

ZPM women’s wing files FIR over defamatory post on MLA

Aizawl, Mar 27: The women’s wing of the Zoram People’s Movement (ZPM) has filed a First Information Report (FIR) against an individual accused of circulating a defamatory social media post targeting MLA Baryl Vanneihsang. The complaint was lodged at the Cyber Crime police station in Aizawl on March 26, 2026, just weeks ahead of the Aizawl Municipal Corporation elections scheduled for April 21.

According to the FIR, the defamatory post was uploaded on Facebook and was aimed at maligning the reputation of Baryl Vanneihsang, who represents the Aizawl South-III constituency. The ZPM women’s wing stated that the post was not only an attack on the MLA personally but also an attempt to undermine women’s representation in Mizoram’s political landscape.

Party leaders have strongly condemned the incident, emphasizing that defamatory acts during an election season are unacceptable and must be dealt with firmly. They have urged authorities to take strict legal action against the accused, framing the issue as part of a larger fight against online defamation and cyber



harassment. Police officials confirmed that the complaint has been registered and investigations are underway under relevant cybercrime provisions. The authorities are expected to trace the origin of the post and identify those responsible for its circulation. The incident comes at a politically sensitive time, with campaigning intensifying for the upcoming municipal elections. The ZPM, which currently holds power in the state, is keen to protect its leaders from reputational attacks that could influence

voter sentiment. Observers note that the case highlights the growing challenge of social media misuse in Mizoram’s political environment. With digital platforms playing an increasingly important role in shaping public opinion, parties are becoming more vigilant about online narratives that could sway electoral outcomes. As one of the few young female legislators in Mizoram, Baryl Vanneihsang’s targeting has sparked discussions about gendered attacks in public life. Supporters argue that

such defamatory posts are not only politically motivated but also reflect deeper societal biases against women in leadership roles.

In summary, the ZPM women’s wing’s FIR underscores the seriousness with which the party is addressing online defamation. The timing of the complaint, just ahead of the AMC elections, highlights the political sensitivity of the issue and the growing importance of regulating social media conduct in Mizoram’s electoral politics.

Mizoram CM Lalduhoma Inaugurates The New Thenzawl PWD Division

Thenzawl, Mar 27: The Chief Minister, Lalduhoma, today inaugurated the Thenzawl PWD Road Division at the PWD Complex, Thenzawl. He was accompanied by B. Lalthanzova, Minister for Information & Public Relations, and T. Lahlimpuia, MLA. In his address, the Chief Minister described the occasion as a significant milestone for the Public Works Department and a moment of joy for the people of Thenzawl. He stated that the establishment of the new Thenzawl PWD Road Division would contribute meaningfully to Mizoram’s continued progress.

He noted that Mizoram had lagged behind in development due to two decades of insurgency, particularly in infrastructure, industry, and investment. The state’s road density remains considerably lower than that of other states. While the national average road density in India stands at 116 km per 100 sq. km, Mizoram has only 46.37 km per 100 sq. km. Even reaching the national average remains a challenge, and much work still lies ahead. The Chief Minister emphasized that with increasing developmental activities, there is a pressing need to strengthen



the workforce and administrative capacity. The creation of the Thenzawl Division and the new Bitate Sub-Division is therefore a crucial step toward enhancing efficiency and accelerating development work. Addressing possible questions on why Thenzawl was chosen, the Chief Minister reiterated that Thenzawl is being developed as a “Peace City,” with a Master Plan currently underway. A Greenfield City Project under SASCI has also been proposed. In addition, several major projects are planned or in progress in the area, including tourism initiatives such as ropeways, development of Vanva riverfront, Lau project, heliport, sericulture P3 unit, and relocation plans for Neihloh village due to disaster concerns. Given the scale of upcoming PWD-related

works in the region, the establishment of a full-fledged division in Thenzawl is both timely and necessary. Encouraging the officials and staff of the new office and the PWD at large, the Chief Minister urged them to carry out their duties with dedication, keeping in mind that their work and planning play a vital role in shaping the future of the state. B. Lalrinliana, representing the Thenzawl Joint Village Council, also spoke at the event. He expressed gratitude to the government, noting that Thenzawl has recently received several developmental benefits, including the arrival of a new ultrasound machine at the local hospital, the inauguration of the PWD Road Division, and the upcoming foundation laying of Artificial Turf at the Lo Tha Zawla playground.

AR commemorates Shangshak Day in Ukhrul

Imphal, Mar 27: To honour the profound legacy of one of the most significant battles of the Second World War, Assam Rifles, in coordination with troops of 4 Maratha Light Infantry and the local community, commemorated Shangshak Day in Ukhrul. The day was marked by a solemn wreath-laying ceremony at the Shangshak War Memorial, paying homage to those who stood firm against advancing Japanese forces in 1944, informed IGAR(S) in a press release. The Battle of Shangshak remains a remarkable testament to the resilience of the 4 Maratha Light Infantry and represents a unique chapter of civil-military cooperation. Fought from March 20 to 26, 1944, this critical engagement saw a force of approximately 3,000 personnel successfully stall the Japanese 31st Division for six



days, providing the British 14th Army vital time to reinforce Kohima and Imphal. The names of the brave soldiers and local civilians who made the supreme sacrifice during this defensive stand are immortalised on the memorial, serving as a lasting tribute to their collective courage. The ceremony commenced with a joint wreath-laying by a group of 30 security personnel and village elders, followed by a two-minute silence observed in quiet gratitude, it said.

Guwahati to host 3rd Test of Border-Gavaskar series between India and Australia

Guwahati, Mar 27: Having hosted its first-ever Test match against South Africa in November last year, ACA Stadium in Guwahati is once again among the five venues that will host the marquee series between India and Australia for the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. The series will start with the opening Test in Nagpur from January 21 followed by Chennai (January 29-February 2) with the third Test in Guwahati from February 11 to 15 after a eight-day gap. The fourth Test in Ranchi will be played between February 19-23 while the final Test in Ahmedabad will commence from February 27.

“I congratulate Assam Cricket Association on securing its second Test match. Hosting a Border-Gavaskar Trophy fixture is a matter of great pride. Over the years, Guwahati has consistently proven its capability as a successful host of international sporting events,” BCCI Secretary Devajit Saikia said.

Pioneer Academy opens Imphal branch, to guide exam aspirants



Imphal, Mar 27: A new branch of Pioneer Academy, a well-known coaching institute for competitive examinations, has been opened in Imphal with the aim of guiding aspirants preparing for various national-level exams. The branch, located near Nityananda Temple on RIMS Road, will provide coaching for examinations such as Staff Selection Commission (SSC), banking, and CUET. The announcement was made by L. Jeenamika during a press briefing held at the academy premises. Speaking at the occasion, Jeenamika stated that Pioneer Academy has produced numerous successful candidates in civil services and other competitive examinations over the past 15 years, and the Imphal branch aims to extend the same quality guidance to local students. As part of its launch initiative, the academy re-

cently conducted a scholarship test, awarding scholarships ranging from 40 to 100 percent to meritorious students. Another round of scholarship tests offering 20 to 30 percent concessions is also planned in the near future. Additionally, the academy has announced special provisions for internally displaced (IDP) students, with scholarships of up to 30 percent to support their educational pursuits. Faculty member Alina Huidrom highlighted that the institute aims to assist aspiring youth in the state who are striving to secure government jobs, especially at a time when many face challenges due to limited opportunities. The opening of the new branch is expected to provide a significant boost to students in the region seeking quality coaching and guidance for competitive examinations.

Photography and videography workshop under RAMP winds up

■ Key figures at the event included Dr. N. Munal Meitei, DFO/Chandel, and guests S.T. Wanghring and Pearson Anal. Dr. Meitei emphasized the importance of active community participation in development and highlighted various eco-tourism activities conducted under RAMP that have trained around 350 individuals, fostering self-reliance.

Imphal, Mar 27: A three-day Photography and Videography workshop cum training under RAMP (Raising and Accelerating MSME Performance), organised by DFO/Chandel at Chandel’s MACA Hall concluded successfully on Thursday with the participation of around 50 individuals from Chandel district. The concluding event of the training program witnessed the presence of Dr. N. Munal Meitei, DFO/Chandel as the Chief Guest, Pearson Anal, State Awardee and Secretary of Lambung Village, and S.T. Wanghring, proprietor of Zinnim Enterprise, as Guests of Honour, and N. Deepra, Range Forest Officer/Chandel, as the President. Regarding the workshop cum training, Dr. N. Munal Meitei, DFO/Chandel, stated that this year, under RAMP, various eco-tourism related activities have been conducted in Chandel, including Home Stay, Natural Dying, craft-



ing of wood and bamboo products, and training in the art of traditional pottery. Today marks the conclusion of the 3-day Photography and Videography training. The Forest Department’s objective is to make Chandel a developed district in all aspects. The active participation of the people is crucial for the development of any region. Under RAMP, training has been provided to approximately 350 individuals, including women from this district, across 5 sectors, enabling many in Chandel to become self-reliant. The government’s alone can’t provide employment to everyone. Therefore, Dr. N. Munal Meitei urged the public to utilize these RAMP-sponsored training programs to enhance their skills and contribute to the development of Chandel and Manipur. Dr. N. Munal Meitei further add-

ed that while the training modules provided this time are innovative, they are essential for the growth of the tourism industry. He appealed to the public to utilize the knowledge gained from the training in their future endeavors, contributing to the development of Chandel and Manipur. S.T. Wanghring, proprietor of Zinnim Enterprise, Chandel, in his speech as Guest of Honour, mentioned that he had previously attended exposure training in various places, including Kaziranga in Assam, under RAMP. He stated that these places in Assam are not superior to those in Chandel. The difference lies in our ability to develop these places. He appealed the public the importance of taking advantage of the numerous training programs being offered by the Forest Department under RAMP.

Statewide deworming drive to cover over 9.25 lakh children

Imphal, Mar 27: In a major public health initiative under the National Health Mission (NHM), a statewide deworming drive was launched in observance of National Deworming Day, targeting children between the ages of 1 and 19 years. The programme aims to protect children from intestinal parasitic infections such as hookworms, whipworms, and roundworms, which can adversely affect their health, nutrition, and overall development. As part of the campaign, Albendazole tablets are being administered free of cost. Speaking at a press briefing held at the Directorate of Health Services conference hall at Lamphelpat, Director Dr. N. Hemanta Kumar stated that a total of 9,25,138 children across the state have been targeted for the deworming programme this year. He informed that the drive has already been launched and necessary arrangements, including supply of

medicines and logistics, have been put in place to ensure smooth implementation across all districts. Dr. Hemanta Kumar emphasised that deworming is crucial for preventing health complications caused by parasitic infections and improving the well-being of children. He also assured that the medicine is safe and effective. For children who may miss the initial round, a mop-up campaign will be conducted from March 31. Health officials further stated that medical teams have been deployed to monitor and manage any minor side effects such as allergies or discomfort, ensuring immediate care if needed. The department has urged parents and guardians to cooperate and ensure that all eligible children participate in the programme, making the initiative a success in safeguarding the health of the younger population.



In Brief

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Illegal water boring in Guwahati

Guwahati: The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has issued notice to the Assam government and various state agencies over alleged illegal groundwater boring in parts of Guwahati. The NGT’s Eastern Zone Bench admitted an application filed by Milan Kanti Das and others, which highlighted serious concerns over alleged illegal groundwater extraction in the Barshapara area of the city of Assam. The Bench comprising Justice Dinesh Kumar Singh and Expert Member Ishwar Singh on Monday issued notices to all respondents, directing them to respond within four weeks. The Tribunal fixed May 8 as the next date of hearing.

No party has a stronghold in the Nemom constituency: V Sivankutty

Thiruvananthapuram, Mar 27: Communist Party of India (Marxist) legislator V Sivankutty, who is eyeing to retain the high-profile Nemom assembly constituency in the April 9 Kerala polls, faces a strong challenge from Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) state chief Rajeev Chandrasekhar and Congress candidate KS Sabarinadhan. In an interview with HT, the state's minister of general education and labour talks about his own contest as well as his party-led Left Democratic Front's prospects in the forthcoming polls. Edited excerpts: Not at all. After Nemom was formed post delimitation, there have been three elections in which I, as the CPI(M) candidate, won twice and lost once. It was when I lost in 2016 that I received the most votes ever — 89,000. Even when I won in 2021, I got fewer votes. Congress's vote share went up last time only because K Muraliedharan contested. The voting pattern is different; the LDF might get only about 30,000 votes in the Lok Sabha polls, but it goes up in assembly elections. Nemom is not a stronghold of any party. The LDF has a good chance of victory here. Two of the past three elections were straight fights with the BJP, but when Muraliedharan contested, it was a triangular fight. This time, the Congress candidate has just landed. It will take a week to assess. We have carried out ₹1,000-crore worth of development projects here. Out of the 23 schools, 19 have new buildings. We have upgraded the Nemom taluk hospital, built a new walkway along the Karamana river, inaugurated a new building for the Kerala Academy for Skills Excellence (KASE) in Karamana, and sanctioned a new Industrial Training Institute (ITI), while work on eight new bridges is ongoing. The BJP candidate here is a crorepati (multi-millionaire). Can he tolerate the smell of the sweat of the poor? Will he wait to hear their problems? His language is already problematic. This is not an apt job for him. He has already committed fraud by not disclosing all his assets in his election affidavit. The property tax records are publicly available. His house is worth ₹200 crore. Unlike him, our assets belong to the people. We will file a petition officer, but the court will examine it in detail and produce the correct verdict. There is no chance of a UDF win. In the last 10 years, UDF leaders have not been able to pinpoint a particular sector where there has been no progress. In the assembly, the UDF failed to bring forth even a single no-confidence motion. In the last 10 years, they have not been able to accuse any minister of corruption.

