdar said the party will contest the Bhawanipur-Sorbhog and Goreswar constituencies as part of the Congress-led opposition alliance.

Sitting MLA Manoranjan Talukdar will contest from the Bhawanipur-Sorbhog constituency. The seat was renamed and redrawn following the 2023 delimitation exercise. The party has nominated Bupu Ram Boro as its candidate from Gore-



swar, which is located in the Bodoland Territorial Region. Talukdar said the party is part of a broader opposition alliance in the state that includes the Indian National Congress, Assam Jatiya Parishad, All Party Hill Leaders Conference, and Communist

Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) Liberation. In the 126-member Assam Legislative Assembly, the Bharatiya Janata Party holds 64 seats. Its allies include the Asom Gana Parishad with nine seats, United People's Party Liberal with seven

seats, and the Bodoland People's Front with three seats. Among opposition parties, the Congress has 26 seats, the All India United Democratic Front has 15 seats, CPI(M) has one seat, and there is one Independent member in the Assembly.

Hint of rift within NDA in Assam

Guwahati, Mar 16: Fissures seem to have appeared in the ruling NDA in Assam with one of its constituents writing to the BJP seeking to know its status in the alliance.

In a letter to state BJP president Dilip Saikia, the United People's Party Liberal (UPPL), a key member of NDA in Bodoland Territorial Council, has asked the saffron party to clarify UPPL's Status in NDA for the ensuing Assam Assembly elections.

The UPPL has been at unease after the entry of its rival BPF in the NDA.

"Given the recent political development in the state, especially the statements made by different BJP leaders in the media by different BJP leadership, the Core Committee of UPPL has decided to seek formal status on NDA Alliance for the ensuing Assam Assembly Election," the letter signed by UPPL general secretary Raju Kumar Narzary stated.

Despite being both in the NDA, there hasn't been any seat-sharing arrangement between the UPPL and BPF due to their bitter rivalry in the BTC.

What has added to the confusion is the statement of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma that the BPF and UPPL should finalize the seat-sharing agreement among themselves.

With the CM and the BJP washing their hands of the issue of seat-sharing in the NDA, the UPPL is apparently feeling sidelined.

Mizoram launches Universal Health Care Scheme 2.0, Rs 130 crore allocated for 2026–27

Aizawl, Mar 16: Mizoram Chief

Minister Lalduhoma today launched the Mizoram Universal Health Care Scheme (MUHCS) 2.0 along with a dedicated MUHCS Call Centre at the Assembly Annex Conference Hall in Aizawl. The programme was held during the lunch recess of the ongoing Assembly session. Health Minister Lalrinpuii attended the event as the Guest of Honour. The Speaker of the Assembly, several ministers, advisers to the Chief Minister, and MLAs were also present at the programme. Addressing the gathering, the Chief Minister said that the Mizoram Universal Health Care Scheme has

successfully completed its first year since its introduction. He thanked the officials, staff members and hospitals empanelled under the scheme for their efforts in ensuring its smooth implementation across the state. Lalduhoma said the government had carefully reviewed the first year of the scheme and noted that substantial financial resources had been invested. However, he said the benefits being received by the people have encouraged the government to continue and strengthen the programme despite the heavy expenditure involved. For the financial year 2026–27, the state government has allocat-

ed ₹130 crore for the scheme. In addition, government employees contribute about ₹26.42 crore to the programme. The Chief Minister also said the state has secured a loan of more than ₹800 crore from the Asian Development Bank to support various development initiatives. He said MUHCS 2.0 will be implemented with several improvements over the earlier version. The Chief Minister urged citizens to complete their enrolment within the specified period so that they can benefit from the scheme. He said enrolment will remain open until April 15, 2026. A one-month grace period will also be allowed in June, but

the registration fee during the grace period will be 50 percent higher than the regular enrolment fee. He stressed that fresh registration will not be allowed after the deadline. He also said that the provision allowing treatment at non-empanelled hospitals in emergency situations has been reviewed and will be implemented more strictly under MUHCS 2.0. According to the revised rules, this provision will apply only in specific cases such as patients requiring immediate ICU admission, those needing urgent life-saving surgery, and accident victims who require immediate surgical treatment.

The Chief Minister congratulated the Mizoram State Health Care Society for its recent achievements. The Society received ISO certification on February 18, 2026, recognizing improvements in office management and public service delivery. He also noted that Mizoram was recognised among the best performing states in beneficiary enrolment under the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana by the National Health Authority in January 2026. The recognition was given after at least one member from each of the 2,16,584 eligible households in the state obtained the Ayushman Bharat Golden Card.

CPPKAF demands protection of Koirengei Airfield

Imphal, Mar 16: A protest demonstration was staged on Sunday at the historic Koirengei Airfield in Imphal East, demanding the preservation and protection of the landmark site. The demonstration was organised by the Campaign for Protection and Preservation of Koirengei Airfield (CPPKAF). A large number of participants assembled at the airfield holding placards and banners emphasising the historical importance of the site.

The demonstrators raised slogans such as "Koirengei Airfield is the Pride of Manipur," and "Save our Heritage." During the protest, the participants appealed to the authorities as well as the public to take urgent and responsible measures to safeguard the airfield. They stressed that the site holds immense historical value and remains an important heritage landmark for the people of Manipur.

TSA rejects police complaint against social activist Ashang Kasar

Imphal, Mar 16: The Thadou Students' Association (TSA) has rejected a complaint filed at Kangpokpi Police Station against social activist Ashang Kasar, calling it a "baseless" attempt to misuse the name of the Thadou community and escalate ethnic tensions in Manipur. The complaint was lodged on March 15 by Lungoulen Guite, who identified himself as the general secretary of Thadou Inpi Sadar Hills. It seeks the registration of an FIR against Kasar over remarks made during a television discussion on Impact TV's programme Manung Hutna (Episode 58: "After Meitei-Kuki, Naga-Kuki Next?"), aired on March 12. Guite alleged that Kasar spread "false and misleading" information about the killing of two Kuki men, Thengin Baite and Thangboimang Khongsai, in Kamjong district. The complaint stated that the remarks distorted facts surrounding the incident, caused distress to the victims' families and had the potential to inflame tensions between communities. Sections 196 and 353(2) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita were cited in the complaint, which accused the activist of promoting enmity and circulating misleading information through digital platforms. A link to the YouTube broadcast of the discussion was submitted as evidence. Police have not issued any statement on the matter so far. Responding to the development, the Thadou Students' Association said the complaint "categorically rejects the baseless

complaint filed by one Lungoulen Guite in the name of 'Thadou Inpi-Sadar Hills' against social activist Ashang Kasar". The organisation stated that the killings in Kamjong district had "zero involvement or connection to the Thadou community" and alleged that the complaint was an attempt to exploit a tragic incident for political purposes. TSA also questioned Guite's authority to represent the Thadou community in Kangpokpi district, describing the group he represents as a "fraudulent, unrecognised proxy outfit". According to the association, the so-called Thadou Inpi-Sadar Hills had earlier been criticised by the organisation for allegedly acting as a front for "Kuki supremacist agendas". The association maintained that Kasar's comments during the discussion addressed the killings within the context of rising tensions between Naga and Kuki groups. Allegations that the remarks were misleading were described as a "deliberate distortion aimed at suppressing open discourse". It further warned that invoking legal provisions such as Sections 196 and 353(2) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita could amount to misuse of the legal process and might be intended to intimidate critics. TSA also accused certain groups of invoking the Thadou identity to create confusion in ongoing ethnic disputes. The association claimed that such actions attempt to "muddy waters, exploit ethnic tensions and drag the Thadou name into unrelated conflicts".

Congress Rift in Assam

Pradyut Bordoloi Threatens to Quit Party Over Lahorighat Candidate Row

Nagaon, Mar 16: Internal tensions within the Indian National Congress in Assam have intensified after Nagaon MP Pradyut Bordoloi issued an ultimatum to the party's central leadership, threatening to resign over the selection of a candidate for the Lahorighat Assembly constituency ahead of the upcoming Assam Assembly elections. In a strongly worded letter addressed to Jitendra Singh, the All India Congress Committee (AICC) general secretary in charge of Assam, Bordoloi expressed "pain and anguish" over what he described as the party leadership's failure to address his concerns regarding the candidature of sitting MLA Asif Mohammad Nazar. Bordoloi also accused Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) president Gaurav Gogoi and senior Congress leader Imran Masood of humiliating him during internal discussions on the issue. The Nagaon MP said that although his political life had been shaped by the Congress and he had always taken pride in being a first-generation politician nurtured by the party, recent developments had deeply hurt him. According to Bordoloi, his concerns stem from a violent attack he allegedly faced on April 27, 2025. He claimed that a group of around 20 masked assailants armed with iron rods attacked the vehicle in which he was travelling with MLA Sibamoni Bora at Doomdoomia in Dhing. Bordoloi alleged that Nagaon Police had arrested and chargesheeted Emdadul Islam, whom

he described as a "history-sheeter" and a close associate of MLA Asif Nazar, as the alleged mastermind behind the attack. He further claimed that after Islam was granted bail, he was accorded a "hero's welcome" and publicly received by Nazar before being taken to the residence of APCC president Gaurav Gogoi. Bordoloi also alleged that the accused was felicitated during a programme attended by Gogoi earlier this year.

Bordoloi said he had raised the issue with the party leadership and later placed evidence before the party's screening committee chaired by Priyanka Gandhi, opposing Nazar's candidature in the 2026 Assembly elections.

However, he alleged that during a meeting of the Congress Central Election Committee in New Delhi on March 13, Imran Masood dismissed his allegations as "false and fabricated" in front of senior leaders including Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, leader Rahul Gandhi, and AICC general secretary K. C. Venugopal. Calling the episode humiliating, Bordoloi wrote that the silence of the APCC president during the discussion further compounded his distress. He urged Jitendra Singh to intervene and examine the evidence he had submitted. Meanwhile, responding to reports of internal dissent after the party released its second list of candidates, Gaurav Gogoi dismissed speculation of rebellion within the Congress. Speaking to reporters

in Tezpur on March 15, Gogoi said no resignation letter had been received from any senior leader and stressed that discussions within the party were part of the normal political process. "In the larger interest of Assam, everyone must remain united. There is no rebellion within the Congress," Gogoi said, adding that public enthusiasm had increased following the announcement of the candidate list. His remarks came amid speculation of unrest within the party after senior Congress leader Praneshwar Basumaty resigned soon after the second list of candidates was announced. During his visit to Tezpur, Gogoi also met party workers and supporters who gathered in large numbers at Hotel Greenwood to discuss organisational preparations for the upcoming elections. Adding another dimension to the political developments, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma reiterated his earlier claim that Pradyut Bordoloi might eventually leave the Congress and join the Bharatiya Janata Party. Speaking to reporters, Sarma said he had known Bordoloi for over 15 years and believed the senior leader would not remain in the Congress for long. He suggested that many leaders continue in the party despite internal dissatisfaction but eventually decide to move on.

Sarma added that in Bordoloi's case, he believed such a shift could take place before the 2029 Lok Sabha elections.

CM Lalduhoma Launches Mizoram Universal Health Care Scheme 2.0

Aizawal, Mar 16: Chief Minister Lalduhoma officially launched the Mizoram Universal Health Care Scheme (MUHCS) 2.0 and a dedicated Call Centre today at the Assembly Annex Conference Hall. Attended by Health Minister Lalrinpuii and several state officials, the launch marks a significant upgrade to the state's healthcare infrastructure as the scheme enters its second year.

Financial Commitment and Improvements The Chief Minister highlighted the scheme's success, noting that despite substantial expenditures, the government remains commit-

ted to its expansion. For the 2026–27 financial year, ₹130 crore has been allocated. This is bolstered by ₹26.42 crore from government employee contributions and a massive ₹800 crore loan from the Asian Development Bank (ADB). Key updates in MUHCS 2.0, effective April 1, 2026, include: Strict Emergency Care: Treatment at non-empanelled hospitals is now restricted to immediate ICU admissions, urgent life-saving surgeries, and accident-related emergencies.

Payments: Moving beyond the monthly guideline, the state now settles hospital claims weekly to ensure smooth op-



erations. Enrolment Deadlines Citizens are urged to enroll by April 15, 2026. A grace period is available in June, though registration fees will increase by 50% during that time. National Recognition Mizoram was recently recognized by the National Health Authority as a top performer in Ayushman Bharat enrolment, with over 2.16 lakh

households securing Golden Cards. Additionally, the Mizoram State Health Care Society received ISO certification in February 2026 for its efficient management. Health Minister Lalrinpuii concluded by clarifying that outside-state referrals will continue to undergo strict scrutiny by the Medical Referral Board to ensure necessity.

more than four decades, Das has authored over 25 books, covering genres such as fiction, non-fiction, screenplays, reviews and critical essays.

Over the years, he has received several notable recognitions for his contributions to literature, including the Sahityarathi Lakshminath Bezbaruwa Award in 2018 and the Sahitya Sanskriti Award of the literary organisation Eka Ebong Koekjan in 2010.

He had also received the Tagore Literature Award from the Sahitya Akademi in 2010.

In the Bodo language category, writer Sahaisuli Brahma won the award for her novel Dwngnwi Lama Mwnse Gathwn.

Reacting to the announcement, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma congratulated the winners in a post on social media.

"I am delighted that Assam's literary brilliance has been recognised at the Sahitya Akademi Awards 2025. Congratulations to Shri Devabrata Das for Karhi Khelar Sadhu (Assamese) and Smt. Sahaisuli Brahma for Dwngnwi Lama Mwnse Gathon (Bodo), and I wish them continued success," he wrote on X.