Census 2027: Enumerators are asked to be courteous; failure to do so could result in jail time

New Delhi, Mar 27: The Registrar General of India (RGI), Mritunjay Kumar Narayan, has issued a detailed directive a week ahead of the country's largest administrative exercise — Census 2027 — outlining the duties of census enumerators, including ensuring all houses are covered in data collection, even if multiple visits are needed for locked premises, and maintaining polite behaviour.

Census officers found not performing their duties, or intentionally asking any offensive or improper question, or damaging any census document, may face imprisonment of up to three years and a fine of ₹1,000, according to the directive issued to all states and Union territories (UTs) "For smooth conduct of Census operations, it is necessary that the Census officers engaged in conducting of Houselisting and Housing Census and Population Enumeration must be informed of their specific duties under the Census Act. Along with the duties, penalties have also been prescribed under Section 11 of the Census Act, 1948," Narayan said.

For enumerators, the directive said they shall "show all buildings with numbers, number of census houses in each building and other important landmarks on the layout map; assign num-



RGI directive outlines duties for Census 2027, warns of up to 3 years' jail and ₹1,000 fine for lapses or misconduct by census officers.

bers to each building and census house; carry appointment letter along with ID card during the field visit; and conduct proper probing while maintaining polite behavior during the field visit". It further said that enumerators shall "fill up the data in the mobile app during door-to-door visits according to instructions issued; ensure that all the

houses/households are covered under her/his jurisdiction; and make multiple visits if the census house is found locked". Similarly, principal census officers, supervisors and district charge officers have also been assigned specific duties of organising the process and monitoring developments related to the decadal exercise. Citing the provisions of

penalties under Section 11 of the Census Act, Narayan said in his communication that "any census officer or any person lawfully required to assist in taking of Census who refuses to perform any duty imposed upon her/him by this Act; or any census officer who intentionally puts any offensive or improper question; or any sorter, compiler or other member

of the census staff who removes, secretes, damages or destroys any census documents or deals with any census document in a manner likely to falsify or impair the tabulation of census results, shall be punishable with fine which may extend to one thousand rupees and in case of a conviction shall also be punishable with imprisonment which may extend to three years".

The Ministry of Home Affairs informed Parliament last week that in Census 2027, data on the sex of transgender-headed households will be collected along with male and female categories. In the 2021 Census, this data was collected under the "other" category. The population of 'other', as per Census 2011, is 4,87,803. The 16th Census, which will include caste enumeration, was announced by the Union government last year. It will be conducted in two phases and is expected to be completed by March 1, 2027. In the first phase, HLO (houselisting operation), housing conditions, assets and amenities of each household will be collected from April 1, 2026. Subsequently, in the second phase, or PE (population enumeration), the demographic, socio-economic, cultural and other details of every person in each household will be collected from February 1, 2027.

After conflicting reports of the "driver," the investigation in the K'taka Lamborghini case turns to CCTV footage

Bengaluru, Mar 27: Police are questioning whether the person who claimed responsibility was actually driving a seized white Lamborghini, which was seen drifting in circles on a central Bengaluru road, due to "inconsistent" accounts, an officer aware of the development said on Thursday. The incident occurred near Anil Kumble Circle, where the white Lamborghini was seen performing "doughnuts" repeatedly in the early hours of March 21. The footage, widely shared on social media, showed the car making sharp turns and multiple passes along the stretch, at times while other vehicles were present.

Acting on the video, Cubbon Park Traffic Police registered a case and impounded the car. Although Rikki Rai, son of the late under-world figure Muthappa Rai, was initially linked to the vehicle, he denied driving it. His lawyer, Narayana Swamy, maintained that the car had been sent for servicing and was with a driver, adding that the episode was not a planned stunt but an unintended occurrence. However, during question-



ing, when the driver who claimed he was operating the car was asked basic technical details about the vehicle, his responses did not align with the features of the Lamborghini, prompting doubts about his familiarity with it, investigators said. "With the driver's account appearing inconsistent, officers are focusing on other forms of evidence. Footage from cameras near MG Road and Cubbon Park is being reviewed to determine who was actually driving.

Recordings from around 2.30 am appear to show Rai inside the vehicle, a detail that conflicts with his earlier denial," said an officer aware of the development. Additional footage recorded by a bystander is being examined alongside CCTV

recordings to piece together the sequence of events, officials said.

Rai has appeared before the police and submitted documents related to the vehicle, while officials have sought ownership information from the Regional Transport Office. He has also been granted anticipatory bail by the 5th ACMM Court.

"We are interrogating Rikki Rai's driver," said Cubbon Park Traffic Police inspector Ravi N. A case has been registered for rash and negligent driving, and officials said further action could follow, including fines and possible cancellation of the vehicle's registration. Senior officers have indicated that strict action will be taken once responsibility is established.

There is no shortage and a 60-day supply of oil in stock

New Delhi, Mar 27: The petroleum ministry of India recently declared that the country has around 60 days of actual fuel stock coverage and insists that there is no shortage of petrol, diesel, or LPG, countering what it perceives as a "deliberate, coordinated misinformation campaign" causing panic purchasing in various states. The ministry confirmed that all over 100,000 retail fuel outlets are operating smoothly, and that no outlet has been instructed to implement rationing, contesting social media claims and images suggesting limited stock and long queues at fuel stations. The ministry noted that India is currently receiving more crude oil from its 41 suppliers than prior volumes through the Strait of Hormuz, with shipments from the western hemisphere compensating for any disruption. Every refinery in India is operating above 100% capacity, and procurement of crude oil for the next 60 days has been secured. Regarding LPG supplies, an area of significant concern due to geopolitical tensions, the situation has improved. The domestic production of LPG has increased by 40%, reaching 50,000 metric tonnes daily, covering more than 60% of the national requirement of around 80,000 metric tonnes. Consequently, net daily imports have decreased to 30,000 metric tonnes, with an additional 800,000 metric tonnes of LPG reportedly on its way from the US, Russia, Australia, and other countries, arriving at 22 import terminals. Despite these assurances, panic buying persisted, notably in Gujarat, where fuel sales surged to four to five times the norm. Some fuel stations temporarily closed in Surat and Ahmedabad to replenish supplies, and limits were placed on purchases. To aid fuel dealers with working capital, oil companies extended credit terms from one day to over three days. On the pricing front, private refiner Nayara Energy increased petrol prices by ₹5 per litre and diesel by ₹3. This was the first price adjustment by an oil marketing company since the beginning of recent conflicts, although refiners are reportedly incurring losses of approximately ₹25 per litre on standard petrol and diesel. State-run oil companies such as IOC, BPCL, and HPCL, which collectively command over 90% of the retail market, have been unable to adjust prices due to governmental control, leading to frozen rates for petrol and diesel since April 2022.

"PM waking up late": Imran Masood of the Congress claims that the conflict in West Asia has left India stranded

New Delhi, Mar 27: As the Centre slashes excise duty on petrol and diesel amid the escalating tensions in West Asia, Congress MP Imran Masood on Friday criticised Prime Minister Narendra Modi's delayed response to crucial decisions, claiming the country had been left stranded. He warned that the situation was dire and the consequences would be felt by all. "The Prime Minister is waking up late. Where decisions should have been made on time, and where we were leading a neutral stance, we have been left stranded. We will have to bear the consequences. The situation is dire. People are worried. Commercial cylinders are unavailable. People are very distressed."

His remarks come after the central government reduced excise duty on petrol to ₹3 per litre and brought it down to zero for diesel, as per a Gazette notification issued under the provisions of the Central Excise Act, 1944. Additionally, a windfall tax of ₹21.5 per litre has been imposed on diesel exports. The deci-



sion follows escalating tensions in West Asia, particularly the ongoing conflict involving the United States, Israel, and Iran, which has led to a blockade of the Strait of Hormuz—a crucial route that handles nearly one-fifth of the world's crude oil supply. Before the crisis, India sourced around 12-15% of its oil imports through this route. While the duty cut is expected to ease pressure on oil marketing companies facing losses due to surging crude prices, retail prices of petrol and diesel have remained unchanged so far. The government has

maintained that fuel supplies across the country remain stable.

The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, in an official statement, assured that "all retail outlets are operating normally across the country" and that there are "adequate stocks of petrol and diesel available at all petrol pumps." It also urged citizens not to engage in panic buying amid circulating rumours. Officials added that refineries are functioning at high capacity with sufficient crude inventories, and domestic LPG production has been ramped up to meet demand.

The government offers recipients of the gallantry medal lifetime free rail travel

New Delhi, Mar 27: The government has granted free rail travel benefits to a new category of armed forces gallantry award winners in recognition of their service, officials aware of the development said on Thursday. Personnel awarded the Sena Medal, Nau Sena Medal and Vayu Sena Medal for acts of gallantry will now be entitled to complimentary travel in First Class, 2AC and chair car on Indian Railways, they said. The facility also covers dependents and one companion, where applicable, and is valid for life.

The concession is limited to those honoured for gallantry, and does not apply to personnel awarded these medals for distinguished service. Earlier, only recipients of the Ashok Chakra, Kirti Chakra and Shaurya Chakra, along with their wartime equivalents — Param Vir Chakra, Maha



Vir Chakra and Vir Chakra — were eligible for free rail travel.

The Sena Medal, Nau Sena Medal and Vayu Sena Medal rank immediately below the Shaurya Chakra in the order of precedence for gallantry awards. The Ashok Chakra, Kirti Chakra and Shau-

rya Chakra are the highest peacetime gallantry awards in the country.

An official letter issued on March 16 states that "the proposal to grant railway concessions to these medal recipients was taken up with the Ministry of Defence (MoD), which has now approved complimentary

lifelong travel for the awardees, their dependents and one companion." The Adjutant General's branch, in consultation with the Controller General of Defence Accounts, is working out the modalities for implementation, which will be notified soon, the letter added.

PM Modi needs to use his connections to help put an end to the US-Iran conflict

Mumbai, Mar 27: Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Omar Abdullah on Friday condemned the "unjust and illegal war imposed on Iran" and requested Prime Minister Narendra Modi to use his influence to end the war in the interest of humanity. He made the statement in the Legislative Assembly as the Leader of the House after several National Conference MLAs pressed for it, even as BJP legislators maintained that the Iran crisis is an international issue and does not fall in the domain of the House. "On behalf of myself and my colleagues, I strongly condemn this unjust and illegal war imposed on Iran. I express my deepest condolences over the loss of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and his associates and all those who have lost their lives in this conflict," the chief minister said. "I also make a sincere appeal to our prime minister to use all available diplomatic channels and relationships to help end this war at the earliest. This will benefit not just us, but humanity as a whole," Abdullah said. The Jammu and Kashmir assembly witnessed chaotic scenes on Friday soon after the second leg of the budget session began after a five-week recess, with the National Conference, CPI(M), Congress, PDP and Independent MLAs raising slogans

in support of Iran and the BJP legislators demanding a National Law University in Jammu. When noisy scenes continued, Speaker Abdul Rahim Rather adjourned the House for half an hour. As the House assembled after the adjournment, National Conference MLA Tanvir Sadiq sought a statement from the Leader of the House against the war on Iran. Short speeches by various MLAs in support and against the demand followed. "The House is not united on this issue; there is no single opinion. If you wish, a discussion can be held so that differing views may be expressed. If I speak on behalf of the demand and opposition emerges afterwards, it would not be appropriate," Abdullah said initially, asking the speaker to decide how to proceed. After hearing the opinions of several members from both benches, Rather requested the chief minister to make a statement in the House, pointing out that Parliament has done it as well. Abdullah said, Abdullah said. Stating that a school was bombed, killing scores of female students, Abdullah said it is difficult to recall such a horrifying incident in the recent past. "And what is the objective? Even now, it is not clear. If you listen to the statements coming from America, it seems even they are

unsure. In the morning, they speak of regime change, in the afternoon of security concerns, and by evening, they talk of oil prices. Perhaps they themselves do not know why the people of Iran were made to suffer for the last three weeks," he said. The chief minister said the BJP members are of the view that the House should not discuss matters that do not directly affect the region.