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The countdown starts

With the Election Commission of India announcing the dates for holding elections to the Legislative Assemblies of five states – Assam, West Bengal, Keralam, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry – on Sunday, the countdown for a crucial event of the most vibrant democracies of the world has begun. As far as Assam is concerned, it will be the most exciting Assembly election in recent times, especially with the BJP-led alliance seeking its third consecutive term and the one headed by Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma seeking its second in a row. The Congress party, which had performed a hat-trick by clinching three consecutive wins in 2001, 2006 and 2011 under the leadership of Tarun Gogoi, despite being the largest opposition party, has already proved itself to be reasonably weak when it announced its decision to form an alliance with a couple of small regional groups and the Left parties in order to take on the ruling alliance. For the BJP-led alliance, it is clear that it will fight the election on two major issues – development and protection of the indigenous communities from the dangerous demographic threat posed by the immigrants having roots in erstwhile East Bengal/Pakistan and present-day Bangladesh. As far as the Congress is concerned, it does not practically have anything to talk about development. The huge amount of funds allocated and released by the Centre in the past ten years to Assam and the Northeastern region is simply mind-boggling. Even the strongest critic of the present government will admit that Assam has experienced unprecedented development in the past ten years. Equally important to note is the way corruption has been brought down to zero in government recruitments. The story of Assam’s transformation and development under PM Modi’s leadership, with Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma on the driver’s seat in Dispur, in fact has become a much talked about story at the all-India level. Given his scenario, the opposition Congress will have to work overtime and put in extraordinary efforts to keep itself floating in the high-voltage election campaign that the BJP-led alliance has already mounted. As far as the Congress is concerned, its top leaders at the national level, including its president, do not appear to have a proper understanding of Assam’s burning issues, as well as its culture and society. The Congress president, for instance, is on record ridiculing Bhupen Hazarika when the NDA government had conferred the Bharat Ratna on him a few years ago.

Here’s the news from Iran – Donald Trump is making America lose wars again

Donald Trump menaces the world. He’s global public enemy number one. He’s steadily losing the illegal war with Iran he started but cannot stop. His violence-addicted Israeli sidekick, Benjamin Netanyahu, is terrorising Lebanon. And ordinary people everywhere, their security threatened, face a huge economic bill for his reckless folly. Add Trump’s war-making to his daily debasing of democracy, appeasing of Russia, punitive tariffs, climate crisis denial and flouting of international law, and it’s clear this White House travesty has gone on long enough. Americans must put their house in order and act decisively to restrain someone who endangers us all. Trump is a man without a plan. He hasn’t the foggiest what to do next in Iran, deluding himself that he is in control of events. The more the US and Israel batter Tehran and other cities, the more defiant is the odious, unvanquished Islamic regime. US regional bases and Gulf Arab partners are sustaining significant damage from retaliatory strikes. Iran has succeeded in closing (and is now reportedly mining) the strait of Hormuz, which Trump, astonishingly, failed to defend. Rising oil and gas prices are driving a global energy shock that harms international trade, fuels inflation and creates food and medicine shortages. Poorer countries will suffer most. But few will escape the Trump plague. He’s the new Covid. Netanyahu’s worst instincts have free rein as Trump flounders. Unceasing, disproportionate Israeli air attacks are hitting Iranian homes, utilities, banks, cultural heritage sites and mosques. The attacks are said to be counterproductively rallying nationalist support for the regime. In Lebanon, it’s the same criminal story: civilians killed, hundreds of thousands of people displaced, destruction, occupation – all supposedly necessary to smash Hezbollah terror. But this is something worse: it’s state terror. Compare it with unchecked



Israeli settler depredations in the West Bank. The “greater Israel” project advances on all fronts, olive grove by uprooted olive grove, village by depopulated village. Taking fright as markets tumbled, Trump half-ried to declare victory last week, but even he couldn’t sustain so big a lie. At least George W. Bush had the courage of his (foolish) convictions in Iraq in 2003. Bush knew only a land invasion would achieve his aims. Trump lacks the balls for that. In Iran, he sought swift, painless victory from the air. What he – and the world – have got instead is, potentially, another forever war. The regime will keep fighting, increasingly by asymmetric means; there can be no popular uprising while this continues. Israel wants to make Iran and Lebanon like Gaza: permanent aerial free-fire zones. And thanks to Trump, the US is pig in the middle. Trump and his Bible-thumping Pentagon mouthpiece, Pete Hegseth, would prefer to declare “mission accomplished” sooner rather than later. It’s undeniable Iran’s military capabilities have been severely degraded, however this will not end well for Washington. Humiliating failure looms, prospectively as symbolically damaging to US global standing and

national self-esteem as Afghanistan or Iraq. Body bags are coming home. And the war’s financial cost is running at more than \$11bn a week. Midterm election voters, watching prices rise, will not easily forgive its careless architect. Donald J. Trump: making America lose again. The central issue of Iran’s suspect nuclear intentions remains unresolved. Its facilities have been “obliterated” not once but twice. Yet it retains a hidden stockpile of highly enriched uranium, plus scientific knowhow that cannot be bombed away. This stockpile might have been peacefully surrendered or diluted, had Trump not torpedoed negotiations. Some hardliners want to copy North Korea and build nukes to ensure regime survival. To date, Iran has not taken that final step, blocked by a fatwa from the then supreme leader, Ali Khamenei. Now he’s been assassinated, that may quickly change. If Iran does finally go nuclear, it could be Trump’s and Netanyahu’s doing. The Iranian missile and drone threat is diminished but far from eliminated, as Tehran’s continuing strikes show. Pentagon boasting about “permanently” destroying Iran’s offensive capabilities is plain silly. The US is taking hits, and suffering casu-

alties, at military bases across the Gulf as Iran learns how to exploit defensive vulnerabilities. Tehran is also holding proxy militias in reserve. Hegseth’s ranting about “barbarians” and “savages” says more about him and his boss than his enemies. It seems the “secretary of war” may have had some traumatic experiences while serving in Iraq and Afghanistan, where many US and UK soldiers were killed by improvised explosive devices (IEDs). In contrast, draft-dodger Trump probably thinks an IED is a contraceptive device. The coming US defeat is moral and legal, too. Trump’s lying efforts to shift blame for the killing of more than 100 schoolgirls in a US Tomahawk missile strike in Minab on 28 February are utterly contemptible. De-liberate or not, Minab was a war crime for which those responsible must be held accountable. In this context, it’s significant that Trump went to war without necessary congressional authority, flouts the Geneva conventions and ignores international law. US troops observe no rules of engagement. Ethically challenged Hegseth claims they can do whatever they want, with impunity. No, they cannot. Trump’s “little excursion” will have big geopolitical consequences. Regime

change, which he cruelly promised protesters, is slipping off the US agenda. It was always unrealistic to suppose it could be imposed from above. For his part, Netanyahu still hopes for regime collapse, not least because it may boost his re-election chances. He will want to keep on bombing Iran and Lebanon (and Gaza) when it suits him, regardless of whether Trump proclaims an end to the war. Allies including Britain are dismayed and alienated by Trump’s arrogant refusal to consult and fatal lack of strategic planning, exemplified by his strait of Hormuz fiasco. He’s irresponsibly escalating the war, saying he is bombing Iran’s Kharg Island oil terminal “just for fun” – which could further drive up global prices. Simultaneously, he’s asking those same allies to get directly involved by sending warships to his rescue in the strait. Unsurprisingly, there are no takers so far. Meanwhile, from US oil sanctions to Ukraine’s great detriment – and China are profiting from Trump’s bellicose bungling and disdain for global opinion. If there is any justice left in the world, Trump’s Republicans will be punished in November’s elections. But that’s the very least that should happen. US and Israeli leaders should face prosecution for war crimes and crimes against humanity in national and international courts. Britain and other adversely affected states should demand the US pay compensation. Iran and Lebanon should receive reparations. And Trump should be impeached in Congress for his many gross abuses of power. People may say this will never happen. But the point is, it should – and must. This is the universal standard to which even the most powerful leaders must be held, or else all is lost. Trump has almost three years left in charge, what else might he do if allowed to rampage on unrestrained? Failing, flailing Trump poses a clear and present danger to the US and the world. Take him down.

Power, risk, and readiness: The real test of Bangladesh’s nuclear moment

Bangladesh stands on the threshold of a historic moment. Beginning on April 7, fuel loading is scheduled to start at the first unit of the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant—a milestone that marks the transition from construction to operation. In this stage, uranium-enriched fuel rods are placed into the reactor core for the first time. Once inside the reactor, these rods will initiate a nuclear chain reaction, generating enormous heat. That heat will produce steam, the steam will turn turbines, and the turbines will generate electricity. Technically speaking, this is the moment when the reactor begins to come alive. But this milestone is not merely symbolic. Fuel loading is one of the most delicate and sensitive phases in the life of a nuclear reactor. From this point onward, the reactor becomes an active nuclear system. Consequently, issues of safety, radiation control, and technological reliability become paramount. Nuclear technology is indeed one of the most powerful sources of energy known to humanity—but its risks are not comparable to ordinary industrial risks. Even a minor lapse can have consequences of extraordinary magnitude. History offers sobering reminders of this reality. Incidents such as the Chernobyl disaster and the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster illustrate how rare but catastrophic failures in nuclear systems can reshape societies and environments for decades. These examples underline a simple truth: nuclear power demands the highest standards of safety, technical competence, and transparent oversight. For many

years I have expressed reservations about Bangladesh undertaking such a highly sensitive project largely through foreign loans, foreign companies, and foreign technical expertise. I said this repeatedly during the tenure of the previous government and again shortly after the current administration assumed office. My concern is not ideological; it is structural. Countries do not normally enter the nuclear power era without first building a strong domestic scientific and technological base. In most successful nuclear programmes, a nation develops its own generation of world-class nuclear scientists, engineers, and regulatory experts before constructing reactors. These human resources are cultivated over decades through universities, research institutes, and sustained scientific culture. Without such a foundation, a nuclear power project risks becoming primarily an imported technological system rather than an integrated national capability. Indeed, examples of countries implementing nuclear power programmes without first developing significant domestic expertise are exceedingly rare. When discussions about nuclear power arise, public attention typically focuses on the reactor itself—its technology, construction costs, or fuel supply. Yet the success of a nuclear power plant depends on something far less visible but equally critical: the strength and readiness of the national electricity grid. A nuclear reactor is an immense source of power. A single reactor often produces around 1,000 megawatts or more. Introducing such a large block of electricity



into a relatively weak or unstable grid can create serious technical challenges. Electric grids operate on a delicate balance between supply and demand. Frequency, voltage, and load must remain synchronised across the entire network. Even small disturbances can propagate through the system, causing cascading failures. If a grid is not robust enough, a sudden injection—or loss—of a large power source can destabilise the entire system. This is why many electrical engineers follow a practical guideline: the capacity of the largest generating unit connected to a grid should generally not exceed about ten per cent of the total grid capacity. Otherwise, the sudden shutdown of that unit could remove a large fraction of the system’s power instantaneously. A national power system functions much like a carefully coordinated

orchestra. The power grid network consists of many generating stations connected through transmission lines. All generators must operate in synchrony at the same frequency. When one major power source suddenly goes offline, the grid instantly loses a substantial amount of electricity. If sufficient reserve capacity is not available to compensate for this loss, the system can quickly become unstable, potentially triggering widespread blackouts. This risk becomes particularly significant when a large nuclear reactor is involved. Nuclear plants are designed primarily for base-load electricity generation. They operate most efficiently when producing a steady output over long periods. Unlike gas turbines or hydroelectric plants, they cannot easily ramp production up or down in response to sudden changes in electricity demand. Therefore, other

parts of the power system must provide the flexibility needed to accommodate fluctuations in demand. Gas turbines and hydropower stations typically play this balancing role. When nuclear and flexible sources operate together in the same grid, careful coordination becomes essential. Another major consideration is the transmission infrastructure required to distribute nuclear-generated electricity across the country. A power plant such as Rooppur will produce electricity far from many major load centers. Delivering this power efficiently requires strong high-voltage transmission lines capable of carrying large quantities of electricity over long distances. If the transmission network is weak or insufficient, several problems can arise. Electricity may not reach distant regions effectively, transmission losses may increase, and in extreme

cases the plant itself may be forced to reduce output because the grid cannot absorb the generated power. Grid conditions can also affect nuclear safety systems. Nuclear reactors contain highly sensitive protection mechanisms designed to prevent accidents. If abnormal voltage or frequency fluctuations occur in the grid, the reactor may automatically disconnect itself as a precautionary measure. While such protective shutdowns enhance reactor safety, they can also place sudden stress on the grid—especially if the grid is not strong enough to absorb the loss of such a large generating unit. This interaction between nuclear plants and grid stability is often overlooked in public debate but is critically important in practice. Beyond infrastructure lies an even deeper issue: the development of scientific and technical capacity. History

shows that major scientific achievements are rarely the result of short-term training programmes. They emerge from sustained intellectual ecosystems—universities, research institutions, and vibrant scientific cultures. Consider the trajectory of nuclear science in India. Scientists such as Homi Jehangir Bhabha played a foundational role in establishing the country’s nuclear research programme. Bhabha was not only an internationally respected physicist but also connected to leading figures such as Albert Einstein. His work laid the intellectual groundwork for India’s nuclear development. India later produced influential scientists like Vikram Sarabhai and R. Chidambaram, who contributed significantly to the country’s scientific and technological progress. Pakistan, too, developed notable scientific figures. Among them are Abdul

Qadeer Khan, Munir Ahmad Khan, and Nobel laureate Abdus Salam, whose work profoundly influenced modern particle physics. Scientists such as Samar Mubarakmand also played key roles in Pakistan’s nuclear programme. These examples reveal a fundamental lesson: world-class scientists are not produced simply through a few years of overseas training or by acquiring academic degrees. They emerge from sustained research environments, strong institutions, intellectual freedom, and a culture that values deep scientific inquiry. The fuel loading at Rooppur is undeniably a historic step for Bangladesh. It signals the country’s entry into a highly advanced and complex technological domain. Yet the true measure of success will not lie solely in the operation of the reactor. It will depend on whether Bangladesh can build the broader ecosystem required to sustain such technology—strong universities, robust regulatory institutions, skilled engineers, resilient power grids, and a culture of scientific excellence. Constructing a nuclear reactor is an extraordinary engineering achievement. But building the intellectual, technological, and infrastructural foundations necessary to support it may be an even greater national challenge. If Bangladesh can rise to that challenge, nuclear power may indeed become a pillar of its long-term energy security. If not, the lesson will be clear: technology imported without deep domestic capacity can illuminate cities—but it cannot by itself build a nation’s scientific future.