"How can they say this does not affect us? Many of our citizens are in Iran, so it directly affects us. The queues outside our petrol pumps today — isn't that affecting us directly? And above all, the pain and anguish felt by our people, that too is an impact," the chief minister said. "It is true, we cannot stop the war by merely sitting here," he said, reminding the MLAs that, however, the Central government has repeatedly claimed that it has strong relations with many countries. "Therefore, there should not be any objection if this House collectively appeals to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to use his office and personal diplomatic relations to help bring this war to an end as soon as possible, so that the suffering of the people there may end and Iran may once again engage peacefully with the world," Abdullah said.

CM Khemchand attends 15th convocation of Manipur University



Imphal, Mar 27: Chief Minister Y Khemchand on Friday attended the 15th Convocation of Manipur University at the auditorium hall of the university located at Canchipur, Imphal West. “It was a privilege to attend the 15th Convocation of Manipur University today at the Auditorium Hall, Canchipur, as the Guest of Honour, in the gracious presence of the Hon’ble Governor, who graced the occasion as the Chief Guest, along with the Secretary General of the Association of Indian Universities, esteemed professors, and distinguished dignitaries,” Chief Minister Khemchand said in a social media post. “The ceremony marked a proud and defining moment as degrees were conferred and certificates and med-

als awarded to students who have successfully completed their academic journey and are now ready to embark on their professional paths,” the Chief Minister said. Addressing the gathering, the Chief Minister underscored that this milestone signifies not just academic accomplishment but the beginning of a new chapter. He expressed confidence that the knowledge, values, and experiences gained during their years of study will empower the graduates to navigate the complexities of the real world with resilience and integrity. The Chief Minister extended heartfelt congratulations to all the graduating students and best wishes for a bright, purposeful, and successful future ahead.

NGT notice to Assam govt over illegal water boring in Guwahati

Guwahati, Mar 27: The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has issued notice to the Assam government and various state agencies over alleged illegal groundwater boring in parts of Guwahati. The NGT’s Eastern Zone Bench admitted an application filed by Milan Kanti Das and others, which highlighted serious concerns over alleged illegal groundwater extraction in the Barshapara area of the city of Assam. The Bench comprising Justice Dinesh Kumar Singh and Expert Member Ishwar Singh on Monday issued notices to all respondents, directing them to respond within four weeks. The Tribunal fixed May 8 as the next date of hearing.

The case has made the Assam government as respondent, represented by the Special Chief Secretary (PHED), along with the Executive Engineer (PHED), District Commissioner of Kamrup Metropolitan, Central Ground Water Board and the Water Supply Management Committee of Barshapara No 1.

The Tribunal observed that the matter involves a substantial question relating to the environment and admitted the application.

Modi to address people of Assam via NaMo App on March 30

Guwahati, Mar 27: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will directly interact with party karyakartas as well as the people of Assam on March 30 at 1 pm. In this regard, the State BJP earnestly calls upon all party workers and the citizens of Assam to download and register on the “NaMo App”, thereby becoming an integral part of this unique and interactive initiative. To facilitate easy access, individuals may give a missed call on 1800-209-0920 to download the application, a statement issued by state BJP said. Furthermore, for seamless registration on the NaMo App, citizens may also click on the following link: <https://www.narendramodi.in/mbsmasm>.

Sixty-Eight Candidates File Nominations For Aizawl Municipal Corporation Election 2026

Aizawl, Mar 27 : A total of 68 candidates, including 28 women, from four major political parties have filed nominations for the upcoming elections to the Aizawl Municipal Corporation (AMC), officials said on Thursday. Polling for the 19-member municipal body is scheduled for April 21, while count According to election officials, the ruling Zoram People’s Movement (ZPM), the main opposition Mizo National Front (MNF), and the Congress have fielded 19 candidates each, covering all wards.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has nominated 11 candidates. Scrutiny of nomination papers will be conducted on March 27, and the last date for withdrawal of candidature is March 30. ing of votes will be held on April 27. More than 2.37 lakh voters, including around 1.28 lakh women, are eligible



to cast their votes in the AMC polls. The municipal corporation comprises 19 wards, of which six are reserved for women, while the remaining 13 are open to all candidates. In the previous AMC elections held in February 2021, the MNF secured a majority with 11 seats, followed by the ZPM with six seats and the Congress with

two. Mizoram’s ruling party, Zoram People’s Movement (ZPM), on Monday released its candidate list for the upcoming Aizawl Municipal Corporation (AMC) polls slated for April 21. Similarly, the state Congress also released the full list of its candidates for the municipal polls. Earlier, Congress had announced names of candidates

for 13 seats. The ZPM and Congress will contest all 19 seats. Apart from announcing their candidates, both parties also launched election campaigns and released manifestos on Monday.

The main opposition, Mizo National Front (MNF), has already declared the names of 19 candidates for the upcoming polls. The BJP is yet to release its candidate list. Polling for the 19-member AMC will be held on April 21, with counting of votes scheduled for April 27. The last date for filing nomination papers is March 25, while candidates can withdraw their nominations by March 30. Scrutiny of nomination papers will be held on March 27. Although the municipality’s current term expired on March 1, the State Election Commission (SEC) delayed the elections due to several overlapping administrative priorities.

Sonowal Claims NDA Will Win 100+ Seats in Assam

Guwahati, Mar 27: Senior BJP leader and Union minister Sarbananda Sonowal on Thursday asserted that the BJP-led NDA would secure over 100 seats in the upcoming Assam Assembly elections.

Addressing a media conference here, Sonowal said that there is already a clear public sentiment in favour of the BJP-led alliance and that it is evident that the BJP-led NDA government would be formed again in Assam, ensuring continued peace, stability and rapid devel-

opment. The Union minister reaffirmed that the BJP-led NDA government remains unwavering in its commitment to evict illegal immigrants and reclaim encroached land to safeguard the rights, identity, and future of the indigenous people of Assam. “The BJP government has taken decisive and sustained steps to resolve the long-standing issue of illegal immigration in the state. The protection of Assamese jati, mati, bheti is at the core of our governance. We are firmly committed to freeing Assam

from illegal immigrants and restoring the rightful ownership of land to our people,” he stated.

Underscoring the significance of the upcoming Assembly elections, Sonowal noted that the polls are crucial for all indigenous communities across Assam, including those in the Barak Valley, Brahmaputra Valley, hills and plains.

Drawing a sharp contrast with previous regimes, Sonowal said decades of Congress misrule had severely compromised the interests of the native

population. “For years, Congress encouraged illegal immigration for vote bank politics, allowing encroachment of land and undermining the rights of the indigenous people. The IMDT Act stands as a glaring example of policies that worked against Assam’s interests,” Sonowal said.

Highlighting the achievements of the BJP-led government, Sonowal stated that more than 1.5 lakh bighas of land has been freed from illegal encroachments in the state.

TYCM puts stir on hold after government assurance

Imphal, Mar 27: Pursuant to the invitation issued by the Director, Tribal Affairs & Hills Department, Government of Manipur on March 24 for a meeting with the Tribal Youth Council Manipur (TYCM), a meeting was accordingly held on Thursday with the Director, Rangnamei Rang Peter, at 1 pm on Thursday regarding the commencement of the Tribal Girls’ Hostel at Old Lambulane, Imphal. A seven-member delegation of the Tribal Youth Council Manipur (TYCM), led by its President, Momo Tantanga, attended the meeting. During the meeting, the Director elaborated on the various challenges faced by the Department in operationalizing the said hostel. After a detailed and constructive discussion, the Director assured the delegation that the Tribal Girls’ Hostel at Old Lambulane, Imphal will be made functional from June, 2026 (upcoming academic session 2026–27). In view of the assurance given by the Director, the TYCM has deferred its proposed agitation indefinitely. However, the TYCM made it clear that if the government fails to materialize its assurance, the council will be compelled to intensify democratic forms of agitation at any time.

It may be recalled that the TYCM has long been demanding the Government of Manipur to commence the Tribal Girls’ Hostel through written appeals addressed to the Director, Tribal Affairs & Hills Department, Manipur, on October 28, and to the Additional Chief Secretary, Tribal Affairs & Hills Department, Government of Manipur, on December 19, 2025, in order to address the challenges faced by tribal girl students of Manipur who are staying in rented houses in Imphal. TYCM had earlier announced its decision to intensify democratic agitation on March 24 in response to the failure of the Government of Manipur to materialise the ultimatum served on January 28, 2025, regarding the demand for the commencement of functioning of the Tribal Girls’ Hostel at Old Lambulane. The Government of Manipur invited the council on March 24 for a meeting scheduled on March 26 at 1 pm. The TYCM-CHQ convened a Central Executive Council (CEC) meeting held on March 24, wherein the invitation was discussed and it was decided to defer the intensification of the democratic agitation till March 26.

Amit Shah to hold road show in Guwahati today

Guwahati, Mar 27: As all parties are intensifying their campaigning for the Assam Assembly polls, Union Home Minister and senior BJP leader Amit Shah will hold a road show in Guwahati today.

BJP sources said that Shah will lead the road show from Arya Vidyapeeth College playground at 5 pm in support of the party candidate for Guwahati Central constituency Vijay Kumar Gupta.

Senior leaders of the BJP’s state unit will also take part in the road show.

The Guwahati Central constituency is likely to witness a straight contest between the BJP and Assam Jatiya Parishad’s (AJP) Kunki Choudhury, who is backed by the Congress-led Opposition alliance.

Later in the evening, Shah will attend a meeting of the party’s state office-bearers at Hotel Taj Vivanta. The Union Home Minister will spend the night in Guwahati.

ZPM Women’s Wing Files FIR Over Defamatory Post Targeting MLA

Aizawl, Mar 27: The women’s wing of the ruling Zoram People’s Movement (ZPM) in Mizoram on Thursday lodged a police complaint against a social media user for allegedly circulating a defamatory post targeting Baryl Vanneihsang, the leader said. She said that the user posted two pictures of Vanneihsang in a Facebook group called ‘Zoram Politics and News’ with a caption intended to malign the MLA’s reputation on Wednesday. According to the leader, the ZPM Zonu has taken the matter very seriously, viewing the post as an attack on a woman’s

dignity. She alleged that the post was a total fabrication intended to tarnish the reputation of the legislator. She said that the ZPM Zonu approached the Cyber Crime Police Station and filed the FIR to ensure that the perpetrator is booked and given appropriate legal punishment for spreading lies. At 32, Vanneihsang was the youngest MLA when she was elected to the state legislature in 2023, defeating incumbent Mizo National Front (MNF) MLA Lalnunmawi.

The First Information Report (FIR) was filed at the Cyber Crime Police Station in Aizawl against an individual who used the name Rfa Rfalte on Facebook, the leader said. She said that the user posted two pictures of Vanneihsang in a Facebook group called ‘Zoram Politics and News’ with a caption intended to malign the MLA’s reputation on Wednesday. According to the leader, the ZPM Zonu has taken the matter very seriously, viewing the post as an attack on a woman’s

IIT Guwahati Develops Eco-Friendly Bricks That Cut Indoor Heat and Energy Use

Guwahati, Mar 27: Indian Institute of Technology-Guwahati (IIT-G) has developed energy-efficient bricks designed to keep buildings naturally cool, offering a promising solution for sustainable construction.

The findings of the research have been published in the prestigious Journal of Energy Storage in a paper co-authored by Prof. Pankaj Kalita, Associate Professor, along with Dr. Pushpendra Singh, Post Doctoral Fellow, and Mr. Bitupan Das and Ms. Urbashi Bordoloi, recipients of Prime Minister Research Fellowship, School of Energy Science and Engineering, IIT Guwahati.

In modern architecture, most infrastructures rely on air conditioning systems to maintain indoor temperatures, especially during the summer. While these systems are effective, they consume substantial electricity and contribute significantly to carbon emissions and environmental degradation. With a global focus on sustainable living and climate-responsive architecture, researchers worldwide are working towards finding alternative solutions to reduce indoor temperatures without relying on energy-intensive systems.

As a significant amount of heat enters the infrastructure through its roof and walls, researchers at IIT Guwahati focused on addressing this challenge by redesigning conventional bricks to minimise heat gain. For the same, Prof. Pankaj Kalita, along with his research team, applied Phase Change Materials (PCMs), a type of material that can absorb and release heat during phase transitions.

For example, materials such as wax absorb heat as they melt and release it upon solidification. Similarly, when embedded in building components, these PCMs absorb excess heat during the day and release it when the temperature drops. This way, the indoor temperature remains stable through-

out the day.

Among the various PCMs tested, the research team found OM35 to be the most suitable for the research. This material melts at around 35 degrees Celsius, making it particularly suitable for hot, humid regions where temperatures range from 28 to 38 degrees Celsius.