Conflict in West Asia: Record outflows from India, negative GEM flows markets open

Mumbai: Global emerging market (GEM) fund flows have turned negative for the first time in months, while India-focused funds have witnessed record outflows, signalling rising risk aversion among global investors as geopolitical tensions and tightening liquidity conditions weigh on markets, according to the latest Global Liquidity Tracker report by Elara Capital.

The report said GEM fund flows slipped into negative territory for the first time since October 2025, largely due to foreign redemptions from China, India and Taiwan. Although the magnitude of outflows remains modest compared with earlier inflow cycles, the shift in trend suggests investors are turning cautious as global uncertainty rises. Flows into US equities have also turned negative, with foreign investors pulling about \$4.5 billion, marking the largest monthly outflow since April 2025. High-yield bond funds, which are often seen as an early indicator of risk appetite, recorded their biggest outflow in nearly a year, reinforcing the view that global investors are moving into a defensive stance

Commodity flows, however, showed a mixed trend. Energy-re-



lated funds continued to attract inflows due to rising oil price risks linked to the conflict, though the pace of buying slowed after a strong surge in the previous week. Gold funds saw modest inflows, reflecting safe-haven demand, while silver funds remained under pressure with continued outflows. The report noted that past cycles of sustained outflows have often been followed by a sharp but short-lived decline before markets stabilise. During earlier episodes, including the 2022–23 peri-

od of geopolitical stress, prolonged redemptions eventually led to capitulation, after which markets formed durable bottoms.

Elara said the current trend suggests that markets may be entering a similar late-stage correction phase, where liquidity fades, risk appetite weakens, and volatility rises before a clearer direction emerges. India has been among the worst hit, with dedicated India funds seeing about \$1.2 billion of outflows in a single week, the largest withdrawal since

June 2022. The selling was led by exchange-traded fund (ETF) redemptions, including heavy withdrawals from US-listed ETFs, while long-only funds also saw significant outflows. In percentage-of-assets terms, the report said the scale of outflows is comparable to previous periods that preceded market corrections Elara warned that the bigger concern for markets is not aggressive selling but the absence of fresh buyers. The report described the current phase as a “no-buyer market”, a condition that historically appears before the final leg of a correction, often followed by capitulation and eventual bottom formation. Investor behaviour is showing early signs of risk aversion, although panic selling has not yet begun. The weakening of global liquidity is occurring at a time when geopolitical tensions have escalated, increasing uncertainty across asset classes. According to the report, the ongoing conflict in West Asia has started to affect fund flows, with investors shifting towards safer assets and reducing exposure to emerging markets. Similar patterns were seen during earlier periods of global stress, including the Russia-Ukraine conflict and tariff-related volatility in 2025

NSE unlisted share hold firm as valuations



Mumbai: NSE unlisted share price: Despite the selloff in the broader markets, unlisted shares of National Stock Exchange of India (NSE) have been able to hold their ground in the pre-IPO market as the leading exchange announced appointment of 20 merchant banks and 8 law firms to support its much-awaited initial public offering (IPO) on Thursday. According to the dealers, unlisted shares of NSE are trading around Rs 1,900-2,000, implying a market capitalization of Rs 4.70 lakh crore to Rs 4.95 crore as of both the ends. However, the leading exchange is yet to file its draft hering red prospectus (DRHP) with the bourses, but market participants are expecting NSE to raise Rs 23,000-25,000 crore from its maiden share sale. Prices of NSE have increased nearly a per cent after the recent announcement of merchant bankers and the stock is hovering around the Rs 1,980-2,010 range, said Vijay Kuppa, CEO, InCred Money. “It’s expected that NSE will continue to be in the spotlight for the next few months considering it may be the biggest IPO of 2026.” NSE has appointed Kotak Mahindra Capital, JM Financial, Axis Capital, IIFL Capital Services, Motilal Oswal Investment Advisors, ICICI Securities, SBI Capital Markets, Nuvama Wealth Management, HDFC Bank, Avendus Capital, Morgan Stanley India, Citigroup Global Markets India, JP Morgan India, HSBC Securities and Capital Markets (India), IDBI Capital Markets, 360 ONE WAM, Anand Rathi Advisors, DAM Capital Advisors, Pantomath Capital Advisors and Equirus Capital as its managers for the issue. The exchange has also pick eight law firm, namely- Cyril Amarchand Mangaldas, Khaitan & Co, Latham & Watkins LLP, Sidley Austin Singapore, AZB & Partners, S&R Associates, Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas & Co, and Trilegal- for its upcoming IPO. Sandip Ginodia, CEO of Kolkata-based Altius Investech, a pre-IPO shares dealer, said that IPO is the biggest positive for NSE but factors including regulatory strictness on F&O, jittered market sentiments, tightened liquidity, FIIs exodus, competition from BSE and impact of STT hike are not leaving rooms for a major spike in the unlisted space.

“Its earnings in future will be supported by addition of investor protection fund (IPF) to its balance sheet, lifting its topline and bottomline,” added Ginodia, expecting price band for NSE’s IPO around Rs 1,400-1,500, leaving some value for investors on table. NSE is the most widely owned unlisted stock with nearly 1.95 lakh investors. The IPO of NSE is said to be entirely an offer-for-sale, allowing complete or partial exit to existing investors, including LIC and Temasek. In order to clearance of regulatory roadblock, NSE had received a no-objection certificate (NOC) from capital markets regulator Sebi earlier in January. The involvement of a large consortium of domestic and global investment banks signals that NSE is gearing up for a complex and closely watched public listing. With this decision and progress towards the NSE IPO, Today’s session saw 55 stocks touch 52-week highs, while 563 counters fell to their 52-week lows. “The lack of buying support from domestic institutional and retail investors, coupled with continued FII outflows, intensified the decline,” said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Investments Limited. The share price may see sharper price discovery and increased investor participation, said Krishna Patwari, Founder and Managing Director at Wealth Wisdom India. “The next few months will be crucial and decisive. Over the next 3–4 months, with the DRHP expected to be prepared, key regulatory approvals secured, and valuation discussions progressing, investors will have greater clarity on the structure and timeline of the IPO,” he said, adding that NSE’s smooth and timely listing shall develop and create liquidity in the overall market. NSE reported a sharp 37 per cent year-on-year fall in consolidated net profit to Rs 2,408 crore for the third quarter due to provisions worth Rs 1,307 crore for one-time settlement in co-location and volumes hit due to regulatory clampdown. Ebitda came in at Rs 2,851 crore, while margins improved to 73 per cent for the quarter. Unlisted shares of NSE have been able to hold their ground as the leading exchange appointed 20 merchant banks and 8 law firms to support its much-awaited IPO on Thursday.

For a rate decrease wane as Middle East tensions rise US GDP growth drops to 0.7%

Mumbai: The US economy grew more slowly than previously estimated in the final months of last year. The US Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) said on Friday that Gross Domestic Product (GDP) expanded at an annualised rate of 0.7% in the fourth quarter, lower than the earlier estimate of 1.4%. The revised figure also fell short of market expectations. The slowdown shows weaker activity across several parts of the economy, including exports, consumer spending, government spending and investment.

“Real GDP was revised down 0.7 percentage point from the advance estimate, reflecting downward revisions to exports, consumer spending, government spending, and investment. Imports decreased less than previously estimated,” the BEA explained in its press release. The Commerce Department also confirmed that the economy grew at 0.7% during the October–December period, a sharp drop from the initial estimate. According to the department, the downgrade mainly came from weaker exports, consumer spending, government spending and investment. The weaker growth comes during the first full year after President Donald Trump returned to office. The economy had grown much faster earlier in the year, expanding at an annual rate of 4.4% in the third quarter. When the first GDP estimate was released, Trump blamed the slower growth on the impact of a prolonged government shutdown that took place late last year. The shutdown lasted 43 days and economists say it weighed on economic activity.

Domestic demand “An already large headache for the Federal Reserve is going to turn into an even larger one, and it’s likely the Fed will not cut rates in 2026 and may even start talking about rate hikes later this year,” he added. Regardless of the slower economic growth, personal income and spending both increased by 0.4% in January. Economists had expected income to rise 0.5% and spending 0.3%. Another key measure of demand in the economy also weakened. Final sales to private domestic purchasers, which excludes government spending, trade and inventories, grew at a 1.9% pace in the fourth quarter. This was revised down from the earlier estimate of 2.4%. This measure is closely watched by policymakers because it indicates underlying domestic demand. In comparison, the same measure had grown 2.9% in the July–September quarter, showing a clear slowdown in economic momentum. Inflation pressures are still a concern for policymakers. The personal consumption expenditures (PCE) price index, the Federal Reserve’s preferred inflation measure, rose 0.3% in January, bringing the annual rate to 2.8%. “The soft January durable goods data also suggests the economy entered this crisis weaker than hoped. This creates challenges for investors with PCE inflation still running well above the Fed’s target,” he added. Energy prices and global tensions

The data also comes at a time when global tensions are rising. Energy prices have surged since the United States and Israel launched attacks on

Iran on February 28. Brent crude, the international oil benchmark, touched \$100 per barrel on Thursday, raising concerns about higher inflation and slower economic growth. The report also comes ahead of a US Supreme Court decision that voided several tariffs imposed by President Trump under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act. Economists believe those tariffs had added around half a percentage point or slightly more to inflation. “The inflation data tells us that the inflation picture wasn’t looking good even before the Middle East crisis,” said Sonu Varghese, chief macro strategist for the Carson Group to CNBCE. Economists had expected a yearly rate of 2.9% when food and energy prices are excluded, core PCE inflation rose 0.4% in January and 3.1% over the past year. The core figure is closely watched by the Federal Reserve as it provides a clearer picture of long-term inflation trends. The monthly reading was 0.1 percentage point higher than December. Another report from the Commerce Department showed that orders for durable goods, products such as transportation equipment, appliances and computers were unchanged in January. Economists had expected orders to rise 1.3%, though the latest figure was still better than the 0.9% drop in December. When transportation equipment is excluded, orders increased 0.4%. “The big downward revision in GDP is a gut check going into this energy crunch, increasing the risk of stagflation,” said David Russell, global head of market strategy at TradeStation to CNBC.

Nifty plunge investors lose Rs 19 lakh crore

Mumbai: Domestic equity benchmarks BSE Sensex and NSE Nifty extended their downtrend for the third consecutive day on Friday, weighed down by weak global cues, escalating tensions in West Asia, continued foreign outflows, and a rise in crude oil prices. At close, the Sensex tanked 1470.50 points, or 1.93 per cent, to settle at 74,563.92, taking its weekly drop to 5.51%, or 4,354.98 points. While the Nifty plunged 488.05 points, or 2.06 per cent, to end at 23,151.10, it slipped 5.31% or 1,299.35 points this week. Investors’ wealth eroded by over Rs 19 lakh crore this week, as the combined market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies dropped to Rs 430 lakh crore, compared with Rs 449.35 lakh crore at close on March 6. The sharp correction has been largely driven by the rise in crude oil prices and growing macroeconomic concerns in energy-importing economies such as India, said Hariprasad K, SEBI-registered research analyst and founder at Live-long Wealth. “Higher crude prices not only elevate inflation risks but also contribute to currency weakness, with the Indian rupee coming under pressure, further dampening investor sentiment,” Hariprasad noted

Top gainers & losers Among Sensex constituents, Larsen & Toubro (L&T) emerged as the top loser, falling 7.52% to Rs 3,440.95. Tata Steel followed with a 5.20% decline, while State Bank of India (SBI), Bharat Electronics (BEL), Maruti Suzuki and UltraTech Cement dropped

3.55%, 3.12%, 3.12% and 3.07%, respectively. While Hindustan Unilever (HUL) and Bharti Airtel are the only gainers on the Sensex, gaining up to 1.18% today.

Five stocks, namely L&T, HDFC Bank, SBI, Axis Bank and ICICI Bank contributed largely to the Sensex’s fall. The India VIX has surged over 13% this week, reflecting a sharp rise in market volatility and heightened uncertainty among investors, said Ponmudi R, CEO of Enrich Money. Among sectoral indices, the BSE Metal index slumped 3.27% to settle at 53,876.79, while the BSE Auto index dropped 4.83% to settle at 37,268.72. According to Hariprasad, metal stocks fell during the session as global metal prices fell due to slowing industrial demand. “Concerns about gas supply shortages and energy disruptions have prompted several manufacturing companies to delay procurement of fresh raw materials until there is greater clarity on geopolitical developments, particularly a potential ceasefire in the US–Iran conflict,” Hariprasad said. In the 30-pack index, shares of Bajaj Finserv, HDFC Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Infosys, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) and Trent hit their 52-week lows today. “Nifty 50 ended the session under strong bearish pressure after breaking below the 23,300 support level. The index is currently hovering around the 23,100–23,200 zone, indicating continued weakness with sellers maintaining control over the short-term trend,” said Ponmudi

Ten stocks that might rise by 50% week’s top brokerage purchases

Mumbai: The Indian markets were hammered this week as conflict across West Asia sent crude prices to a four-year high. The Nifty 50 and Sensex slipped 2.47% and 2.79%, respectively. Almost every sector ended in the red. You may be wondering what’s a good stock to buy at this juncture. With the latest contract win, VA Tech Wabag continues to maintain a strong order pipeline. The company’s order book currently stands at over Rs 16,300 crore, which is around five times its FY25 revenue. The brokerage argues that IndiGo’s operating discipline, scale and promoter oversight have allowed the airline to maintain continuity during past leadership transitions. Co-founder Rahul Bhatia has stepped in to run the airline on an interim basis while the board begins the search for a permanent successor. Motilal Oswal on Jio Financial Services- Motilal Oswal initiated coverage on Jio Financial Services with a ‘Buy’ rating on the back of the ecosystem-led operating advantage. The brokerage house believes that leveraging Jio’s subscriber base of over 500 million and the extensive retail footprint of the Reliance Group is a key positive. 10 stocks with up to 115% upside – Top bro-

kerage Buys this week Motilal Oswal has set a target of Rs 320 per share. This implies nearly 36% upside for the share price of Jio Financial Services from current levels. The brokerage house believes that Jio Financial Services represents a “long-term platform opportunity in India’s evolving financial services landscape, supported by strong parentage, a robust balance sheet, and access to a large digital and consumer ecosystem.” Axis Securities on Voltas Axis Securities has Buy on Voltas and set a target price of Rs 1,628. This implies a 10% upside potential from current levels. Axis Securities pointed out that the current heat wave, recovery in pent-up demand in RAC, and increasing market share for Voltas Beko are the key triggers. Summers are setting in early in many parts of the country, with mercury rising significantly despite it being just the second week of March. “With channel inventory largely normalised and pre-buying confidence visible, we believe Voltas can outperform the industry with a positive trend in the market share,” said Axis Securities. Jefferies on IndiGo Jefferies maintained its ‘Buy’ on InterGlobe Aviation with a price target of Rs 6,140, implying roughly 45% upside from

the current price of Rs 4,236. This week, several top research houses, including Jefferies, Motilal Oswal, Nomura, Anand Rathi Research, and Axis Securities, shared their latest recommendations, and we shortlisted 10 stocks across sectors. Jefferies on Reliance Industries Jefferies expects Reliance Industries to be relatively resilient despite market volatility. The brokerage maintained a ‘Buy’ rating on the stock with a price target of Rs 1,750, implying around 26% upside from the current levels. The firm notes that Waaree Energies is aggressively scaling up its operations with plans to reach 28,400 MW of modules and 15,400 MW of cell capacity by the 2027 fiscal year. Its unexecuted order book currently stands at Rs 60,000 crore, providing strong revenue visibility for the next few years. Jefferies on Coal India Jefferies kept a ‘Buy’ rating on Coal India and increased the price target to Rs 485 from Rs 450 with an 11% upside based on Jefferies estimates. Jefferies has also increased its earnings per share estimates by 1–4% for FY26–FY28. The brokerage said improving electricity demand, stronger global coal prices and steady domestic consumption could support earnings growth

ahead. Coal India’s profit trajectory weakened during the past two financial years as dispatch volumes slowed and auction premiums declined. Motilal Oswal on VA Tech Wabag Motilal Oswal has a ‘Buy’ on VA Tech Wabag, with a target price of Rs 1,900. This implies nearly 48% upside from the current share price.

Though there are concerns about its Middle East exposure, the stock is also in focus after it secured a contract worth more than Rs 1,000 crore from the Chennai Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (CMWSSB) to refurbish a 45 million litres per day (MLD) Tertiary Treatment Reverse Osmosis (TTRO) plant in Chennai. Jefferies said Reliance Industries’ oil-to-chemicals (O2C) business is currently benefiting from supply disruptions in the Middle East, which have pushed up refining and petrochemical spreads. Anand Rathi has a ‘Buy’ rating on Waaree Energies, with a target price of Rs 3,849, representing a potential upside of approximately 44.9%. The company stands as the undisputed market leader with a massive module capacity of 22,800 MW, which includes 1,600 MW in the United States.

Europe criticizes the US for temporarily removing restrictions on Russian oil



Iran: European nations have reacted strongly to Donald Trump’s decision to remove certain US sanctions on Russian oil in the midst of Iran’s blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, arguing that the international community should continue to put pressure on Moscow over its conflict against Ukraine. The UK has joined Germany, France, and Norway in opposing the move, with foreign secretary Yvette Cooper condemning Russia and Iran’s effort to “hijack the global economy”. The German chancellor, Friedrich Merz, called Washington’s decision to temporarily ease sanctions on Russian oil stranded at sea “wrong” as the Trump administration sought to fight a jump in oil prices. Merz stated, “We feel it is inappropriate to relax the sanctions. Unfortunately, Russia has shown no inclination to negotiate. We will, and must, put further pressure on Moscow.” Despite the Middle East turmoil, the chancellor insisted on continuing to help Ukraine. “We will not allow ourselves to be deterred or distracted from this by the war with Iran,” he told reporters. The decision came as US and Israeli jets continued to pound Iran and Lebanon in a deepening regional conflagration that has choked global oil supplies. The Middle East crisis has effectively blocked

the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world’s most significant commercial routes, through which about one-fifth of all oil and seaborne gas vessels transit. In an interview with Fox Radio, Trump revealed for the first time that Russia had been supporting Iran during the battle, sparking backlash from Europe. “[Putin] might be helping a little bit, yeah, I guess,” Trump answered. “And he probably thinks we’re helping Ukraine, right?” Trump was alluding to accusations from multiple US media sites that Russia had given Iran with targeting information for attacks on American soldiers during the continuing fight. As the war in the Middle East approached its third week without any signs of de-escalation, Trump added that American forces would continue to strike Iranian targets in the coming days, signalling an intensification of the US-Israeli campaign. “We’re going to be hitting them very hard over the next week.” Merz’s statements mirror similar sentiments made by French President Emmanuel Macron, who stated following a call with other G7 leaders about the economic consequences of the conflict in Iran that the closure of the Strait of Hormuz “in no way” justified relaxing sanctions on Russia. Moscow, on the other hand, said that lifting the sanctions was “increasingly inevitable” on

Friday. Russia’s economic ambassador, Kirill Dmitriev, stated on Telegram that the US was “effectively acknowledging the obvious: without Russian oil, the global energy market cannot remain stable”. In the midst of quickly spreading worldwide shocks from the battle, Ukraine’s president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, stated on Friday that the Gulf War was “not good for Ukraine”. “There is no benefit to Ukraine from the Middle East conflict. It is reasonable that the world’s attention has shifted to the Middle East. “It’s not good for us,” Zelenskyy told students in Paris. As the Wall Street Journal reported, the Pentagon was deploying a marine expeditionary force to the Gulf. Trump’s unpredictable geopolitical movements looked to have left friends perplexed, as he also rejected Ukraine’s offer of assistance in combating Iran’s drones. Brent crude, the worldwide benchmark, stayed above \$100 per barrel in early trade on Friday, despite the latest step aimed at alleviating fears about the war’s economic impact. While the Trump administration has frequently vowed to accompany ships across the strait, activity has yet to resume. The Iranian leadership has warned that it will not let “one litre of oil” to leave the area as US and Israeli attacks continue. The Trump adminis-

tration last week allowed Indian refiners to purchase Russian oil for 30 days. A month ago, Trump claimed India had decided to stop buying it, claiming that this move would “help END THE WAR in Ukraine” by cutting off Russia’s key supply of revenue. Lloyd’s List, which issues information on global maritime and shipping logistics intelligence, said on Friday that tankers carrying Russian oil were being immediately rerouted to India, due to sanctions having been lifted. Analysts for Lloyd’s List said the Kremlin would benefit financially from the move. The International Energy Agency, the world’s energy watchdog, has already authorized the greatest release of government reserves in its history, with all 32 members agreeing to release 400 million barrels of emergency oil. However, ongoing bombings in the Middle East have obscured these attempts, as Iran has increased its retaliation strikes on regional economic targets. It urged the United States to “get ready for oil to be \$200 a barrel” after Trump’s attempt to destabilize the Iranian system. The New York Times reported on Thursday that Iran began laying mines in the Strait of Hormuz, citing US authorities. Trump has attempted in recent days to downplay worries about rising energy costs. “The United States is the largest Oil Producer in the World, by far, so when oil prices go up, we make a lot of money,” he posted to Instagram. “BUT, of far greater interest and significance to me as President, is preventing a wicked empire, Iran, from acquiring nuclear weapons and devastating the Middle East and, indeed, the world. “I will never let that happen!” Higher fuel costs, however, may represent a problem for Trump as November’s midterm elections approach, with his Republican supporters defending their slim Senate and House majority.

How the Iran conflict may get more costly and difficult



Iran: In its current phase, the Israeli-US war against Iran and its proxies has become a test bed for two conflicting military escalation models, both of which threaten to become traps. On the one hand, Donald Trump and Benjamin Netanyahu have so far failed to achieve their ill-defined and fluctuating geopolitical objectives. Despite the assassination of Iran’s supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, and other important individuals in the first salvo of the campaign, the religious government remains in place, and Iran’s stockpile of highly enriched uranium is at risk. Airstrikes are becoming more intense and striking a larger number of targets. Tehran’s response is a “horizontal escalation,” long planned by the regime, that aims to broaden the battle geographically, with strikes on Gulf states, as well as in terms of costs to Washington and the global economy, particularly in oil supplies. The following days and weeks will undoubtedly disclose critical lessons, not least regarding the strength of US military force in an increasingly unstable and multipolar world. Experts point to the possibilities of an escalation trap, in which the attacker is lured into a more complicated, lengthy, and costly confrontation than was anticipated from the beginning, as a tactical-strategic gap in the US-Israeli operation widens. Simply said, the tactical level consists of particular military missions, such as airstrikes that hit their intended targets, where the campaign has been effective. The strategic level determines if the war’s political and national security objectives are being met and at what cost. “There are several stages to the escalation trap,” said Robert Pape, a US historian who has researched the limitations of air power and advised several US administrations. “What we saw with the initial attack was tactically almost 100% success,” he

informed me. “The problem is that when that does not lead to strategic success, you get into the second stage of the trap.” “The attacker still has escalation dominance, thus there is a doubling down, which progresses up the escalation ladder but does not result in strategic success. Then you get to stage three, which is the true crisis, when you’re considering more riskier solutions. I would say we are at stage two and on the verge of stage three.” He said that the Trump administration was entranced by the initial strike and had developed a “illusion of control” based on the precision of its weaponry. All of this has led Tehran to develop its own escalation model, Pape and other critics argue, with far-reaching global economic and political consequences. Iran has proved that by attacking Gulf states and shipping in the Strait of Hormuz, it can raise the costs of war for Washington well beyond its military capability to directly fight the US-Israeli strike. Iran’s actions “are designed to create wedges between the US and the Gulf states by in turn creating wedges between the Gulf states and their societies,” according to Pape. “They are forcing the publics in the Gulf to ask: ‘Why are we paying the price of a war that appears driven by expansionist Israeli policies?’” Israel has signalled another escalation. Its defence minister, Israel Katz, said on Thursday that he had ordered the military to prepare for expanding operations in Lebanon, where it is fighting the Iran-backed Hezbollah, and that it would “take territory” if Hezbollah rocket fire did not stop. Robert Malley, a former US envoy to Iran and lead negotiator in the nuclear talks with Tehran, said how the US proceeded in the conflict – and what level of escalation or de-escalation was adopted – was likely to be defined less by clearly delineated strategic considerations than by

Trump’s psychology. “A some point, I assume there will be an exit ramp, but I could imagine the escalation reaching levels we really wouldn’t have contemplated even a month ago ... troops on the ground, going after basic infrastructure, taking over parts of Iran, working with Kurdish or other ethnic groups. All of that is escalatory in a different way. ” But that might elicit reactions from the Iranian side, and then who knows what occurs. I wouldn’t be surprised if we saw terrorist assaults against soft, quote-unquote, American objectives. If that happens, whether it was ordered by Iran or not, who knows how the president would react?” But at this point, what we should be concerned about is that the escalatory ladder is the one that Trump is most comfortable with, because I don’t believe the Iranians will make things any easier for him. I don’t think they’re going to provide him the win he desires and say, ‘Okay, we stop firing.’” “There is a view in the US strategic community, if not in Trump circles, that sees a risk of state-on-state conflict with China in the near future,” he said. From that point of view there has been a desire in the US to avoid the risk of other simultaneous threats and conflicts – involving Russia, Venezuela and Iran – and this has led to a split between those who envisaged the war as a narrow set of achievable objectives to degrade Iran, and Trump’s desire for “coercive control” over the country’s future. For Iran, he said, the pattern of retaliation in the Gulf was not simply about reciprocal strikes but also re-establishing deterrence in the region. He cautioned that if Iran struggled to maintain its current intensity of missile and drone strikes, it would not necessarily mark the end of Tehran’s horizontal escalation if it transitioned to a longer-term threat against shipping through the strait of Hormuz. The US author and foreign affairs specialist Robert D Kaplan pointed to another risk, which, while not immediately escalatory, could lead to the same end point – “the slippery slope of incrementalism”. “If a civil war, or something akin to it, breaks out in Iran, the [Trump] administration may feel compelled to send special forces and advisers to aid one side,” he wrote in Foreign Affairs. “And the risks of escalation spiral from there. The war in Vietnam took years to evolve into a middle-sized war ... The situation in Iran might follow a similar trajectory.”

France recovers the holy talking drum seized from Côte d’Ivoire over a century ago



Africa: A religious object taken by French colonial authorities over a century ago has been restored to Côte d’Ivoire in one of the most significant cultural restitutions to a former French colony in recent years. The Djidji Ayôkwé, a talking drum stolen by French officials in 1916, landed around 8.45am on Friday at the airport at Port Bouët, on the outskirts of the economic metropolis, Abidjan. It was delivered to Ivorian officials in Paris earlier this month after being removed from the Quai Branly - Jacques Chirac Museum. Aboussou Guy Mobio, the head of the Adjamé-Bingerville village, stated, “After a lengthy absence from this area, it is returning to its own people, and it is an hon-

or and a relief to receive it. This is the missing piece of the puzzle that returns today. Receiving this precious instrument is a comfort, but it is also another way to connect with our forefathers, who were extremely connected to this instrument.” Talking drums are hourglass-shaped pressure drums that are intended to simulate the tone, pitch, and rhythm of human speech. The 4-metre-tall Djidji Ayôkwé, weighing 430kg, was a symbol of resistance for the Ebré people, after whom the lagoon in Abidjan is called. Before and throughout colonial times, it was used to deliver signals across long distances to announce funerals or festivities, and in certain cases to warn people of impending peril. In

one event in 1916, locals opposed forced work building a road, and colonial officials confiscated it and transported it to France. The French president, Emmanuel Macron, vowed to return the drum by 2021, but it took four years of debate and campaigning for the French parliament to confirm and accept the decision. Then she addressed the drum, saying: “Djidji Ayôkwé, today your return is a message for our youth who have chosen to reclaim their history, and for the communities ... a symbol of social cohesion, peace and dialogue ... 13 March is just one step.” As a forklift operator rolled the wooden crate holding the drum from the aircraft, a cultural troupe broke into the traditional

tchaman dance. Another ceremony is expected to herald the permanent installation of the drum at the Musée des Civilisations de Côte d’Ivoire in the Plateau administrative district, at a later date believed to be in April. In readiness for the exhibition to the public, Unesco has donated \$100,000 (£75,400) through its Abidjan office for research and training at the museum. Sylvie Memel Kassi, a former director of the museum and founder of the TAPA Foundation for Arts and Culture, said the drum’s return to Ivorian soil paved the way for more restitution. “We are studying eight other objects,” she said, referring to the Ivorian and French authorities.