Speaking about the use of PCMs in developing climate-responsive infrastructure, Prof. Pankaj Kalita said, “The developed biocomposite-filled Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (AAC) brick is highly stable in shape and offers adequate mechanical strength in hot and humid conditions, making it suitable for infrastructure development.”

While PCMs have proved to be a suitable choice for developing infrastructures for sustainable living, one primary challenge is their leakage during the melting phase. To address this, the research team developed a composite material by integrating the PCM with biochar. Biochar is a carbon-rich material that serves as a supporting matrix, holding the molten PCM in place and preventing leakage while enhancing thermal conductivity.

The bio-composite PCM-filled AAC brick is very convenient to use in construction work. The AAC brick is known for their lightweight and better insulating properties. The integration of biocomposite PCM into AAC bricks further improves the building’s thermal performance.

Highlighting the key difference in conventional bricks and PCM-embedded bricks, Prof. Kalita said, “PCM-embedded bricks are capable of better thermal management in terms of temperature reduction, as they can absorb and store heat during the day and release it gradually when the temperature drops, helping maintain more stable indoor conditions compared to conventional bricks.”



To ensure optimal design of the developed bricks, the research team used advanced computer simulations to track heat transfer through AAC bricks with different PCM configurations. Based on this, the researchers found that the developed bricks can reduce indoor wall temperatures by approximately 3 degrees Celsius. This reduction in indoor temperature can result in a 10 to 20 per cent decrease in cooling energy demand, depending on building design and usage patterns.

The estimated cost of the developed bricks is in the range of Rs 115 to Rs 130 and is expected to decrease with mass production. As the next step, the research team plans to take this innovation to the commercial stage, likely by setting up a startup.

The developed innovation has significant implications for energy savings, especially in hot and humid climates, where cooling accounts for a major share of electricity consumption. The new materials can reduce overall energy consumption and peak electricity demand by reducing reliance on air conditioning.

The new method further improves climate sustainability by reducing greenhouse gas emissions from excessive energy use and by fostering energy-efficient, climate-sensitive buildings. Additionally, it supports the global initiatives of low-carbon construction and the sustainable urbanization of cities.

Five arrested for torching SF vehicle in Churachandpur

Imphal, Mar 27: Security forces have arrested five individuals for attacking, vandalising and burning down one Tata Winger used by the security personnel at Tuibong Bazar, Churachandpur district.

In confrontation, some security personnel were seriously injured and some vehicles used by the security personnel were vandalised. The arrested persons have been identified as Lunmalsawm Sehlep (28) of Khamram Vaiphei presently staying at P Joljam Village, Churachandpur; Haominlien Kipgen (28) of Tuibong, Laijon Veng, Churachandpur; Khaigoulien Haokip (30) of Hengjol under Sangaikot presently staying at Tuibong, Churachandpur; Hemtinlen Haokio (23) of Koite, Churachandpur and Khupgoulen Khongsai (28) of NS Khojangphai, Churachandpur. Further, 27 more persons were detained and bound down under legal provisions for being involved in other disturbances.

Further investigation follows.



KSO accuses PHED, TA&H Department of neglecting public services

Imphal, Mar 27: The Kuki Students’ Organisation (KSO), Sadar Hills, on Thursday launched a sharp attack on officials of the Public Health Engineering Department (PHED) and the Tribal Affairs & Hills (TA&Hills) Department in Kangpokpi, accusing them of “chronic negligence, dereliction of duty and administrative apathy” affecting public services. In a statement, the student body said it had received repeated complaints from residents regarding “irregularities and persistent absenteeism” by the Executive Engineer of PHED, Kangpokpi Division, and the Deputy Director of TA&Hills in the district. Acting on these complaints, KSO Sadar Hills members carried out a surprise inspection at the offices of both departments located within the DC Office Complex earlier in the day. The organisation claimed that the inspection confirmed allegations of irregular attendance and inefficiency, which it said were severely impacting essential services. Describing the situation as a “systemic collapse of accountability,” the KSO issued a 48-hour ultimatum to the concerned officials, directing them to report to duty regularly and discharge their responsibilities with immediate effect. It further demanded that the officials show “genuine commitment” in addressing public grievances.

EDITORIAL

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Editorial

The Role of Critical Thinking in Modern Society

Critical thinking has become an essential skill in a world filled with information and rapid communication. It refers to the ability to analyse, evaluate, and interpret information objectively before forming conclusions. In today's digital environment, individuals are constantly exposed to a wide range of information. Without critical thinking, it becomes difficult to distinguish between reliable sources and misinformation. This can lead to confusion and poor decision-making. Education systems play a vital role in developing critical thinking skills. Encouraging students to question, analyse, and debate ideas helps them become independent thinkers. Rather than memorising information, students learn to understand and apply knowledge. In professional settings, critical thinking contributes to effective problem-solving and decision-making. Employees who can evaluate situations logically are better equipped to handle complex challenges. Critical thinking also supports responsible citizenship. Individuals who analyse information carefully are more likely to engage thoughtfully in public discussions and make informed choices. However, developing critical thinking requires practice and openness to different perspectives. It involves questioning assumptions and being willing to reconsider one's views. A society that values critical thinking becomes more informed and resilient. By encouraging analysis and reflection, communities can navigate challenges more effectively and make sound decisions.

Girlguiding didn't have to do this to its trans members. There was another way

Great work, Guides; you've taken some members you had no idea even existed, and expelled them from your organisation with effect from September. This gives trans girls a humane half-year to extricate, because that's definitely what kids want: to participate for six months in a uniformed, voluntary, social organisation that has explicitly kicked them out, while they look for somewhere more welcoming.

"Like every charity, we have to follow the law," Girlguiding says in an online info pack whose FAQs are almost comically Stasi-lite. "Will volunteers be expected to carry out additional checks or ask for proof?" (The good news, folks, is that they won't; the mind boggles at what those additional checks might be that didn't breach at least some safeguarding protocols.) "How should volunteers check that trans girls have left?" (Some sort of dunking stool? In actuality, again, they won't check.) The supreme court ruled unanimously last April that "sex" and "woman" referred to biological sex assigned at birth. It permitted services to be single-sex,

but did not require it. Let's give the charity the benefit of the doubt and say that its board really did fear legal action if it continued to badge itself single-sex, but remained inclusive. An obvious solution would have been to change its name away from something so clearly single-sex, to Kid-Guiding, or RangersRainbow, which reference two existing categories of Guide, and sound about as gender-neutral as it gets.

Indeed, all the age-grouped sections of Guides are already essentially gender-neutral – four- to seven-year-olds are called Rainbows, harking back to a time (it was named in 1987) when it was considered fun for children to be able to identify bugs and sew things without constantly being reminded how female they were. Brownies, seven to 10, were so named in 1915, after the kids complained that "Rosebuds" was saccharine and they would prefer to dress in the colour of what they intended to get covered in: mud. I'm guessing; I don't actually have the minutes of that meeting. Guides and Rangers (10-14 and 14-18) are so



gender-neutral, they could be, and most probably are, also the names of cars. It was always understood that the more questionable elements of Guiding, the background hum of Christianity, the promises to "love my God" (which held until 2013), the oaths of allegiance to the monarch, the uniforms themselves, were all fine, regardless of your worldview, because the ultimate aim was sound. What was it? Now we'd say "community-building"; in the 1980s we'd

have said "socialising"; doubtless in the 1920s it was "character-building". This was a way for girls to socialise without endlessly encountering the rules and strictures and expectations they found everywhere else. It was radical precisely because at no time in history did it insist on the femaleness of its members; it wasn't where you went to dress like a fairy princess. It was supposed to be fun. It was still too trad for some, and they went to the Woodcraft Folk, where you got to

smoke weed in the teenage division. But it never had a trace of nastiness. Renaming the organisation would not have killed it, while the choice it has made could well do. It is impossible to quantify how much immediate impact this will have, since Girlguiding does not collect data on gender identity. Trans volunteers have also been asked to see themselves out, but the organisation doesn't even know how many of those there are. Will it deter new joiners? It's hard to see

kids the age for entry into Rainbows or Brownies having made a final call on their gender identity, but it's very easy to see parents who are trans allies giving Girlguiding a wide berth. Deterrence and alienation are much more likely impacts of this decision than a wave of new members, and that's just the parents. The Rangers, who are 14 to 18, play a huge part in the lives of younger Guides. Gen Z are famously inclusive, more likely than any other generation to identify as LGBT+. In the UK, women are more trans-inclusive than men. If you scoured the country to find some late teenagers who were in favour of this new rule, they would be more likely to be male, and so wouldn't have been allowed in the first place. Girlguiding didn't have to address the supreme court judgment this way; it has centred notions of femaleness as an exclusive and fragile quality, in a way that seems counter to the spirit of its founders; it has been hurtful to its trans members. A name change might have been dicey for the brand. What it has done instead has capsized its identity.

What an empty Dhaka teaches us about how we live

On a regular weekday afternoon, Dhaka's roads are overwhelming. Horns blare, the air smells of diesel, people hurry by, and it feels like several million people are all trying to find space at once. But during the short duration of Eid holidays, the city changes completely. The usual crowds disappear, the streets clear up, the dust settles, and for once, you can stand on the overpasses in Banani or Mohakhali and actually hear the wind. Every year, at least one crore people—sometimes even more—leave the capital to visit family. For those who stay behind, the city feels almost perfect. Suddenly, you can drive from Uttara to Dhanmondi in less than half an hour. The air gets noticeably cleaner as the city takes a break from pollution. However, behind the relief of empty roads, there is a deeper truth: for many, Dhaka is more of a workplace than a true home. The rest of the country relies on this one city for work, education, and a better life. Everyone, from a rickshaw-puller to an executive, endures the chaos because most opportunities in Bangladesh are concentrated in this overburdened metropolis. But when they leave, the city

becomes a shadow of its regular self. Local tea stalls close, the vibrant neighbourhood activity fades, and the city's underlying infrastructure is exposed.

While Dhaka's Eid migration is dramatic, big cities like Mumbai, Lagos and Jakarta see similar patterns during major holidays. Some of these big cities have addressed this challenge in different ways. For example, in Mumbai, the development of satellite towns like Navi Mumbai has helped ease pressure on the city centre by spreading out population and job opportunities into neighbouring areas. Similarly, Lagos has supported the growth of nearby towns such as Ikeja and Lekki through infrastructure investment and by encouraging businesses to set up outside the main city. These cases show that thoughtful decentralisation and better regional planning can help large cities manage the stress caused by massive populations.

The "Eid version" of Dhaka offers a tantalising glimpse of the city's potential. The cleaner air and quiet streets show that better urban living conditions are physically possible. However, as recent urban studies highlight, these improvements are fleeting



due to long-standing institutional weaknesses and centralised planning that benefit only a few. This reliance on centralisation leaves the city's infrastructure fundamentally strained, making genuine decentralisation difficult and leaving both the city centre and its outskirts facing perpetual challenges. To achieve lasting improvements, the gov-

ernment should decentralise key services and opportunities by actively supporting hospitals, universities, and industries in regional centres. This could be done through targeted public investment in building and upgrading facilities outside Dhaka and offering incentives for businesses to relocate or expand beyond the capital. Improving

public transport modes, such as developing reliable, frequent commuter rail links between regional towns and Dhaka, would also make it practical for people to live and work outside the city. Urban planners can update zoning regulations to require mixed-use developments, ensuring that housing, business, and public facilities grow together in

new satellite towns. Clear policy guidelines, with measurable targets, enforceable timelines, and dedicated budgets, would ensure accountability in implementing these initiatives. Of course, there will be some challenges. Moving institutions, services, and industries away from the capital city that has run as the central hub for economic activities, education, and administrative work for so long will require significant collaboration between different levels of government, private investors, and local communities. There could be resistance from stakeholders who benefit from the current set-up. In addition, building strong regional economies will take time and may face obstacles, such as a lack of local expertise or slow infrastructure development. Addressing these challenges will require consistent leadership, transparent monitoring, and flexibility to adapt policies as needed. Implementing evidence-based approaches would bring sustained improvements to urban life across Bangladesh, turning the Eid experience from an exception to the norm. In a couple of days, those who left Dhaka for the holidays will all return. Trains will be packed at Ka-

malapur, traffic jams will return to the city roads, and the noise will be back. We will revert to our routines, dealing with traffic and crowds again. For now, as we walk through these empty streets, we have a chance to turn this relief into real change. Dhaka's transformation during Eid is a clear call to action. Only with real decentralisation and investment in other regions, led by government, business and community efforts, can peace and liveability become part of daily life, not just a brief holiday moment. As concrete next steps, every group has a role to play. Policymakers can begin public consultations to identify promising regional centres and commit to pilot projects outside Dhaka. Businesses might consider shifting part of their operations or opening new branches in the growing towns across the country. University students and young professionals can get involved in local civic initiatives or volunteer projects to improve their home districts. Citizens can contact their elected officials to advocate for better transport and healthcare facilities in their own communities and stay engaged with the planning processes. The choice is ours; let's make it.