Bolivia captures suspected drug kingpin accused of plotting

Americas: Sebastián Marset, an accused Uruguayan drug trafficker and one of South America’s most wanted criminals, was apprehended in Bolivia. Marset, 34, is suspected of transporting tons of cocaine from South America to Europe, as well as ordering the murder of a Paraguayan prosecutor who was shot dead while on honeymoon on a Colombian beach in 2022. Marset was also sought in Washington for allegedly laundering money via US institutions, and Bolivia’s interior minister, Marco Antonio Oviedo, said on Friday that he was already being extradited to the United States. Marset’s criminal career as the self-proclaimed “King of the South” - a name he had imprinted on blocks of cocaine - ends with his arrest. It also marked a resumption of law enforcement collaboration between Bolivia and the United States under Rodrigo Paz’s centrist government, nearly two decades after his leftist predecessor Evo Morales expelled both the US ambassador and the Drug Enforcement Administration. Marset was originally caught for drug trafficking in 2013 and spent years in jail in Uruguay, where he reportedly made ties with Brazil’s Primeiro Comando da Capital (the originally Capital Command) and Ita-



ly’s ‘Ndrangheta mafia. On his release in 2019 he moved to Paraguay on a fake Bolivian passport in the name of Gabriel de Souza Beuner, where he allegedly built the networks to traffic drugs from Bolivia, which is both a cocaine producer and key transit hub for Peruvian cocaine, and on to Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany. In 2021, Marset was detained in Dubai while travelling on a fake Paraguayan passport, only to leave the United Arab Emirates legally within days after Uruguayan authorities issued him a new passport. The resulting scandal led to the resignations of several Uruguayan officials. But as investigators in various countries closed in on him, Marset moved to Bolivia in 2022, now using a Brazilian passport and the name Luis Paulo Amorim Santos. Around this time, Marcelo Pecci, the Paraguayan prosecutor in charge of dismantling Marset’s network in

that country, was murdered while on his honeymoon in Colombia. Colombia’s president, Gustavo Petro, accused Marset of having ordered the assassination. Meanwhile in Bolivia, Marset hid in plain sight. He bought a second-division football team and installed himself in its starting lineup, appearing in matches shown on local TV. Marset, accused of leading the First Uruguayan Cartel, is wanted in Paraguay and Bolivia on organized crime charges related to cocaine trafficking between South American countries and Europe. He was indicted in the U.S. on money laundering charges, according to the U.S. State Department. Bolivia’s centrist government said last month it restored operational cooperation with the DEA after a 17-year break, part of what it says is a broader multinational push against organized crime. President Rodrigo Paz hailed Marset’s arrest as a regional milestone.

She Ignored The Fatigue Thinking It Was Stress, It Turned Out To Be A Silent Heart Attack

Fatigue is a common occurrence in people's daily lives. Many work long hours, sleep poorly, experience stress, and skip meals, all of which can make them feel exhausted. As a result, people often attribute their tiredness to their hectic schedules. However, sometimes the body signals fatigue because a more serious issue is developing. Unexplained or unusual fatigue can be one of the earliest warning signs of an approaching heart attack. In such cases, the severe symptoms that most people associate with heart disease may not be present. Dr. Tanmai Yermal (Jain), Consultant – Cardiology, Manipal Hospital, Kharadi, Pune, explains what people need to know.

When a Heart Attack Does Not Announce Itself

Many people believe that the typical symptoms of a heart attack include severe chest pain, intense sweating, and collapse. However, there is another type of heart attack known as silent myocardial infarction, which has been recognized in medical literature for many years. These heart attacks may present with either no symptoms at all or with mild, nonspecific, or easily misinterpreted signs. In such situations, a person may not realize that a serious cardiac event has occurred. However, the heart still suffers dam-



age due to reduced oxygen and blood flow. According to reports, between 22 and 60 percent of heart attacks are silent, making them far more common than many people realize. Because of the absence of clear symptoms, individuals often mistake silent heart attacks for everyday issues such as indigestion, stress, or muscle strain.

The Fatigue That Should Not Be Ignored

One of the most commonly overlooked warning signs is persistent and unusual fatigue. This type of fatigue can be more severe than the typical tiredness

experienced after a busy day. Doctors describe it as sudden, overwhelming exhaustion with no obvious cause. This fatigue may make it difficult to perform everyday activities such as climbing stairs, carrying groceries, or completing routine household chores. Studies have shown that many women experience extreme fatigue for days or even weeks before a heart attack occurs. Unfortunately, this symptom is often dismissed as a result of lack of sleep, stress, or hormonal changes. As a result, patients frequently delay seeking medical attention.

Why Silent Heart Attacks Are Often Missed

Silent heart attacks are often detected late for several reasons. First, the symptoms are not always severe. The discomfort may feel more like back strain, muscle stiffness, or acidity rather than the sharp chest pain commonly associated with heart attacks.

Common symptoms of silent heart attacks include:

- Unusual fatigue or weakness
- Mild chest pain or pressure
- Breathlessness without exertion

Nausea or an indigestion-like sensation
Pain in the jaw, shoulder, or upper back
Light-headedness or dizziness

Because these symptoms resemble common health complaints, many individuals continue with their daily routines without seeking medical help.

The Urban Lifestyle Challenge

Urban lifestyles can further increase the risk of heart disease. Long hours of sitting, high stress levels, irregular sleep patterns, and lifestyle-related conditions such as diabetes

and high blood pressure all contribute to the risk of heart attacks. Recent medical data also shows a rising number of heart attacks among women. Due to the atypical nature of the symptoms, many women fail to recognize that they are experiencing cardiac problems. Instead, they may attribute fatigue, nausea, or back pain to minor health issues. By the time the condition is diagnosed often during routine tests such as an ECG, the heart may already have suffered permanent damage.

Treatment Options

Treatment depends on the extent of coronary artery blockage and the amount of damage to the heart muscle. Doctors may begin with medication to improve blood flow and stabilize heart function. In certain cases, procedures such as angioplasty with stent placement or coronary artery bypass surgery may be recommended to restore blood circulation and prevent further cardiac complications.

The Hidden Risks of an Unnoticed Heart Attack

A silent heart attack does not mean the damage is minor. In reality, it can significantly weaken the heart's ability to pump blood. This increases the risk of future cardiac events. It may also raise the likelihood of developing irregular heart rhythms or heart failure, making early detection and treatment extremely important.

Isha Ambani Channels Springtime Romance In Vintage Valentino Couture

Among the evening's parade of contemporary couture, Isha Ambani chose to look to the past for inspiration. At the Oscars 2026, she stepped onto the red carpet in a vintage creation that felt both romantic and refined – an elegant reminder of the enduring allure of archival fashion. Rather than opting for the season's newest runway look, Isha Ambani selected a strapless column gown from Maison Valentino's Fall 2006 Couture collection. The choice reflected a growing appreciation among global style figures for heritage pieces. The ivory-based gown unfolded like a delicate garden in bloom. Intricate floral embroidery in soft pastel tones of lilac, blush pink, powder blue and pale green was scattered across the bodice and skirt, creating a gentle, painterly effect. The silhouette itself was intentionally restrained. Cut as a sleek strapless column, the design allowed the embroidery to take centre stage, highlighting the couture-level artistry synonymous with Valentino's archives. Against the bright lights of the Oscars red carpet, the palette felt refreshingly soft. Isha balanced the romantic gown with sharply considered jewellery choices. She accessorised with diamonds from Lorraine Schwartz, including a distinctive black velvet choker set with a diamond pendant and coordinating drop earrings. The choker introduced a subtle contrast to the pastel florals, grounding the look with a touch of modern glamour while echoing darker accents within the embroidery. The result was styling that felt thoughtful rather than ornate. Isha's Oscars appearance came amid a broader cultural visit to Los Angeles. In the days leading up to the ceremony, she met with Amy Homma to explore potential collaborations between the Nita Mukesh Ambani Cultural Centre and the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. The conversations reportedly centred on promoting Indian cinema globally and strengthening cultural dialogue through film and the arts. Against this backdrop, Isha Ambani's vintage couture choice felt particularly fitting: a celebration of heritage, artistry and the enduring power of cultural exchange – expressed through fashion on one of cinema's most influential stages.



The New Rules Of Menswear: Why Structured Jackets And Elevated Basics Are Trending

Indian menswear is undergoing a noticeable transformation. For years, men's wardrobes largely revolved around occasion-driven dressing – think weddings, festive celebrations, and formal business meetings. Today, however, the focus is shifting toward everyday style that feels polished yet effortless. Modern wardrobes are now being built around versatile pieces that balance comfort with sophistication. Structured jackets, refined tailoring, and elevated basics are increasingly becoming the building blocks of contemporary style. The change reflects a broader cultural shift: men are no longer dressing simply for events – they are dressing with purpose, personality, and practicality in mind.

Why Structured Jackets Are Taking Centre Stage

“Over the past few years, the way Indian men dress has evolved significantly. Earlier, wardrobes revolved around occasion wear like weddings, festivals, or formal meetings. Today, men want pieces that look sharp yet feel effortless for everyday life,” says Tabby Bhatia, Founder, Brune and

Bareskin. According to Salesh Grover, Business Head at Corneliani and OSL Luxury Collections, this shift reflects a more refined approach to dressing. “The modern menswear landscape is evolving with quiet confidence. Structured jackets bring definition and presence while maintaining fluidity and comfort,” he explains. Structured jackets are no longer confined to formal settings. Instead, they are styled with T-shirts, denim, or relaxed trousers for everything from casual dinners to professional meetings. “A well-cut jacket instantly makes you look put-together without feeling overdressed,” Bhatia adds. Manjula Gandhi, Chief Product Officer at Numero Uno, notes that this versatility is particularly important in India. “Lightweight constructions and breathable fabrics make structured jackets practical across seasons. They work seamlessly with denims, chinos, or knit trousers, allowing men to transition from work to social settings,” she says.

The Growing Importance Of Elevated Basics

While jackets provide structure, elevated basics form the foundation of

the modern wardrobe. “Fine-gauge knits, impeccably tailored trousers, premium cotton jerseys, and refined outerwear are no longer secondary elements – they are investment pieces,” says Grover. Today's luxury is expressed through craftsmanship, fabric innovation, and subtle detailing rather than bold logos or flashy designs. This sentiment is echoed by Gandhi, who points out that men are moving away from trend-heavy fashion. “Premium T-shirts, well-fitted shirts, refined polos, quality chinos, and minimalist knitwear are replacing logo-heavy clothing,” she explains. The emphasis is now on better fabrics, improved fits, and neutral colour palettes that offer timeless appeal.

A Wardrobe Built For Modern Lifestyles

Another factor driving this shift is the evolving lifestyle of urban professionals. Work environments are becoming more flexible, social calendars are more dynamic, and wardrobes need to keep up. “Structured tailoring paired with elevated essentials creates a modular wardrobe,” Grover notes. Such pieces can move easily between professional settings,



evening engagements, and casual outings. Gandhi adds that cultural influences, including celebrities and social media, are also shaping modern style choices. Seeing public figures combine tailored pieces with relaxed clothing has encouraged men to experiment with more refined yet prac-



tical looks.

The Future Of Men's Style In India

The shift toward structured jackets and elevated basics signals more than a passing trend. It reflects a deeper evolution in how Indian men approach fashion. Rather than building ward-

robes around occasional statement pieces, men are now investing in versatile essentials that offer longevity and adaptability. With craftsmanship, quality fabrics, and thoughtful design taking centre stage, the modern wardrobe is becoming more refined, practical, and expressive.

Kylie Jenner's Cherry-Red Schiaparelli Gown Brings Bombshell Glamour To Oscars 2026

While many celebrities treat the Oscars red carpet as the night's main stage, Kylie Jenner proved that a memorable fashion moment doesn't necessarily require one. At the Academy Awards, the beauty mogul and reality star revealed her look ahead of the ceremony – delivering a bold shift from the all-black ensembles she has favoured throughout this awards season.

Instead, Kylie Jenner embraced the drama of monochrome in a striking cherry-red couture gown that instantly commanded attention.

A Schiaparelli Silhouette With Vintage Allure



Custom-made by Schiaparelli, Kylie's gown was drenched in glossy, wet-look sequins that caught the light with every movement. The design featured a plunging halter neckline, a signature keyhole cutout and a sculpted body-hugging silhouette that emphasised the label's flair for theatrical glamour. The overall effect evoked the spirit of classic Hollywood bombshells, with Kylie herself playfully nodding to the resemblance by captioning her Instagram reveal “Jessica Who?” – a clear wink to the iconic animated seductress Jessica Rabbit.

Yet the look also felt distinctly modern. The sleek construction and minimal

colour palette kept the design sharp and contemporary, reinforcing the fashion house's signature blend of surrealist drama and couture precision.

A High-Wattage Diamond Statement

Kylie amplified the impact of the gown with a dazzling selection of jewellery from Lorraine Schwartz. The diamond suite – including statement earrings, rings and an eye-catching necklace – reportedly totalled around 200 carats. Against the vivid red of the gown, the diamonds delivered maximum sparkle without overwhelming the look. Instead, they heightened the cinematic quality of the ensemble, giving it

the kind of larger-than-life glamour that awards-season fashion thrives on.

For the glam, Kylie stayed true to a formula that has become instantly recognisable. Her makeup centred on luminous skin, softly bronzed eyes and a matte pink-nude lip, while generous blush added warmth and dimension. Her long Brunette hair was styled in sweeping, voluminous waves.

Though Kylie Jenner skipped the red carpet entirely, she was later spotted arriving inside the theatre hand-in-hand with actor Timothée Chalamet, reinforcing their growing status as one of Hollywood's most-watched couples.

ENTERTAINMENT

Amid the thaw between China and India, Salman Khan’s Battle of Galwan was renamed Maatrubhumi

New Delhi: The title of Salman Khan’s next military drama, which was inspired by the conflict in the Galwan Valley, has been changed. Maatrubhumi: May War Rest in Peace is the new title for the movie, which was previously advertised as Battle of Galwan. Salman Khan formally unveiled the new title and poster on Monday. A remark related to the movie’s theme was also included in the announcement: “May War Rest in Peace.” Salman Khan is depicted in the poster looking from behind a wooden log that has been splattered with blood and is secured with a barbed chain. The Galwan Valley events served as the inspiration for the narrative. Additionally, the movie’s release date has been pushed back. The original release date was set for April 17. The movie will now be released in August. The film, which was directed by Apoorva Lakhia, is based on the actual conflict between Chinese and Indian soldiers in the Galwan Valley on June 15, 2020, near the Line of Actual Control (LAC).Twenty



Indian soldiers lost their lives in the hand-to-hand fighting, which was one of the worst military conflicts between the two nations in decades. Colonel Santosh Babu, the commanding officer of the 16 Bihar Regiment, who led Indian troops during the conflict while upholding a disengagement agreement at the border, is portrayed by Salman Khan in the movie. In addition to Salman Khan, the fe-

male lead in the movie is Chitrangda Singh. Key parts will also be played by actors Ankur Bhatia and Abhilash Chaudhary. Himesh Reshammiya wrote the music for the movie.Salman had a moustache, a tough war look, a bloodied face, and a determined expression in the movie’s first-look poster. The project has faced criticism from various Chinese quarters even prior to its

publication.Following the release of the movie’s teaser, a number of individuals on the Chinese social media site Weibo claimed that the film misrepresented the circumstances leading up to the Galwan Valley battle. Some tweets claimed that China owns the area and that the teaser went against their account of what happened on the battlefield.The movie was also criticized by Chinese official media, which claimed it misrepresented the 2020 conflict and encouraged Indian nationalism.The critique has also been rejected by government sources. The 2020 Galwan Valley conflict had a big impact on China-India ties. Following the incident, India implemented a number of economic actions, including the prohibition of over 200 Chinese mobile applications, including well-known platforms like TikTok. Additionally, the government increased its monitoring of Chinese corporations’ investments.During that time, public calls to boycott Chinese goods gained momentum.

Regarding Arijit Singh abandoning playback singing, Shreya Ghoshal



Mumbai: In response to Arijit Singh’s decision to leave playback singing in Bollywood, singer Shreya Ghoshal acknowledged that she had also considered taking a vacation. The singer commended Arijit for having the guts to take such a risky decision. Shreya recently discussed her wish to take a vacation and Arijit Singh’s choice to retire in an interview. Shreya emphasized that lip-syncing on stage is something she would never want to rely on, stating that live performances are fundamental to her identity as an artist. “I feel very uncomfortable with that,” she remarked. The day I have to do that, I will no longer sing.In response to Arijit’s recent decision to give up playback singing for movies, Shreya expressed her admiration for the bravery required to make such a decision. “I also feel like taking a break sometimes,” she remarked.

He made his choice with great courage.He is a passionate musician. He doesn’t consider his motivations or the benefits of creating music. He simply acts in a way that brings him joy. According to Shreya, one of the main reasons viewers connect with Arijit so deeply is his genuine love of music. Shreya claims that the reason people adore Arijit so much is because music is his top priority.Shreya’s career as a playback singer started with Ismail Darbar’s music for Sanjay Leela Bhansali’s Devdas. For Bairi Piya, she received her first National Award for Best Female Playback Singer. She has since performed in Hindi, Bengali, Kannada, Telugu, Tamil, and Malayalam, among other languages. Shreya just revealed that she will be performing in the UK, USA, India, and Abu Dhabi as part of her The Unstoppable World Tour. Arijit announced his retirement from

playback singing on January 27. “Hello, Happy New Year to all,” he wrote in a post on X. I want to express my gratitude to each and every one of you for being such wonderful listeners throughout the years. I am pleased to declare that I will no longer be accepting any new playback vocalist assignments. I’m canceling it. It was an amazing trip. According to the artist, he now wants the younger generation to come up and use their skills to motivate him. He underlined that he will not be singing for Bollywood movies after fulfilling his present obligations, even if he pledged to continue creating music. After leaving Bollywood music, Arijit released his first solo song, Raina, earlier this month. Arijit Singh sings, Priya Saraiya writes the lyrics, and Sheykhara Ravjani composes the music for the independent single Raina.

Priyanka Chopra donned a strapless white Dior gown at the 2026 Oscars

Mumbai: Priyanka Chopra returned to the Oscars as a presenter, wearing a strapless white Dior gown that featured a flowing skirt and high slit. Despite her elegant appearance, many fans on social media expressed disappointment in her styling, particularly criticizing her hair and dress choice. While some supporters praised her look, comments highlighted that it did not meet the expectations set by her previous fashion statements. Chopra and her husband, Nick Jonas,



complemented each other on the red carpet, aiming for a classic Hollywood aesthetic, but the overall reaction was mixed, with several fans feeling she could have chosen a better outfit.

Naga Chaitanya on the lady luck of his wife, Sobhita Dhulipala

New Delhi: Recently, Naga Chaitanya made history by winning the Best Actor prize for his film Thandel (2025) at the esteemed Gaddar Telangana Film Awards 2025. The actor played a fisherman in a village in the movie, which starred Chaitanya and Sai Pallavi. The performance won him praise from critics and viewers. Naga Chaitanya acknowledges that the fact that his award is from the Telangana government adds to its uniqueness. “I hold Thandel in high regard. An Andhra village’s fisherman are the subject of this factual story. Telling their valiant tale was therefore motivating. I spent time getting to know them, and I gained a great deal of personal knowledge and motivation. I became emotionally invested in their lives, stories, and energy, which seemed to be carried over into the movie. For me, changing into Thandel Raju was an extreme-



ly difficult journey. “I was happy about the film’s box office number, but having this critical acclaim and the government recognizing it, I’m just so thankful,” he adds. “Now that the government has recognized it, it’s been amazing.” It’s interesting to note that Thandel celebrated his first release following his 2024 wedding

to actor Sobhita Dhulipala. It was well received by critics and went on to become his biggest grossing movie, earning over ₹100 crores globally. Does he think Sobhita has been his lucky charm and lady luck now that he has this prize as well? “I always believe that having a solid foundation is crucial because your strength

and vitality at home kind of translate to your career as well. “So, yes, she has,” he answers. Given that he works in Telugu and Sobhita Dhulipala has a successful career in Hindi, do they advise one another on how to manage their careers? “We talk about movies all the time because we are both so interested in them. We engage in intelligent banter about industries and discuss each other’s projects. We talk about what’s going on here, what’s happening there, and what kinds of scripts and storylines are being produced. He responds, “It’s not just about a particular industry, but there’s always a creative banter about films, about the craft that we have more than anything else.” Is the duo planning to work together on screen? “We are always open to it,” he replies. Of sure, why not if we discover something novel and exciting for both of us?

Following the unexpected death of hairstylist Marce Pedrozo, Janhvi Kapoor paid a heartfelt tribute to him



Mumbai: Celebrity hairstylist Marce Pedrozo and Janhvi Kapoor have worked together on a number of projects. The industry is in shock over his unexpected passing, and tributes are flooding in. Janhvi Kapoor posted a sweet statement and a carousel of photos of herself and Marce Pedrozo over the years on her Instagram account.Janhvi Kapoor posted backstage photos of events with him in the Instagram carousel, along

with additional photos of him doing her hair. “I love you, Marcy,” she wrote. We would look at each other and yell in a high-pitched mocking voice, “We have 20 minutes chalo chalo,” every time I got into my van. We would also laugh at the difficult jobs, insane hours, madness, and confusion. In the midst of all of that, though, there was a certain sense of trust and happiness that we shared whenever we worked together (or

sneaked away time to eat at restaurants when we should have been getting ready). “You weren’t just a member of my team,” she went on. We worked together as a team. Of course, literally. However, we also had control over one another, which made me feel very well-cared for. that my people are these people. And I am theirs. I would do anything to have twenty more minutes with you so I may tell you how wonderful you were

to all of us. How lovely your soul and mind are, were, and always will be.” “You were a multifaceted artist. You weren’t just my safe haven; your warmth (and your sass) contributed so much color to all of our lives. You were so pure, and my goodness, I know you had so many plans, and we had so many ideas. Marcy, I adore you. Every day I will miss you. Janhvi Kapoor continued, “And one of the greatest honors of my life has been seeing your face at the beginning and end of every creative journey I’ve had over the last couple of years.” “I hope you’re enjoying a lot of banana paranthas and eating food that isn’t too sour or spicy wherever you are! Adding vibrant colors to your hair and creating artwork that reflects the beauty and sparkle of your thoughts. I wish you could see how much everyone is missing you today, how much you have impacted and enriched their lives, and how much they

want to celebrate you. I will always treasure every memory I have of you. Her lengthy email ended with, “I love you and I miss you dearly.” In addition to Janhvi Kapoor, other celebrities who have collaborated with Marce Pedrozo, such as Varun Dhawan and Nora Fatehi, also expressed regret on social media.Varun Dhawan commented, “Can’t believe it.”Today I lost a very very dear friend, a brother, a confidant... someone who was a part of my journey from day one,” Nora Fatehi said, expressing her deep sorrow. Someone you’ve all seen my relationship with! He brought out the best in me! And I’m always grinning and giggling whenever you guys see him with me! Together, we completed everything. Marce Pedrozo’s precise cause of death is still unknown.Tripti Dimri, Suhana Khan, Malaika Arora, Jacqueline Fernandez, and Tara Sutaria are among the other well-known celebrities that Marce Pedrozo has collaborated with.

Ram Gopal Varma Shares The Story Of The Mumbai Apartment He Used For The Bhoot Shoot

Mumbai: 2003 saw the release of Bhoot. Ram Gopal Varma’s horror film, which starred Ajay Devgn and Urmila Matondkar, is still strongly linked to the director over twenty years after. Recently, Varma revealed a little-known fact about the movie: the apartment that served as the major shooting location has not been occupied since the film’s production.While attending a special showing at the Red Lorry Film Festival 2026 in Mumbai, the director discussed Bhoot. In retrospect, Varma stated that he decided to set the drama in a Mumbai apartment rather than a bungalow because he thought it would be more accessible and believable for viewers. He also disclosed that the majority of the movie’s sequences were filmed in a single apartment, and it was completed in just 30 days. The flat hasn’t been occupied since 2002, according to Varma, because people were allegedly reluctant to move in after the movie’s release.Ram Gopal Varma stated, “I shot most of the movie



in one apartment, so I finished it in just thirty days.” I have a fascinating fact to share with you. The movie was filmed in 2002. That apartment remains unoccupied after more than 20 years! After the movie’s release, it gained a lot of fame, and no one wants to live in that flat. The Lokhandwala Complex is where it is located. I can’t remember the building’s name.” “I decided to cast Urmila in the role because of one expression she did in another completely different film of mine,” he continued when discussing the hiring of Urmila Matondkar. Rangeela’s expression in the Hai Rama song, where she is wearing a red outfit and staring intently at Jackie Shroff, really stuck in my memory.

I was genuinely persuaded that she could play this part in (Bhoot) by that close-up. Ram Gopal Varma is the author and director of the 2003 supernatural horror movie Bhoot. The plot revolves around a married couple, portrayed by Ajay Devgn and Urmila Matondkar, who move into a flat that turns out to be haunted. Tanuja, Fardeen Khan, Nana Patekar, and Rekha all played significant roles in the movie. Bhoot later achieved success at the box office. For her portrayal of a possessed lady, Urmila Matondkar won multiple prizes and was much praised. Later, Varma made a comeback to the franchise with the 2012 release of Bhoot Returns, which starred Manisha Koirala.

Heartfelt moments during Harish Rana’s transfer to AIIMS



New Delhi, Mar 16: Following a Supreme Court ruling allowing passive euthanasia, 32-year-old Harish Rana was moved from Ghaziabad to AIIMS Delhi on Saturday after 13 years in a vegetative condition. In an effort to put an end to his protracted agony, doctors will now progressively remove life support under medical supervision. A heartfelt farewell at Rana’s Ghaziabad home was captured in a video that went viral on social media. It was filmed on Friday and included a heartbroken Brahma Kumari saying goodbye to Rana: It’s time to leave, so please forgive everyone and ask for forgiveness from everyone. It’s alright. For more than ten years, Harish has received loyal care from his family, especially from his father Ashok Rana. Because of their longstanding affiliation with the Brahma Kumaris center, members of the Rajnagar Extension AOA and the surrounding community remember the family’s

steadfast service. Brahma Kumari paid a visit to the Rana household on March 13, offering prayers and a ceremonial tilak. This was the first instance of court-approved passive euthanasia in India. Thirteen years ago, Harish suffered a catastrophic brain damage from a fall, which led to his protracted illness. The Supreme Court had to make it clear that stopping nutrition and medical tubes—beyond ventilator support—could lawfully be considered passive euthanasia, even when medical professionals concurred that his condition was incurable. After the landmark decision was rendered by a bench of Justices JB Pardiwala and KV Viswanathan, the family was able to remove Harish Rana’s life support in a hospital, letting him to pass away with dignity.

The case has spurred new discussion regarding end-of-life rights in India in the legal and medical communities. In 2013, Rana, a football-loving, athletic young man and engineering student at Panjab University, fell from the fourth story of his paying guest lodging and sustained head injuries. Since then, he has been in a coma.