How will we know Labour is really cleaning up party funding? When Reform and the Tories fight like hell to stop it

Good. Yet again the government has done a good thing. But yet again it is not enough, and too weak a political klaxon to signal what Labour stands for. Overcaution and opportunity missed is so often the story, as the government fails to imprint the best of itself on the public mind. But there is still time to act, with hopeful signs behind the scenes that it is considering stronger reforms to how politics is funded. Bring it on, fast – and this time with panache.

Crypto donations to political parties have been banned, instantly leaving no time for shovelling more truckloads of dubious cash from mysterious sources into British politics. Donations from Britons abroad have been capped at £100,000 – still high for those paying to influence tax-and-spend decisions without paying UK tax. Many good

recommendations from the report by Philip Rycroft will be debated and included in the current representation of the people bill, after his severe warnings about the influence of Russia, Iran, China or indeed US billionaires inside Trumpworld: all of them enemies. He offers an example of this kind of malevolent interference, noting the sharp drop in aggressive commentary on Scottish independence during Iran's internet blackout. Who knew Iranian ayatollahs were so interested in the SNP? Enemies relish a broken-up, enfeebled UK.

Steve Reed, whose departmental remit includes the constitution, said on Wednesday as he announced the immediate action, "I am not prepared to allow any window of opportunity in which malign actors based overseas can funnel dark money into our

politics." Starmer promised in prime minister's questions to "act decisively to protect our democracy". Many in politics are said to be delighted that Labour's actions will prevent donations such as the £12m given to Reform last year by the Thailand-based crypto billionaire Christopher Harborne. The jailing of the Reform politician Nathan Gill for taking Russian-linked bribes shone another light in a murky place. Naturally, Richard Tice, Reform's deputy leader, told GB News that the party would reverse these new rules if it came to power. (Enforcing broadcasting law must be Labour's next democratic act: with a new Ofcom chair being selected, make that someone with the guts to force GB News to obey basic broadcasting law. See Alan Rusbridger's deep investigation of how Ofcom

let GB News become Reform News.) Democracy campaigners welcomed Wednesday's action, but all call for a real clean-up of political funding. Labour's manifesto said it would "protect democracy by strengthening the rules around donations to political parties" and surely more than this was implied. A record sum of £94.5m was spent on the last election, reports the Electoral Commission. Money talks, and is increasingly being spent on tidal waves of social media influencing and super-sophisticated data systems pinpointing canvassers towards the right voters.

Everyone can see how rewards follow donations, accelerating understandable public cynicism about all politics and politicians. Transparency International research found in 2024 that £48.2m

came from donors alleged or proven to have bought privileged access, potential influence and/or honours, and 66% of private political donations in 2023 came from just 19 individuals. How could people not be suspicious when, for example, the Good Law Project reports that the Conservatives have received £15m from the Phoenix Partnership, owned by businessman Frank Hester – a company that has secured more than £400m in public contracts since 2016. (He's the man who said Diane Abbott made him "want to hate all black women" and that she "should be shot".)

So far the present bill tightening up on foreign donations will only scrape away the most egregious threats from foreigners. But it wouldn't stop Elon Musk's rumoured \$100m gift to Reform if it came from his UK-generat-



ed profits. What's needed is a ceiling on donations, such as other countries impose. France caps individual donations to political parties at €7,500 per year. Canada, Belgium, Portugal and South Korea impose similar limits. Some ban corporate donations altogether and it's high time we did too.

This clean-up would not be easy. Labour would have

to make sacrifices in its own funding, abolishing trade union donations except by individual union members. As in other countries, the state would have to contribute towards political funding: parties are an essential element in democracy. To protect their main funding sources, the Tories and Reform would fight a dirty campaign against this, stirring up public objections

to the Treasury contributing what would be a tiny sum to pay for hated politicians. That's how Tory funders swung the referendum on the alternative vote in 2011, using pictures of a baby in intensive care to suggest money would be better spent on healthcare than changing the voting system.

Helena Kennedy's long-standing proposal to democratise the funding of parties is a good one: in a 2006 report for the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, she and others recommended letting voters tick a box at elections to allocate their share of public money to the party of their choice.

Labour stands to gain far more than it would lose by standing up as the champion of clean politics, embarrassing defenders of a system growing more corrupt at every election.

Reliance Power shares tank nearly 6%; analysts see more downside

Mumbai: Shares of Reliance Power Ltd declined sharply on Friday, snapping a two-day upward movement. The stock fell 5.82 per cent to settle at Rs 21.35. At this closing price, it has plunged 52.53 per cent over the past six months.

Earlier this month, the company issued a clarification denying media reports that alleged Enforcement Directorate (ED) raids at locations linked to Reliance Power. "This is in reference to various media reports alleging that the Enforcement Directorate has conducted raids at locations linked to Reliance Power Ltd. In this regard, the Company would like to clarify that, to the best of its knowledge, no such action has been carried out at any of the offices or premises of the Company," the company said. From a technical perspective, some analysts largely maintained a bearish stance on the stock.

Osho Krishan, Senior Analyst – Technical & Derivative Research at Angel One, stated, "RPower has been in a secular downtrend, with no sign of technical respite or a pullback. The counter is hovering



below the short-term EMA, implying inherent weakness. On the levels front, the Rs 25-26 subzone

is likely to act as a formidable barrier and a sustained breach could only provide some respite in the

counter. On the contrary, with the ongoing structure, any breakdown below Rs 20 is likely to aggravate correction towards the Rs 18-17 zone in the coming future."

Kunal Kamble, Senior Technical Research Analyst at Bonanza, said, "Reliance Power is in a clear downtrend, forming consistent lower highs and lower lows on both daily and weekly timeframes, indicating sustained selling pressure. The stock has decisively broken an important support zone, suggesting a continuation of the bearish trend. Price remains below all major short-term and long-term EMAs, reinforcing weakness. Avoid fresh positions and maintain strict stop loss discipline for existing holdings."

According to AR Ramachandran, a Sebi-registered research analyst at Tips2trades, "The stock is bearish on daily charts with strong resistance at Rs 23.5. A daily close below the support of Rs 20.8 could lead to a downward target of Rs 18.7 in the near term."Promoters held a 24.98 per cent stake in Reliance Power as of December 2025.

HDFC MF clarifies stance on holding physical gold after rule change

Mumbai: HDFC Mutual Fund has clarified recent changes to the HDFC Gold ETF, affirming that the core investment strategy remains focused on investing primarily in physical gold. As of March 24, 2026, the scheme now has an enabling provision allowing investments in Exchange Traded Commodity Derivatives (ETCDs) but specifies that such investments will only occur in exceptional circumstances, such as when market shortages hinder the buying or selling of physical gold. The mutual fund emphasized that these etf-related derivatives are not a regular investment strategy but a measure for managing short-term market constraints.

The updated provisions permit the scheme to allocate up to 50% of its net assets in gold-related instruments, with a strict cap of 20% for exposure to Gold Deposit Schemes (GDS) and Gold Monetisation Schemes (GMS). A minimal allocation of 0-5% can be utilized for



debt mutual fund units and various debt and money market instruments, maintaining an overall exposure cap at 100% of net assets. This change comes after a notice-cum-addendum issued in early March and aligns with the regulations prescribed by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), which allows mutual funds to invest in commodity derivatives under defined conditions.

HDFC Mutual Fund reassured that once market conditions stabilize, any derivatives exposure will be unwound, ensuring a full return to investments in physical gold. The ETF remains focused on deploying assets primarily in high-purity gold

bullion, with only a minor allocation in cash or cash equivalents to fulfill asset allocation requirements. As of February 28, 2026, over 15,000 kilograms of physical gold constituted nearly the entire portfolio, with only a small reserve in liquid assets.

The adjustment arose following investor queries regarding potential risk increases due to the change. The fund house stated that the amendment serves as a technical flexibility measure and does not alter the scheme's objective to track gold prices in the long term. While no specific reason for the change was provided, the update aligns the scheme's investment strategy with evolving regulatory frameworks, which now permit investments in gold-linked assets beyond physical gold. The HDFC Gold ETF, designed as an open-ended fund to replicate gold performance subject to tracking errors, is considered suitable for investors aiming for long-term exposure to gold prices.

Petrol, diesel excise duty cut may cost govt over Rs 1 lakh crore, fiscal hit to be reviewed fortnightly



New Delhi: The Centre's decision to cut excise duty on petrol and diesel by Rs 10 per litre could result in a revenue loss exceeding Rs 1 lakh crore on an annualised basis, significantly impacting the government's fiscal position even as it seeks to shield consumers and oil marketing companies (OMCs) from a global oil shock, economists told Business Today TV. The duty reduction, which brings excise on petrol down from Rs 21.90 per litre to Rs 11.90 per litre, comes amid a sharp surge in international crude prices. While retail pump prices remain unchanged, the move effectively shifts the burden onto the exchequer, reducing the Centre's per-litre tax realisation.

Government officials indicated that the revenue implications remain fluid and will be assessed on a fortnightly basis, factoring in import trends and global price movements. "The situation is dynamic, and not business as usual," said Vivek Chaturvedi, Chairman, Central Board of In-

direct Taxes and Customs (CBIC), underlining the uncertainty surrounding revenue projections.

On the export front, Chaturvedi noted that duties on petrol are currently nil, given prevailing crack margins, but these will be reviewed every fortnight. The government has, however, imposed a levy on diesel exports, which is expected to generate about Rs 1,500 crore over a two-week period. The measure is aimed at discouraging exports and ensuring adequate domestic availability at a time of tight global supply.

Domestically, the policy focus remains on stabilising fuel prices and supporting OMCs, which have been absorbing significant under-recoveries. "Steps have been taken to ensure under-recoveries by OMCs are well absorbed and there is no sudden increase in prices," Chaturvedi said. The excise cut is designed to partly offset these losses, enabling companies to continue fuel supply without passing on the full impact

of elevated crude prices to consumers.

India Ratings and Research estimates that if the current duty structure is maintained through FY27, the revenue loss could be as high as Rs 1.7 lakh crore, significantly complicating the government's fiscal arithmetic. "If the excise duty remains at the current level throughout FY27, it would cost the government Rs 1.70 lakh crore," said Devendra Kumar Pant, Senior Director, Public Finance, India Ratings and Research. Fuel taxes have historically been a major contributor to indirect tax revenues, and any sustained reduction could widen the gap in meeting budgeted targets. The government's approach reflects a calibrated trade-off, absorbing fiscal pressure to maintain price stability and prevent inflationary spillovers. However, with crude prices remaining volatile and geopolitical risks elevated, the duration of this intervention will be critical in determining the overall impact on public finances.

In a volatile market, can Tata Communications strike a balance between expansion plans and margin pressures

New Delhi: Formula 1 has, over seven decades, remained one of the foremost sporting attractions globally. And guess what? An Indian company enables the broadcast of the race to over 500 million fans in at least 180 countries. In 2022, Formula 1 and Tata Communications announced a multi-year strategic collaboration, under which the latter was made the official broadcast connectivity partner of the races. In under 200 milliseconds, video feeds move from the venue of the race to a remote production site in London, before making their way to the viewing device. This is what media companies do, but Tata Communications is not one. Its network provides international call services, but it's not just a telecom company either. It would be best to describe the company as operating at the confluence of both, in a zone called communication technology, courtesy the 5,00,000 km of sub-sea cables that serve enterprises and internet service providers. All this is enabling the company to bat for a play in the digital space.

The high-value solutions it is targeting call for expertise in cloud computing, mobility, security, artificial intelligence (AI), Internet of Things (IoT), and more. The business model of Tata Communications is not easy to grasp. One reason, among others, is the sheer pace of transformation, from a voice player at the turn of the century to building a big play in data and digital. The company followed strategies in line with what was the need of

the hour. "One of the reasons we are not understood very well is because there is no other comparable company," says the company's MD & CEO, A S Lakshminarayanan. Before his current position, he had a long stint with Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), where he was running markets like Japan, the UK and Europe, apart from being the global head of media and information services. "We have an interaction fabric, a network fabric and a cloud fabric. Nobody else has that, and since each of these has a different profile, one cannot put them on a single spreadsheet.