Shortly after the verdict, Harish Rana’s father stated that while the Supreme Court’s decision to allow his son to stop receiving artificial life support won’t benefit the family directly, it might benefit others in similar circumstances. “It hurts so much as a father. A parent would never want to witness their son in such a state. Ashok Rana, who had argued before the Supreme Court that permitting passive euthanasia would restore his son’s dignity after years of incurable agony, stated, “We think that in the larger public interest, the decision could help families of many people who may be in a condition like Harish.”

After losing the series to Bangladesh, an ex-Pakistani star becomes impatient

New Delhi: After the Green Shirts’ defeat in the three-match ODI series against Bangladesh, former Pakistani wicket-keeper-batter Kamran Akmal went on a two-minute tirade. Bangladesh won the series 2-1 as the Shaheen Shah Afridi-led team lost by 11 runs in Sunday’s decider in Dhaka. The Pakistani management chose to bench players like Babar Azam and Fakhar Zaman for the match against Bangladesh; it was later disclosed that both players had injuries during the T20 World Cup.

But instead of seizing the chance, the kids gave in to pressure. In the series final, Salman Ali Agha achieved a century, but Shaheen was unable to score 12 runs off the last two balls, and Pakistan lost by 11 runs as a result of Agha’s dismissal. In response to Pakistan’s loss, Akmal stated that it is puzzling that the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) isn’t taking action and that the squad may potentially lose to the Netherlands. Additionally, he questioned how Pakistan would win the ICC trophies if they couldn’t win a bilateral series. “For heaven’s sake, consider cricket in Pakistan. Just look at the lower levels we’ve reached. The Netherlands must be believing that they can achieve Test status if they play Pakistan in a three-match ODI series because they can defeat us as well. You’ve turned your cricket into a joke. On the “Game Plan” episode, Akmal remarked, “You people just don’t care.” “You’ve lost the game. Which experiments are you conducting? The pitch was strong. What made you decide to bowl? How come you didn’t bat? They would have received a score of 350. Bangladesh was limited to 290 since Litton Das was ultimately slow. It decided the series.

How will you advance if you lose the series against teams? ICC trophy chori karkhe leke aani hai? “You intend to pilfer



the ICC trophies?” he continued. Pakistan did poorly in the T20 World Cup and did not make it to the semi-finals prior to the ODI series loss to Bangladesh. After losing to India in the group round, the Green Shirts succumbed to England in the Super 8s. Rain forced the cancellation of the Super 8s match versus New Zealand. In the last game versus Sri Lanka, Pakistan’s equation was straightforward. They would have advanced to the semi-finals if they had won by 65 runs, but that wasn’t the plan. Despite winning by five runs, Pakistan was unable to advance to the semi-finals. For the fourth consecutive ICC tournament, Pakistan did not make it to the semifinals.

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Iran clears gas tankers headed for India through the Strait of Hormuz. S Jaishankar explains

New Delhi, Mar 16: Iran permitting two LNG vessels flying the Indian flag to cross the war-torn Strait of Hormuz demonstrated that diplomatic efforts between the two nations had “yielded results,” according to External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Sunday. The fact that Iran has formally permitted India to utilize the Strait of Hormuz, which is normally closed by Iran, to move oil and gas ships through the small chokepoint makes Jaishankar’s comments significant. Approximately 92,712 metric tons of LPG were transported by two gas carriers, Shivalik and Nanda Devi, via the Strait of Hormuz on Saturday en route to India. Twenty percent of the world’s oil supply flows through this strait. Jaishankar stated in an interview with The Financial Times (FT) that the vessels’ safe passage demonstrated the advantages of diplomatic engagement. “From India’s point of view, it is definitely better that we reason, coordinate, and find a solution than not,” he stated. Since Iran closed the Strait of Hormuz, where roughly one-fifth of the world’s daily oil consumption passes, Jaishankar has had four phone conversations with his Iranian counterpart, Abbas Araghchi. The Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea are only connected by the strait. In addition to India, nations like China and Russia are said



to have negotiated with Iran to permit their ships to pass through the Strait of Hormuz while the Gulf War is still going on. According to Jaishankar, Iran had not gotten anything in return and there was no “blanket arrangement” for ships flying the Indian flag. It has nothing to do with exchanges. Iran and India are related. And we consider this dispute to be quite regrettable,” he stated. We are currently in the early stages. There are a lot more of our ships there. Therefore, even if this is a positive development, there is still discussion because work on it is ongoing,” Dr. Jaishankar remarked. Jaishankar stated that each nation’s relationship with Iran “stands on its own merits,” making direct comparisons challenging, in response to the question of whether European nations might duplicate India’s agreement. The External Affairs Minister emphasized that because many European

capitals have also communicated with Tehran, he would be pleased to discuss India’s strategy with them. As Tehran continues to retaliate against US and Israeli attacks on Iran, Jaishankar’s comments coincided with Trump’s plans to form a multi-nation alliance to escort ships through the Strait of Hormuz. Speaking at the India Today Conclave 2026 last week, Iranian Ambassador Mohammad Fathali had said that despite the Middle East conflict, some Indian ships were permitted to pass through the Strait of Hormuz due to the two nations’ long-standing friendship and common interests. Serious worries about energy security have been raised throughout Asia by Iran’s blockade of the Strait of Hormuz in response to US and Israeli military strikes, especially for major import-dependent economies like China and India.

One of the most important energy routes in the world,

the small waterway transports large amounts of liquefied natural gas and almost a fifth of all oil exports worldwide. Due to the disruption, oil prices have risen above \$100 per barrel globally. India is the second-largest consumer of LPG, which is commonly used for domestic cooking, and the fourth-largest importer of LPG worldwide.

A large portion of this fuel is transported over the Strait of Hormuz from Middle Eastern producers. In order to protect vital consumption, the Indian government prioritized gas allocation for families and the transportation industry due to pressure on LPG supplies. However, energy-intensive businesses are starting to feel the effects of the tightened supply. LPG shortages have been reported by a number of restaurants and producers of gas-dependent items, including ceramic tiles, throughout India.

This raises fears that protracted disruptions may halt production and affect industrial output. The Center has frequently urged people not to turn to panic buying and guaranteed that there is no shortage of LPG cylinders in the nation. Additionally, it stated that despite tensions hampering shipping via the Strait of Hormuz, India has sufficient stocks and supply agreements in place to meet domestic demand.

After wedding, Kuldeep Yadav’s touching post went viral

New Delhi: Indian cricket team spinner Kuldeep Yadav recently celebrated his wedding to childhood friend Vanshika Chaddha in a private yet glamorous ceremony in Mussoorie. The event took place at the Welcomhotel The Savoy, which was booked for several days to accommodate the couple’s guests and festivities.

Following the wedding, Kuldeep shared on Instagram, “Our Forever begins now. 14.03.2026,” accompanied by photos from the celebration. Numerous current and former cricketers, including Tilak

Varma, Rinku Singh, Yuzvendra Chahal, and Suresh Raina, were in attendance. The days leading up to the wedding featured a colorful Sangeet ceremony, where images shared by Raina and Chahal showcased the couple in matching traditional attire, quickly going viral on social media. A viral video also captured the couple walking together as pyrotechnics sparked in the background, enhancing the festive atmosphere. Tilak Varma remarked on arriving in Mussoorie to partake in the wedding festivities before gearing up for the 2026 Indian Premier League (IPL), where he will represent the Mumbai Indians. Media reports indicated that Kuldeep postponed the wedding, initially slated for November 2025, in order to concentrate on aiding India



mier League (IPL), where he will represent the Mumbai Indians. Media reports indicated that Kuldeep postponed the wedding, initially slated for November 2025, in order to concentrate on aiding India

in winning the T20 World Cup 2026. Both Kuldeep and Vanshika, who work as an LIC employee, hail from Kanpur and have a long history together, having grown up just three kilometers apart.

Rahul Dravid Responds to Receiving the BCCI Lifetime Achievement Award



New Delhi: After winning the Lifetime Achievement award at the BCCI Naman Awards 2026, former Indian head coach Rahul Dravid expressed thanks, adding he felt honored to be acknowledged with some of the greatest Indian cricket icons. At the esteemed BCCI Naman Awards 2026 on Sunday in New Delhi, Dravid and former BCCI president Roger Binny were given the Col. C. K. Nayudu Lifetime Achievement Award, while Mithali Raj was given the BCCI Lifetime Achievement Award for Women. The BCCI Naman Awards annual ceremony celebrates outstanding achievements in cricket at various levels, while also recognizing individuals who have significantly contributed to the game’s development in India. The prestigious Col. C. K. Nayudu Lifetime Achievement Award is presented to former cricketers for their unparalleled contribution to the sport. Rahul

Dravid, a prominent figure in Indian cricket, expressed deep gratitude upon receiving this award, highlighting its significance as a recognition of the icons who inspired him throughout his career as both a player and a coach. Dravid reflected on his long journey in cricket, beginning in age-group competitions, describing the award as a humbling acknowledgment of his dedication to the sport. He emphasized the continuity of Indian cricket, viewing his role as carrying forward the legacy established by past generations. Dravid praised the current crop of players and administrators for their accomplishments and their commitment to elevating Indian cricket to new heights. With a career spanning over 24,000 runs, Dravid was a pivotal element of India’s batting for more than a decade, significantly influencing numerous historic victories as both a player and captain. Following his retirement, he played a crucial role in shaping the future of Indian cricket, particularly through his leadership at the National Cricket Academy, where he prioritized player development.

He led India’s U-19 team to victory in the 2018 ICC U-19 World Cup and later, as head coach of the Indian men’s team, guided them to success in the ICC Men’s T20 World Cup 2024, thereby solidifying his enduring legacy in the sport.

The government requests that household cooking gas users complete e-KYC using Aadhaar

New Delhi, Mar 16: Over 330 million home users of cooking gas or liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) have been urged by the government to complete their electronic know your customer (e-KYC) using the biometric Aadhaar authentication system.

The petroleum ministry stated on X that “all domestic LPG consumers are required to complete biometric Aadhaar authentication (e-KYC).” “Now use the Aadhaar FaceRD app and the mobile app for your Oil Marketing Company (OMC) to verify from the comfort of your home.” For nearly 105.1 million Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) recipients to get the cooking gas subsidy, annual biometric Aadhaar authentication is required. Even in the absence of e-KYC, a PMUY beneficiary is entitled to up to seven LPG refills throughout a fiscal year. As a result, the need for e-KYC does not stop the sup-

ply of refills. To receive more than seven refills in a given fiscal year, a recipient must undergo biometric Aadhaar authentication. One e-KYC must be completed by a PMUY beneficiary per fiscal year.

The PMUY was established in May 2016 to give adult women from low-income households a deposit-free LPG connection. In order to make LPG more affordable for PMUY customers and guarantee continued use, the government began offering a targeted subsidy of ₹200 per 14.2 kg cylinder (and proportionately prorated for 5 kg connections) in 2022. This subsidy was later raised to ₹300 per 14.2 kg cylinder (and proportionately prorated for 5 kg connections).

LPG supplies have been impacted by disruptions in the energy supply brought on by the conflict in West Asia. On March 7, the OMCs increased the cost of cooking gas by ₹60 every 14.2 kg cylinder,

making residential LPG cylinders in Delhi ₹913. In Delhi, it costs ₹613 for PMUY recipients.

According to industry officials, the tariff hike is a partly reflection of the effects of a shortage of energy in West Asia following the war’s disruption of tanker traffic through the Strait of Hormuz.

“The government is offering a targeted subsidy of ₹300 per cylinder for up to nine refills of 14.2 kg cylinders per year (proportionately prorated for 5 kg connections) for FY 2025-26,” Suresh Gopi, the minister of state for petroleum, informed the Rajya Sabha on March 9. On August 8 of last year, the Union Cabinet authorized a targeted subsidy of ₹300 each 14.2 kg cylinder for up to nine refills annually (proportionately prorated for 5 kilogram cylinders) for PMUY beneficiaries in 2025–2026 at a cost of ₹12,000 crore.

Chamoli, Uttarakhand, receives a lot of snow; Badrinath Dham is covered in a white blanket

Dehradun, Mar 16: High-altitude regions in Uttarakhand’s Chamoli district have been seeing significant snowfall since Sunday night as North India prepares for the arrival of summer. The temple grounds at Shri Badrinath Dham, including Neelkanth Parvat and Narayan Parvat, have been blanketed in white due to heavy snowfall. There has also been a noticeable decline in local temperatures. Consequently, extreme cold has returned to Badrinath and the lower-altitude regions around it. The sacred town of Kedarnath, which is tucked away in the high Himalayas, saw severe winter weather earlier on January 28. The shrine was covered in three to four feet of snow, and the temperature dropped to -16°C. The sacred town of Kedarnath,

the home of Baba Kedar, was entirely covered in snow amid ongoing snowfall in the state’s high Himalayan areas, according to the Rudraprayag district administration. At the shrine, three to four feet of snow accumulated, and the temperature fell to sixteen degrees Celsius. However, despite the severe weather, the Rudraprayag Police and the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) braved the cold to patrol the temple grounds and critical areas nonstop. The soldiers conducted constant patrols in and around the temple grounds and other sensitive places despite the bitter cold and severe winds. The police department and the Rudraprayag district government jointly declared that the security forces’ morale is still good despite the challenging ter-

rain. At Kedarnath Dham, there were strong security measures in place. On April 22, 2026, at 8:00 AM, the doors of Shri Kedarnath Dham will formally reopen to worshippers. Based on Panchang calculations, the opening date of the Kedarnath temple gates was formally proclaimed at the Shri Omkareshwar Temple in Ukhimath on the occasion of Mahashivratri.



IPL 2026’s opening pair is much dangerous than Virat-Chris Gayle



New Delhi: In IPL 2026, SunRisers Hyderabad’s batting lineup is by far the most potent. Power hitters abound on the team, from Travis Head and Abhishek Sharma to their bottom order. They are free to aim for scores of 275 or higher on their day. SunRisers Hyderabad’s IPL 2026 campaign will start on March 28 against Royal Challengers Bengaluru, the reigning champions. Former India player Cheteshwar Pujara gave their batting lineup a significant praise prior to the start of the campaign. Pujara claims that SRH’s opening combination of Abhishek Sharma and Travis Head is far more dangerous than RCB’s previous opening combination of Chris Gayle and Virat Kohli. I can categorically state that Abhishek Sharma and Travis Head, the SunRisers Hyderabad openers, are among the most devastating opening pairings in IPL history based on what we have seen over the past several seasons. Both batters are skilled at attacking from the first ball. Thanks

to them, SRH has routinely surpassed 250 runs over the past few seasons,” Pujara stated on Star Sports. “No other IPL team has done that on a regular basis. The two openers are the only reason for that. What makes them unique is that they consistently smash the ball all over the place. Chris Gayle and Virat Kohli come to mind when discussing aggressive opening partnerships in the Indian Premier League. However, Head and Abhishek’s combination is considerably more damaging. Abhishek and Head are an opening combo that no bowler wants to go in and bowl against.” Pujara did point out one significant issue for SRH, though. “When SRH plays at home in Hyderabad, they score a lot of runs and are a highly destructive team. However, they have a very bad record away from home. “They are unable to sustain their destructive batting intent when they play away games,” he stated. The reason for this is that every side is aware that SRH depends on their batting ability to score large totals. Their primary hitters are Heinrich Klaasen, Travis Head, and Abhishek Sharma. After being fired, SRH finds it difficult to go forward. This is the point at which rival teams exploit them to keep them from scoring large totals. They will need to put some effort into that.

Siddharth Gadekar and Kaamya Karthikeyan Lead India’s Historic Asian Ski Mountaineering Charge

Harbin: In a landmark moment for Indian winter sports, the tricolour flew high at the Yabuli Ski Resort as the 2026 ISMF Asian Ski Mountaineering Championships kicked off on Day 1 with a statement of intent. Competing against the continent’s elite powerhouses, Indian athletes delivered a performance that signals a new era for the sport in the Himalayas, according to a release. The Vertical Charge: A Triple Top-10 Breakthrough, which saw the championships opened with the gruelling Vertical race—an event demanding immense cardiovascular strength and technical precision. In a historic surge, all three Indian representatives stormed into the top tier of the continental rankings. In the Men’s category, Siddharth Gadekar secured a phenomenal 7th-place finish. Shardul Thapliyal followed closely, clinching the 8th position.

In the Women’s category, Kaamya Karthikeyan, India’s sole female athlete in the contingent, matched the men’s success with a brilliant 7th place finish. Securing three spots in the top 10 at an Asian-level championship is an unprecedented achievement for India. These athletes, coming off a strong season at



The Khelo India Winter Games in Gulmarg, proved they can now go toe-to-toe with Asia’s best on the international stage. Building a Global Platform: This success in Harbin is the result of a concentrated four-year push to professionalise the sport within India. Praveen Sood (Pintu), President of the SkiMo India Federation, expressed immense pride in the team’s progress and emphasised the federation’s commitment to international excellence. “We have been relentlessly promoting ski mountaineering in India for the last four

years,” said Sood. “Our federation is operating strictly under the guidance of the statutes of the International Ski Mountaineering Federation (ISMF) to ensure our growth aligns with global standards. Our strategy has been to work hand-in-hand with state governments and the Ministry of Sports to provide our athletes with a world-class platform at home. This year’s National Championship and the Khelo India Winter Games were organised to international standards specifically to prepare them for this stage,” Sood added. Sood noted that

the results from Day 1 represent the best collective finishes ever recorded by Indian athletes at the Asian level. “It’s a proud day for us. This is just the beginning of India’s journey as a serious contender in winter sports.” The Road Ahead: While the Vertical race has set a high bar on opening day, the Indian contingent is far from finished. With the three athletes representing the nation, the team is preparing for two more critical races in the coming days.

The atmosphere in the Indian camp is one of high confidence and focus. As the championships continue through March 20, all eyes remain on the Yabuli slopes to see if India can further capitalise on this historic momentum. The Indian contingent will train alongside participants from other countries as they gear up for the crucial continental event, which will see the winners secure direct qualification for the upcoming Asian Games and Commonwealth Games later this year. The second batch of athletes and support staff is scheduled to depart for Mongolia on March 15 to join the camp. Along with the main contingent, the second-ranked boxers in the Olympic weight.

Bengaluru’s Chinnaswamy Stadium Receives Clearance for IPL Matches

Chinnaswamy Matches Approved

Bengaluru: The Karnataka government has approved the hosting of upcoming IPL matches at Chinnaswamy Stadium after an expert committee presented a detailed report on safety and preparedness measures at a meeting chaired by Home Minister G. Parameshwara at Vidhana Soudha on Monday.

The venue will host the home fixtures of Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB), with the franchise scheduled to play five league matches at the Chinnaswamy Stadium. Known for its electric atmosphere and high-scoring encounters, the venue is expected to once again turn into a fortress for RCB as they look to begin their title defence in front of their supporters. Adding to the buzz, the venue will also host the curtain-raiser fixture of the upcoming season, along with the opening ceremony. The Bengaluru-based franchise will also use the Shaheed



Veer Narayan Singh International Cricket Stadium in Raipur as their second home venue, where they are scheduled to play two league matches. Apart from these, one IPL playoff fixture and the final are also slated to be held in Bengaluru. Following the recommendations of the Justice Cunha report after last year’s tragic stampede, the Karnataka State Cricket Association has introduced several crowd-management and safety measures to ensure smoother operations at The Chinnaswamy Stadium During IPL 2026. KSCA sec-

Retary Santosh Menon said the association has already informed the expert committee about the progress of these upgrades, which are aimed at improving spectator safety and match-day crowd flow. 35,000 spectator capacity cap to better manage crowd movement inside the stadium. Stadium gates open 3–4 hours before matches to prevent last-minute congestion outside entry points. Separate entry queues for women and children to streamline access and reduce overcrowding Free metro in Partnership with Bengaluru.

KKR Pacer Harshit Rana Set to Miss IPL 2026 After Being Spotted on Crutches



Mumbai: Kolkata Knight Riders could face a major setback ahead of IPL 2026 after fast bowler Harshit Rana was spotted on crutches during the BCCI Naman Awards in Mumbai. The development has raised fresh concerns about his fitness and availability for the upcoming season. The pacer attended the ceremony on March 15 but was unable to walk onto the stage to collect his award for Best International Debut (Men’s). IPL chairman Arun Dharmal instead presented the honour

to Rana after walking down the stage himself. The video of Rana arriving at the event with crutches quickly went viral on social media, further fuelling speculation about the extent of his injury and whether he will be fit in time for the IPL. Harshit Rana suffered a knee injury during a T20 World Cup warm-up match against South Africa earlier this year.

The injury proved serious enough to rule him out of India’s T20 World Cup campaign, with Mohammed Siraj called up as his replacement

in the squad. Rana later underwent knee surgery in Mumbai on February 9. According to medical assessments, the fast bowler is expected to require around two to three months for full recovery. While the surgery was successful, the recovery timeline puts his participation in IPL 2026 in serious doubt. Rana’s potential absence could significantly weaken Kolkata Knight Riders’ bowling attack. The young pacer was a key member of KKR’s title-winning squad in 2024 and continued

to play an important role for the franchise in the following season. The situation becomes more complicated for KKR as Mustafizur Rahman is no longer part of the squad, while Sri Lankan pacer Matheesha Pathirana is still dealing with fitness concerns. The franchise has brought in Zimbabwe fast bowler Blessing Muzarabani as a replacement option, but filling Rana’s role in the bowling attack may not be straightforward. KKR’s biggest concern will be finding an Indian pacer capable of handling pressure in the death overs, an area where Rana had developed into a reliable option. Apart from Rana, the team’s pace attack currently includes Vaibhav Arora, Umran Malik, Kartik Tyagi and Akash Deep. Without the young fast bowler, the unit could look far less experienced heading into IPL 2026. Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) have not yet officially named a replacement for Harshit Rana, who was recently involved with the Indian national team for the 2027 ODI World Cup cycle and the 2025 ICC Champions Trophy.

Sinner and Sabalenka Break Through To Claim Their First Indian Wells Titles



Indian Wells: Jannik Sinner beat Daniil Medvedev in the Indian Wells final 7-6 (6), 7-6 (4) on Sunday, winning seven straight points to rally from a 4-0 deficit in the second-set tiebreak and claim the title without dropping a single set. The No. 2-ranked Italian beat Medvedev for the ninth time in their last 10 matches to claim his first title at the California desert tournament. Medvedev handed top-seeded Carlos Alcaraz his first loss of the year in the semifinals of the BNP Paribas Open. Sinner congratulated fellow Italian Kimi Antonelli, who won Formula One’s Chinese Grand Prix earlier Sunday. It hasn’t anything to do with tennis, but it has been a special day for Italy,” Sinner said. “Because I’m a huge Formula One fan and having a

very, very young Italian, Kimi, bringing Italy back home at the top, it’s amazing. So, thanks, Kimi, thanks Formula One, and see you next year.”

World No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka beat Elena Rybakina 3-6, 6-3, 7-6 (6) in the women’s final Sunday for her first Indian Wells title. Sabalenka, a runner-up in 2023 and ‘25, finished off the win with a big serve that Rybakina hit long. It was a sweltering afternoon on the court as the temperatures soared into the 90s. The 27-year-old Sabalenka had a chance to close out the third set but was broken at 5-4. Rybakina found herself with a championship point in the tiebreaker, only to have Sabalenka hit a backhand winner. I think the whole idea going into this match was

to be mentally strong, to stay strong, no matter what, to show with the body language that I’m here, I’m fighting,” Sabalenka said in a post-match interview on the Tennis Channel. “You have to get a win with incredible tennis and that was the whole idea going into this one. I’m happy that it really worked.” It’s been quite a stretch for Sabalenka. First, a puppy and then an engagement ring from Brazilian businessman Georgios Frangulis. Now, a title in the desert. “I’ll remember it for the rest of my life,” she said. This marked the 16th time the two players have met, with Sabalenka now holding a 9-7 advantage. Rybakina of Kazakhstan beat Sabalenka at the 2025 WTA Finals championship and the Australian Open two months ago. She also edged Sabalenka in the finals at Indian Wells in 2023. “It was a very difficult match,” Rybakina said after the match as she congratulated Sabalenka. There’s not much time to celebrate for Sabalenka, who was set to leave Sunday night for the Miami Open, where she’s the defending champion. Probably will have a couple drinks on the plane and that’s it,” Sabalenka said. “I’m defending champion there, so I have to bring my best tennis there. But with these vibes that I’m taking from here, I think I’ll be able to be there and to fight and to do my very best to defend that beautiful trophy.”

Raphinha Hat Trick Powers Barcelona To Victory Over Sevilla Keeping Title Lead



Barcelona: Raphinha scored a hat trick, including two goals from the penalty spot, as Barcelona reclaimed its four-point lead over Real Madrid at the top of the Spanish league on Sunday. Barcelona routed Sevilla 5-2 for its fourth straight league win and boosted its confidence ahead of the second leg of its Champions League last 16 match against Newcastle on Wednesday. Barcelona needed Lamine Yamal’s penalty with the last kick of the game to rescue a 1-1 draw at Newcastle in the first leg. Madrid beat Elche 4-1 on Saturday to temporarily cut Barcelona’s lead to one point. After Portugal defender João Cancelo was fouled in the box, Raphinha

put the Catalan side ahead in the ninth minute with a little dink of a shot known as a “Panenka,” which fooled goalkeeper Odysseas Vlachodimos.

Cancelo, who returned to Barcelona this winter on loan from Saudi Arabia club Al-Hilal, earned another penalty in the 18th and Raphinha again converted. Vlachodimos read the shot well and managed to touch the ball but could not stop it. Dani Olmo made it 3-0 in the 38th minute from Marc Bernal’s cross. Oso pulled one back for Sevilla before halftime and Raphinha completed his hat trick after the interval with a shot that took a deflection and went over the ‘keeper. Cancelo

then added more luster to the win, with Djibril Sow reducing the gap in added time. Barcelona midfielder Gavi returned to action after more than 200 days on the sidelines because of a right knee meniscus operation. Gavi came on in the 82nd minute as a replacement for Raphinha to huge cheers. He was then applauded every time he touched the ball.

Elsewhere, Mallorca came from behind to beat Espanyol 2-1, and Real Betis and Celta Vigo drew 1-1. Striker Gonçalo Guedes scored a brace as Real Sociedad defeated Osasuna 3-1. The second loss came even though Barcelona took the lead early in the second half. Yamal hit the post with his spot kick on the stroke of half-time but 14 minutes into the second period Pau Cubarsi met Jules Koundé’s cross from the right and placed his header perfectly into the top corner. The goal was Barcelona’s 100th in all competitions this season and made it the second club in Europe’s big five domestic leagues to hit the century Munich.

Young Boxer Chandrika Inspires Slum Children Through Every Single Powerful Punch Delivered

Chennai: Chandrika Pujari is carving an inspiring path for herself. Hailing from Tadiwala Road slums in Pune, the 17-year-old has been defying odds to highlight her aptitude for boxing at the international stage. On Sunday, the 17-year-old captured a gold medal in the World Boxing Futures Cup 2026 in Bangkok, a tournament which is part of the pathway to the Youth Olympic Games that will be held in Dakar later this year.

Given the disadvantages she faced, it’s a monumental result for Chandrika, who has been taking steps in the right direction ever since she took up the gloves at Yuva Boxing Club, an organisation that has been instrumental in her promising growth as a boxer. In the final, Chandrika



Beat Uzbekistan’s Mardonova Nazokat by unanimous verdict. “She was just 10 or 11 when she joined our club. She is from the slum region. Her parents are originally from Karnataka but Chandrika and her father were

Born Here. Her grandfather is from Karnataka. Her father works as a helper in a private company and her mother goes house to house to do cleaning jobs. She is doing great and has been inspiring many from the region to take

up sports,” Sachin Shinde, the person who took the initiative to being the club, said. Sachin, who’s passionate about sports, said they started sporting activities (football and boxing) in 2017 in Olympics as well.