Investors were also unhappy. There was nothing remarkable to speak of when it came to customers. "If they wanted five things from us, it was often a case of being able to do 2A or 3B. We were not aiming to solve a problem, and that reduced customer relevance," he says. What compounded the problems was that the meetings were held with the head of networks, not with the chief information officer (CIO). When a company is in good financial health, other aspects like product, go-to-market and skills can be approached with more confidence and it can make mergers and acquisitions (M&As) more meaningful. Between December 2022 and June 2023, the company made two acquisitions. First was Switch (at \$59 million), a live production and video transmission services provider. In December 2025, Tata Communications acquired a 51% stake in Commotion Inc,

an AI-native SaaS platform company with US and India operations, for Rs 227 crore. A statement then outlined the reasons for the purchase and subsequent integration of capabilities into the company's own digital fabric (a phrase Lakshminarayanan uses often through our conversation) and how it "will accelerate AI adoption and advance the journey to becoming an AI-first organisation." Tata Communications could be studied as a part of the global telecom system. A September 2025 report from CareEdge Ratings states the importance of the company "owning and operating the world's only wholly owned subsea fibre ring" that has a significant share of international voice and data traffic. It goes on to outline a favourable industry outlook, with increasing data consumption, cloud migration, adoption of CPaaS solutions, and rising demand for network security services driving growth opportunities. Around 84% of the company's FY25 revenues came from data. The digital platforms and services sub-segment has expanded rapidly on the back of acquisitions and enterprise demand. "While the business is concentrated in data, this risk is mitigated by the breadth of services within DMS (data managed services) and the company's well-diversified geographic and customer base (no single customer having over 10% of revenues; India at 38% and the US at 21%). The combination of strong infrastructure, scale and industry tailwinds underpins

Tata Communications' market leadership and revenue visibility," it says. The company has clinched several interesting assignments, apart from Formula 1. In late 2023, it signed a deal with JLR (a brand owned by Tata Motors) for digital transformation. This was a key part of JLR's Reimagine strategy.

A year later, that partnership was expanded to enhance connected vehicle capabilities across 120 countries. Sumet Walia, EVP & Chief Sales & Marketing Officer, Tata Communications, thinks this was important to drive home the point on how they could be relevant to customers. "If you ask JLR today a question on Tata Communications' relevance in its own ecosystem, there is a good chance they will speak of us as being a core part of their central digital nervous system. That's the strength of relevance that we have managed to reach," he says. Understandably, this is not an easy process. According to Walia, positioning technology is only part of the story. I need to understand the problem first. So, it is that pain-gain equation that we are really trying to work with," he says. The digital part has multiple legs with AI, data centres, IoT, 5G/6G. The interesting part is that each is getting integrated with the business," says Deven R Choksey, Chairman and MD of wealth management and investment advisory firm DRChoksey Finserv. The challenge, he says, lies in existing customers being more demanding, making the process of contin-

uous innovation critical. That included next-gen connectivity solutions, cybersecurity solutions or move to cloud and specific solutions for the media vertical," he explains. Importantly, in October 2024, the company announced that it would incorporate Nvidia software into its AI cloud offerings. These will be powered by Nvidia Hopper GPUs. Tata Communications has also developed IoT, signalling that it does not want to be a pure-play IT company, and would rather position itself as a services player. "

That seems rational given that companies work with several vendors on cloud, switches, CPaaS, among other things. CTOs realise the need to consolidate, making it a very attractive opportunity for Tata Communications," he says. The hitch lies in the pace of technological change that can easily hamper a business model. Walia sees Tata Communications facing a "once in a generation opportunity." He looks back at some of the other big technological shifts to emphasise his point. "It took two decades for the internet and one decade for the mobile. Cloud took a decade, and now with AI and GenAI, that shift will be seen in the next three-four years," he says. All eyes will be on how the company will up its game from here on. Maybe it needs to disrupt itself once more, not for survival but just to get better. For Tata Communications, an interesting phase of growth has barely started to unfold.

Defence Ministry signs 858 crore deals for Tunguska missiles, P-8I aircraft maintenance support

Mumbai: The Ministry of Defence on Friday signed two contracts worth a total of ₹858 crore to strengthen India's air defence and maritime surveillance capabilities. The agreements, finalised at Kartavya Bhawan-2 in New Delhi on March 27, 2026, cover the procurement of the Tunguska Air Defence Missile System for the Indian Army and depot-level inspection of the Navy's P-8I long-range maritime reconnaissance aircraft, according to an official statement. The first contract, valued at ₹445 crore, has been signed with Russia's JSC Rosoboronexport for the procurement of Tunguska Air Defence Missile Systems for the Indian Army. The deal was concluded in the presence of Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh. The Tunguska system

is designed to strengthen India's multi-layered air defence network by improving the ability to counter aerial threats such as aircraft, drones, and cruise missiles. Officials said the agreement also reflects the continuing strategic defence partnership between India and Russia, which remains a key supplier of critical military platforms to the Indian armed forces.

The second contract, worth ₹413 crore, relates to the Inspection (Depot Level) of P-8I Long-Range Maritime Reconnaissance Aircraft used by the Indian Navy. The agreement has been signed with Boeing India Defense Private Limited, a wholly owned Indian subsidiary of Boeing, under the Buy Indian category with 100% indigenous content. The contract will enable depot-level maintenance of



the P-8I fleet at an in-country Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO)

facility, ensuring faster reduced downtime, and improved

servicing, operational readiness of the aircraft. The P-8I aircraft plays a crucial role

in maritime surveillance, anti-submarine warfare, and long-range reconnaissance, making regular inspection and maintenance essential for maintaining India's naval preparedness, especially amid growing security challenges in the Indian Ocean region.

The government said the move is aligned with the Aatmanirbhar Bharat and Make-in-India initiatives, as it promotes domestic maintenance capabilities and reduces dependence on overseas facilities for critical defence platforms. Officials added that the contracts underline the government's continued focus on modernising India's defence infrastructure while strengthening both indigenous manufacturing capacity and long-standing international defence partnerships.

Albanese administration says gasoline supply'same, if not higher' in coming weeks as Coalition demands for reducing excise

Australian: The prime minister and energy minister attempted to reassure the public that gasoline supplies would be normal or even higher in the coming weeks, as the Coalition raised calls for a reduction in fuel excise and the government minimized the possibility of substantial curbs on petrol sales. It comes as the consumer watchdog's latest numbers reveal diesel prices in Australia's five major cities have climbed by an average of 10% in the previous week, while unleaded petrol has increased by 8%.The opposition leader, Angus Taylor, asked on Friday for a reduction of the gasoline duty to assist reduce skyrocketing petrol costs, a proposal that the Labor administration had rejected this week. The latest figures from New South Wales showed one in seven service stations in the state had run out of at least one type of fuel, amid a surge in demand.Anthony Albanese shared sympathy for families and businesses struggling with rising fuel bills, but said the government was working to bring more supply to areas facing shortages. "We understand that people are under real pressure and the impact of this war is real," the prime minister told a press conference in Canberra."It's happening across the other side of the world. But in today's interconnected world, it's why we have to engage and we acknowledge that. I feel for people who are under pressure with some of the shortages which have been there."

Albanese said again that shortages were a "distributional" issue in regional areas especially, adding: "there hasn't been a reduction in supply of fuel into Australia or indeed production".Government sources expressed concern



about economic downturn if people stopped travelling and stayed home, with responses such as encouraging people to work from home or limit driving – canvassed in 2020 government documents about fuel crises – currently considered unlikely.Albanese said Monday's specially convened national cabinet meeting of state and territory leaders would work on a "national response" to the fuel crisis, contrasting that to how various states had different responses to the Covid pandemic. "One of the lessons of the Covid pandemic is that we made a number of decisions as a nation that could have been made better if there was proper consideration. We also had different systems operating across the eight states and territories," Albanese said.Albanese said six tankers of jet fuel from China would arrive in Australia between 28 March and 8 April. Chris Bowen said jet fuel supplies from China were assured until late April or early May."Australia's supply of petrol and diesel and oil will be the same, if not higher, than it normally

would be," he said.In NSW, the energy department said that 347 of the 2,414 service stations registered in the FuelCheck compliance platform – or just over one in seven – are temporarily out of stock of one fuel type.Fifty-nine stations are out of any type of fuel, and 207 stations are out of diesel, premium diesel, or both, an increase on Thursday's figures.Taylor on Friday urged the Albanese government to immediately halve the federal fuel excise for three months. That sales tax is set at 52.6 cents a litre of fuel bought, with a halving to potentially save motorists 26 cents a litre.Such a move would be expensive. Former opposition leader Peter Dutton proposed at the 2025 election to halve the fuel excise for 12 months, which was then set at 50.8 cents a litre, and estimated to cost \$6bn. State premiers and federal independent politicians have called for the excise to be cut, but treasurer Jim Chalmers said on Tuesday "it's not something that we have been considering."Analysis showed the richest households would benefit the most from such

an idea; economists have warned it could worsen petrol shortages and add to inflation."Fuel prices are rising, stations are running dry, and families already stretched by the cost of living are falling further behind. This is now a national fuel crisis," Taylor said.The Nationals leader, Matt Canavan, was critical of the government for over-seeing fuel shortages."The government says there is enough fuel in the system, but if that is true, then this is a failure to get fuel where it is needed," he said.Albanese did not endorse the idea when asked about cutting fuel excise, but did not rule it out either, saying "my government has always been strong on cost of living measures. We'll continue to do so. We do so in a responsible way in the context of our budget considerations."

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission said on Friday that across the five largest cities, average diesel prices reached 303.5 cents a litre, up 10% from the previous week, while regular unleaded petrol was 252.2 cents a litre, up 8%.

Nigeria takes its position on the international scene in quest to become a regional giant

Africa: "There are chapters in our shared history that I know have left some painful marks," King Charles said at a state banquet to welcome Nigerian President Bola Tinubu to the UK, in a year when the monarch is expected to face renewed pressure to issue a formal apology for transatlantic slavery and colonialism.However, as African and Caribbean nations seek more reparative justice from the UK, Nigeria and the UK are looking ahead to the future of global commerce.Tinubu's state visit last week was hailed as a comeback to the global scene for Africa's largest economy. Tinubu is the first Nigerian president to visit the UK in 37 years, and just the second African leader in history to be welcomed at Windsor Castle, following Liberia's William Tubman in 1962.This new chapter in the two nations' relationship, which has its roots in colonial history, promises to benefit the UK's struggling steel sector while also advancing Nigeria's goal to become a regional giant. At the state banquet, the monarch addressed Tinubu, "The many dynamic connections between our two nations have deep roots, but I do not pretend that those roots are without a shadow." I do not strive to provide words that will erase the past, since no words can. "But I do believe, as I know you believe, Mr President, that history is not merely a record of what was done to us: it is a lesson in how we go forward together to continue building a future rooted in hope and growth for all, and worthy of those who bore the pains of the past." A agreement in which the UK guarantees a £746 million loan to rebuild two of Nigeria's commercial ports is one example of how Nigeria and the UK may work together to estab-

lish a new future, regardless of the reparative justice argument. Reparations are scheduled to be mentioned during this year's Commonwealth heads of government summit.Nigeria also wishes to diversify global ties and move away from its economic reliance on oil. It aspires to be the major marine center for West and Central Africa, which is rich in vital mineral resources and has enormous potential for consumer market expansion. However, Lagos's seaports are creaking – which is where UK financing comes in. As part of the ports deal, Nigeria will direct at least £236m in contracts to British suppliers, including £70m for the loss-making British Steel, which the UK government took control of last year.

In one of its biggest-ever contracts, British Steel will supply 120,000 tonnes of steel billets to Nigeria. Meanwhile, cooperation, investment and partnerships in the fintech, creative and higher education sectors have been announced.Nigeria's Zenith Bank is opening a Manchester branch, while the Fidelity Bank and fintech companies LemFi, Kuda and Moniepoint are expanding their UK operations.There will also be state cooperation on customs and irregular migration. Nigeria and the EU are also strengthening ties.At the banquet, King Charles said the UK was "blessed that so many people of Nigerian heritage ... are now at the heart of British life through excelling at the highest levels". About 270,000 people, or 0.5% of the population of England and Wales, recorded their ethnic group as Nigerian in the last census.Among the guests at the banquet were the England rugby captain Maro Itoje and his wife, Mimi, the Olympic 400m gold medallist Christine

Ohuruogu, the former Lioness and football pundit Eni Aluko, and the UK's first black female Michelin-starred chef, Adejoké Bakare. For the first time in living memory, canapes were provided before the dinner to offer sustenance to Muslim guests who were unable to take part in iftar – the breaking of their fast – at sunset. Tinubu is the first Muslim leader to make a state visit to the UK during Ramadan since 1928.A prayer room was also set up in the castle for guests breaking their fast, and a mocktail offered that took inspiration from the classic Nigerian drink, the Chapman – usually a mix of Sprite, Fanta, cucumber, grenadine syrup and angostura aromatic bitters.The royal household's version, called crimson bloom, used zobo, a popular west African beverage made of dried hibiscus flowers – known as sorrel in the Caribbean – mixed with English rose soda, a homemade hibiscus and ginger syrup, lemon and a hint of spice. At the banquet, the king quoted Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba proverbs, toasted in pidgin and described Nigeria as "an economic powerhouse, a cultural force and an influential diplomatic voice". But while the visit and the agreements that followed were welcomed in Nigeria as a vote of confidence for the country's status and instability, the Nigerian government faces pressure to prove the country is getting a good deal.Analysts want to see the deals fully materialise and for the government to ensure foreign investment does not leave the country in a dependent, indebted position – or disadvantage domestic industry – and lead to growth across society.

Nigerian officials say the conditions are attractive, but after a history of Afri-

can nations being exploited through western debt, a £746m British loan will invite some domestic scepticism.Britain colonised Nigeria over 100 years, beginning with the annexation of Lagos in 1860. Nigerians trained in the UK in law, medicine, administration and technology after independence in 1961, growing what had been a small, pre-war community of students and seamen.The Royal Niger Company – later absorbed into the consumer goods company Unilever – was central to colonisation in the late 19th and 20th centuries. Palm oil harvested by Nigerian workers was essential for soap and lubricating Britain's industrial machinery.Finished cotton wax-print material was exported from Manchester to Nigeria in the colonial era and still influences styles today. Cotton was at the heart of the most painful era in a relationship between nations defined all too often by extraction. An estimated 3.5 million enslaved people were shipped from Nigeria to the Americas to grow cash crops such as cotton, coffee, sugar and tobacco during the transatlantic trade alone.The British multinational company Shell finally divested from its onshore Nigerian oil operation last year, almost 90 years after it obtained a licence.

The Benin bronzes, thousands of treasures looted by the British military in 1897, are at the centre of restitution campaigns.Nigeria-UK trade grew 11.4% to £8.1bn in the past year, with the UK £3.4bn in surplus.Nonetheless, the visit of Tinubu and the first lady, Oluremi Tinubu, highlighted the strategic importance of Nigeria after domestic overhauls intended to stabilise the Nigerian economy in an evolving global order.

Flatterers are out in force to fill Trump's mind with Venezuelan statue fantasies

Americas: They have become so known for their displays of fawning and obsequiousness that critics have drawn parallels with North Korea. Thursday's cabinet meeting in the White House was no exception.Doug Burgum, the US interior secretary, outshone his other praise singers by claiming that Venezuela, which the US bombed in January, planned to honor the president with a statue.Trump cited the detention of President Nicolás Maduro, who was replaced by temporary leader Delcy Rodríguez, as a positive outcome. "We've made a lot of money, and they've made a lot of money," Trump said. "I am the highest poller. In other words, after the presidency I think I may go to Venezuela and run for president against Delcy. I may run against Delcy. It is an option. "They love me in Venezuela."Later in the discussion, Burgum, who had recently visited Venezuela with oil and mining executives, saw an opportunity. He told reporters: "I literally think they're going to put up a statue to President Trump and I'm not being - it's not a political statement."Trump, now fascinated, interjected: "That would be a great honour!" Someone in the room laughed, and Trump joined in. Burgum responded, "No, because they view President Trump like [independence hero] Simón Bolívar." "He's the liberator of a country, and this is a country that loves American baseball... [and] you look on the street, they're wearing NBA jerseys."Burgum also stated that during his recent trip, the media was permitted to enter Venezuela's counterpart of the White House, the Miraflores Palace, for the first time in 20 years. He stated that there were hopeful signals for US corporate recovery and oil output. But Trump's thoughts were still elsewhere. "Forget that," the president interrupted. "When are they going to do the statue?" The room exploded with laughter. Trump has long had a special interest in statues. He has railed against protesters who top-



pled Confederate statues, proposed a National Garden of American Heroes and this week installed a Christopher Columbus statue on the White House grounds. Congresswoman Anna Paulina Luna has proposed carving Trump's face on Mount Rushmore in South Dakota.The exchange was just one surreal moment in another weird and wild cabinet meeting, the first since the war in Iran broke out. Trump claimed that Iran has been "beat to shit" and accused British prime minister Keir Starmer of a "shocking" lack of support. He went on a long riff about the merits of Sharpies over what he claimed were the \$1,000 pens that presidents typically use to sign bills.He also made offensive com-

ments about Gavin Newsom, the governor of California and a potential 2028 presidential candidate, who has spoken publicly about his dyslexia. "Gavin Newsom, who is one of the candidates, I believe he took himself out of the running when he says he suffers from mental disability."I don't want a person with mental disability to be my president. You don't want to have a person with mental disability being your president and Gavin Newsom said he can't read a speech, he can't do almost anything."Trump added: "He's actually a very stupid person so I believe he's out of the running ... I don't want a stupid person being president."The 79-year-old went on to boast about his own mental capaci-

ty. "I'm the only president that ever took a cognitive test. I took it three times. It's actually a very hard test for a lot of people. It wasn't hard for me. But it's a cognitive test."It starts off with an easy question and by the time you get to the middle it gets tougher – by the time you get to the end, very few people can answer those questions. They get very tough. Mathematical equations and things."Trump added: "I took it three times.

I aced it all three times in front of numerous doctors that I have no idea who they are... I got 'em all right and one doctor said I've never seen anybody get 'em all right; I've been doing the test for 20 years."

Putin requests that oligarchs pay to Russia's depleting defense budget

Russia: According to reports, Vladimir Putin has requested Russia's oligarchs to contribute to the country's depleting defense budget so that the invasion of Ukraine can continue.The Russian president is anticipated to prolong the battle, which began in February 2022, until Moscow has secured the remaining regions of Ukraine's eastern Donbas region that are not under its control, according to the Financial Times.According to the publication, at least two businesspeople informed Putin that they would be prepared to contribute to the defense budget during meetings on Thursday.Putin is said to be moving ahead with the invasion after Ukraine declined to withdraw unilaterally from Donbas during recent US-brokered discussions. Russia will approach the US for a fresh round of peace negotiations as soon as conditions allow, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.Peskov stated that Russia had not lost interest in peace negotiations, but that fundamental problems like as territory remained unresolved.

The Kremlin's defense budget surged by 42% last year to Rbs13.1 trillion (£121 billion), and it has attempted to stabilize its economy through taxes. Maxim Reshetnikov, Russia's economics minister, warned on Thursday that if the rouble falls further this year, the country may

consider imposing another windfall tax. Russia raised Rbs320 billion (£2.95 billion) in 2023 with a one-time 10% windfall charge on select significant firms. In January, the Kremlin increased VAT to 22% in a bid to raise an extra Rbs600bn over three years from small and medium-sized businesses. Russia's budget deficit for January and February swelled to more than 90% of the figure projected for the whole year as US sanctions forced Moscow to sell oil at significantly discounted prices.Earlier, Putin cautioned that Russian companies and the government should take a guarded approach when deciding how to spend windfall gains from higher oil prices resulting from the war in the Middle East."Now that the prices of our traditional exports are rising, but the markets are in turmoil, there may be a temptation to take advantage of the situation," he told business leaders in Moscow.Putin added this temptation could involve squandering the extra revenue, paying it out in company dividends or, in the state's case, expanding budget spending."We must remain prudent. If the markets swing one way today, they could swing the other tomorrow," he added."A moderate degree of conservatism and a moderately conservative approach are needed, both in the corporate sector and in public finances."

Explore true Icelandic culture in the country's less-travelled north

Iceland wasn't always the blockbuster travel destination it is today; in the early 1990s, the country saw just a little more than 130,000 visitors a year. By 2023, however that number had surged to 2.21 million, far outpacing Iceland's tiny population of around 380,000. Experts chalk it up to a mix of savvy marketing, social media virality and sheer natural spectacle. The 2014 #MyStopover campaign turned layovers into week-long adventures, flooding Instagram with images of steaming hot springs, glacier lagoons and volcanic black-sand beaches. Soon, Iceland was no longer just a niche destination for intrepid explorers; it was on every traveller's bucket list. But with soaring popularity came new challenges, pushing the country to grapple with the pressures of overtourism. Most visitors touch down in the capital city of Reykjavik and make a beeline for the Blue Lagoon or the well-trodden Golden Circle. But as Iceland's tourism boom shows no signs of slowing, the country is looking for ways to ease the strain on its most popular spots. The conversation around overtourism has become impossible to ignore, and one solution is clear: encouraging travellers to venture beyond the usual highlights. The country's north, with its dramatic fjords and geothermal hotspots, offers a quieter yet equally spectacular alternative to the capital, with idyllic towns like Akureyri and Húsavík providing a gateway to breathtaking landscapes without the crowds. Húsavík is the country's oldest settlement as well as its whale capital. The small coastal town was once known for its whaling industry, and indeed Iceland is still one of only three countries that allows commercial whaling. However, many former whale hunting boats are now being converted to whale watching vessels in an effort to attract more visitors. "I've been told there's a 97% chance of seeing a whale on any trip you take here," said BBC Travel Show presenter Roma Wells. "Depending on what time of year you visit, you can see all sorts of different species." That's because a variety of whales, including humpbacks, orcas and minke, migrate through this area. In addition, many whale-watching vessels use electric rather than diesel engines, creating a quieter, more relaxing experience for both passengers and sealife. The northern part of the country is also a great place to get a glimpse of Icelandic history and culture. Start in the town of Sauðárkrúkur, around 200km west of Húsavík, visitors can explore 1238: The Battle of Iceland – a museum and virtual-reality experience that allows visitors to be a part of the renowned battle of Örygsstaðir, which is recounted in one of the country's most famous Icelandic sagas. The exhibition also includes historical items from the 11th Century that provide tangible proof of the country's Viking past. "Every generation has the responsibility to preserve history and to mediate it in a way that can be understood," said museum manager Freyja Rut. "I think we've come to the next step. We need to use technology to kind of make it more interesting." Another piece of Iceland's history is its iconic turf houses. These grass-covered dwellings, inspired by Viking longhouses, blend seamlessly into the landscape like something out of a fairy tale. Built with wood and stone and insulated with thick layers of turf, they stand as a testament to the resilience of Icelanders who found ingenious ways to survive in an unforgiving climate. The north is home to some of the country's finest examples, including the Glaumbær turf farm, a cluster



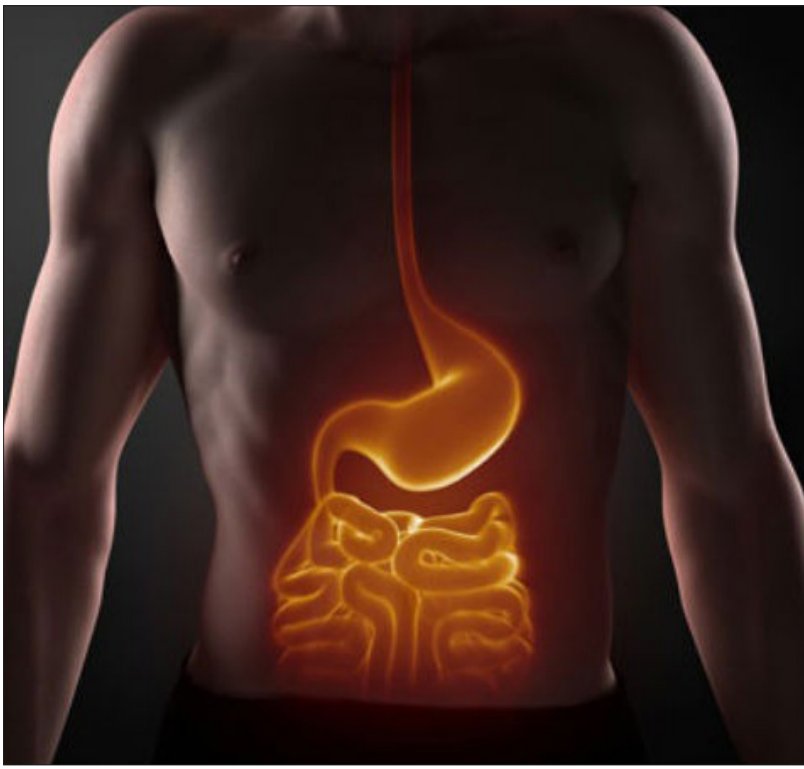
of beautifully preserved homes, and the striking Viðimýri Turf Church. Sheep farming and knitting are also central to Icelandic heritage. The region's hardy, free-roaming sheep – believed to be direct descendants of those brought by Viking settlers – produce the wool used for Iceland's famous lopapeysa sweaters. Recognised worldwide for their warmth and distinctive circular yoke patterns, these sweaters are a living connection to Iceland's pastoral traditions that remain a cornerstone of rural life. "Icelandic people only survived here because of the sheep," quipped Héléne Magnússonis, one of the country's leading knit designers. Visitors interested in purchasing an authentic lopapeysa sweater should look for a label that says "Hand-knitted in Iceland" – a mark of quality that according to

Magnússonis, often includes the knitter's name. Operators such as Green EdVentures offer tours where travellers can learn more about Icelandic life and practice their knitting skills with a local lopapeysa expert. Along with the boost in tourism, Iceland has had to wrestle with environmental degradation and unsafe behaviours from visitors, such as taking selfies too close to active volcanic sites. In 2017, the country proposed the Icelandic pledge, which encourages responsible and considerate behaviour in visitors. The hope is that the combination of this pledge and the push to encourage visitors to explore more of the country will help Iceland remain on the top of everyone's visitor list, without further damage to the local ecosystem or culture.



Could yogurt help protect against colorectal cancer?

Colorectal cancer is the third most common cancer worldwide, with the World Health Organization (WHO) reporting Trusted Source that it makes up more than 10% of all cancer diagnoses. Lifestyle factors, such as being sedentary, smoking, obesity and excessive alcohol consumption, as well as high intake of processed meats and low intake of fruits and vegetables, can all increase a person's risk of developing colorectal cancer. Eating a healthy, high-fiber diet, with plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, calcium and dairy products is associated with a lower colorectal cancer risk. A study led by researchers from Mass General Brigham — and published in the journal Gut Microbes — has now found that yogurt could also decrease the risk of some types of colorectal cancer. The researchers found that people who ate 2 or more servings of yogurt containing live bacteria each week had a 20% lower risk of developing colorectal tumors that were positive for Bifidobacterium, a strain of bacteria that is common in the gut microbiome. "While this study has shown a correlation between long-term consumption of yogurt and lower rates of proximal colorectal cancer positive for Bifidobacterium, more work is required to understand any causative role of Bifidobacterium and the mechanisms involved if so," she added. "Live" yogurt contains several strains of bacteria. Lactobacillus bulgaricus and Streptococcus thermophilus are commonly used to ferment milk to form yogurt, but many other bacterial strains, or probiotics, may also be added. Research has suggested that probiotics may boost the immune system, improve gut health, reduce the risk of osteoporosis, type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease, and could even reduce the risk of some cancers Trusted Source. To investigate whether yogurt consumption affects colorectal cancer risk, the researchers in this study used data from the Nurses' Health Study and the Health



Professionals Follow-up Study Trusted Source, which have followed more than 100,000 female nurses since 1976 and 51,000 male health workers since 1986. Participants in both studies answer frequent lifestyle, diet and health questionnaires, which include questions about intake of both plain and flavoured yogurts, as well as other dairy products. For those people diagnosed with colorectal cancer, researchers assessed tissue samples for Bifidobacterium DNA. Of the cohort, 3,079 people developed colorectal cancer and, of these, the researchers could access Bifidobacterium data for 1,121. A total of 775 people had Bifidobacterium negative colorectal cancer, and 346 were Bifidobacterium positive. Although researchers did not see a significant difference between long-term yogurt intake and overall incidence of colorectal cancer, they found a 20% lower rate of incidence of Bifidobacterium-positive tumors in those who ate more yogurt. Kelsey Costa, MS, RDN, a registered

dietitian nutritionist and owner of Impaetful Nutrition, not involved in this study, explained for MNT how Bifidobacterium might affect colorectal cancer risk. "This study does not suggest that yogurt reduces Bifidobacterium in the gut; just the opposite. In fact, it highlights that Bifidobacterium is an important bacterial strain in yogurt that produces short-chain fatty acids (SCFA) in the gut and has anti-cancer properties through antioxidant, anti-inflammato-

ry, and immune-boosting effects," she pointed out. According to her: "The research suggests that the Bifidobacterium found in Bifidobacterium-positive tumor tissue could reflect impaired intestinal barrier function. And cited studies show that Bifidobacterium may improve the intestinal barrier by reducing harmful inflammatory proteins like tumor necrosis factor and interleukin 6." "Yogurt may help strengthen the gut barrier and support Bifidobacterium's beneficial role in suppressing Bifidobacterium-positive tumor growth, rather than suppressing Bifidobacterium itself," she added. "There are different subtypes of Bifidobacterium in the human gut and different strains have different functions, including the metabolism of dietary carbohydrates, for example. This study did not explore whether there is a causative role for the microbiome, or Bifidobacterium, or any potential mechanisms involved," she told MNT. While live, natural yogurts are a good addition to a balanced diet, not all yogurt is good for you. Flavoured and fruit yogurts often contain high quantities of added sugar, and other added ingredients that are not healthy. However, natural, live yogurts contain plenty of nutrients, including calcium, phosphorus, potassium, vitamin A, vitamin B2, B12, protein and essential fatty acids. They are also a good source of probiotics — live microorganisms which, when consumed in adequate amounts as part of food, confer a health benefit on the host.



New test may predict which IBD patients have higher colorectal cancer risk

Previous research shows that people with inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) — including ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease — are at an increased risk of developing colorectal cancer compared to people who do not have IBD. People with IBD are at a higher risk of developing colorectal cancer, also known as bowel cancer, due to the chronic inflammation associated with IBD, which can cause the growth of abnormal cells — known as dysplasia — and cause the development of precancerous polyps in the intestinal tract. Currently, people with IBD are screened for colorectal cancer every one to three years Trusted Source through a colonoscopy. However, past studies show that detecting pre-cancerous cells in people with IBD can be difficult. Now, researchers from The Institute of Cancer Research in London have developed a new test that they report can predict bowel cancer risk in people with IBD with more than 90% accuracy. According to Trevor Graham, PhD, professor of genomics and evolution and director of the Centre for Evolution and Cancer at The Institute of Cancer Research in London and senior author of the study, although people with IBD have an increased risk of developing bowel cancer, there is no good way to predict that risk at the moment. "For people who are thought to be imminently at risk of developing cancer, the only effective treatment is surgery to remove some or all of the large bowel Trusted Source," Graham explained to Medical News Today. "This surgery can be lifesaving. But because we cannot, currently, be sure if someone really does need the surgery, people are having unnecessary surgery which has life changing consequences." "On the other hand, for people whose risk of bowel cancer we think is low and for whom we don't operate, these people continue to have anxiety about the uncertainty of their cancer risk," he added. During the study, researchers found that people with IBD who had pre-cancerous cells that lost or gained multiple copies of DNA had an increased risk of developing bowel cancer. From there, the scientists created an algorithm to calculate future colorectal cancer risk by using the exact pattern of the changed DNA in the pre-cancerous cells. "In the UK, people with IBD have regular colonoscopies — a camera pushed up their bottom — to look for early signs of cancer," Graham explained. "If something unusual is spotted, a biopsy — small tissue sample — is collected." "Our test is a genetic test that we perform on the biopsy. We compared the genetic signals from people who did go on to develop cancer to those who did not, and we have created a test to predict someone's risk based on the genetic signals in their biopsy," he said. During the study, Graham and his team found that their new test was able to predict which study participants with IBD who developed pre-cancerous cells would go on to develop colorectal cancer within five years with more than 90% accuracy. "We hope that the accuracy with which we can predict who really is at risk of cancer will mean that we can give treatment appropriately," Graham said. "For those at high risk of developing cancer, they can have surgery to remove their bowel and their risk of cancer. For those at low risk, we can spare them unnecessary worry and unnecessary treatment. For patients to be able to benefit from this, we need to show that our predictions hold true in clinical trials that we hope to run in the future," he explained. MNT also spoke with Rudolph Bedford, MD, a board certified gastroenterologist at Providence Saint John's Health Center in Santa Monica, CA, about this study, who praised the study as "wonderful, great, and amazing." "The fact of the matter is that our patients who have IBD, we're doing frequent colonoscopies, biopsies looking for dysplasia or cells or tissue that can lead to cancer. Then we have to have these discussions with them. If they do have these low-grade dysplastic cells, do we take out your colon, or do we do more frequent surveillance? What do we do?" Bedford explained. "If somebody is going to give me a test that has a 90% accuracy as to those patients with inflammatory bowel disease that might develop cancer, then that's a wonderful study," he continued.

Alia Bhatt looks stunning in a mint green saree with an opulent necklace

Mumbai: Alia Bhatt recently went to an event in Chennai. The actor posted images of her idyllic appearance from the event on Instagram on March 26 with the message, “Golden hour, thank you Chennai for all the love.” It is among the most beautiful looks the actor has ever had. Alia wore a mint green saree from the Jadon apparel store, styled by her favorite celebrity stylist Priyanka Kapadia, who also works with celebrities like Deepika Padukone, Ananya Panday, Suhana Khan, and others. The modern jewelry brand Moksh is the source of her eye-catching accessories.This is one of the actor’s most beautiful outfits to date. The see-through structure of Alia’s organza saree in the lovely mint green color gives the combination a dreamy feel. The suit is ideal for nighttime events because



it is embroidered with floral designs in green and metallic silver thread. Priyanka wore the organza saree in a classic manner, with the pallu draped on the shoulder and falling gracefully to a floor-sweeping length, with the front panels pleated beautifully. Regarding the blouse, she select-

ed the ideal mint-green silk item with a fitted silhouette, a cropped hem, a plunging V neckline, and no sleeves.Regarding the jewels, she selected a striking Kundan choker necklace adorned with priceless diamonds and gemstones. She accessorized it with oval-shaped gold earrings. Finally,

the actor chose her typical natural look for the glam, which included feathery brows, pink eye shadow, mascara-coated lashes, blush-tinted cheekbones, glossy pink lip shade, and dazzling highlighter. Her hair was left loose in a center parting, done with gentle waves.

Fans praised Alia in the comments section and praised the classic yet contemporary style. She was referred to as “Beautyyyyyyyyy” by one Instagram user and “High time to cast her as a Disney princess in a movie” by another. Another person said, “Ravishing as always.” After dating for a few years, award-winning actor Alia Bhatt married Ranbir Kapoor in April 2022. Raha, the couple’s daughter, was born in November 2022. Regarding her career, Alia will appear alongside Vicky Kaushal and her husband, Ranbir Kapoor, in Sanjay Leela Bhansali’s next movie, Love and War. The next spy thriller Alpha will also feature Alia.On March 15, Alia celebrated becoming 33 years old. For a peaceful vacation, the actor flew to Hong Kong with his spouse, Ranbir Kapoor, and their daughter Raha.

Sanjay Dutt announces his new movie Aakhri Sawal



Mumbai: Sanjay Dutt will next be seen in the movie Aakhri Sawal, following his role in Aditya Dhar’s hit film Dhurandhar: The Revenge.On Thursday, the film’s first look poster and release date were announced on Instagram by the producers.Dutt is seen on the poster in a solemn, concentrated position, surrounded by a big question mark. The artwork has a strong, enigmatic quality due to its dark tones and fire-like imagery. The poster’s tagline, “The Question India Never Stopped Asking,” alludes to the central premise of the movie. Nikhil Nanda Motion Pictures and Neem Tree Entertainment support Aakhri Sawal, which is produced by Nikhil Nanda, Dhanraj Nathwani, and Sanjay Dutt. Amit Sadh, Namashi Chakraborty, Sameera Reddy, Tridha Choudhury, and Neetu Chandra co-star with Dutt in the movie. On May 15, 2026, the movie is scheduled to open in theaters.The announcement coincides with Sanjay Dutt’s recent film Dhurandhar: The Revenge, in which he plays Chaudhary Aslam, a Pakistani police officer. Since its premiere, the movie, which stars Ranveer Singh in the lead role, has been dominating the box office. Dhurandhar: The Revenge, directed by Aditya Dhar, is a follow-up to Dhurandhar (2025), the highest-grossing Hindi movie of the year. Sanjay Dutt, R. Madhavan, Rakesh Bedi, and Arjun Rampal are among the multi-star cast members of the movie, which is produced by Jio Studios and B62 Studios.

Kiara Advani’s most recent chocolate-hued glam avatar attracted attention

New Delhi:Actress Kiara Advani, a new “mommy,” attracted attention with her most recent chocolate-hued glam avatar. Actress Alia Bhatt responded enthusiastically, calling her “gorgeous.” Kiara posted a photo of herself on Instagram on Thursday morning, showcasing a sleek and glamorous silhouette in a fitted corset-style dress with a milk chocolate hue. She put, “Mommy’s home!” as the caption, and she brought chocolate. Her remarkable appearance and self-assured vibe prompted a number of fans and industry friends to comment to the post.Actress Alia couldn’t contain her admiration and commented, “Gorgeeeeeeeeee.” Actor Sidharth Malhotra’s wife, Kiara, acknowledged that

their “world” had “forever changed” when she formally announced the birth of their daughter in July 2025.On behalf of himself and Kiara, Sidharth posted a beautiful pink announcement on his Instagram account.“Our hearts are full and our world forever changed,” the Shershaah star wrote. KIARA & SIDHARTH, our baby girl, is a blessing.The name of their little bundle of joy was finally revealed on November 28, 2025. They posted this on Instagram: “From our prayers, to our arms (Folded hands emoji) our divine blessing, our princess, Saraayah Malhotra (Sparkles, folded hands, red heart and evil eye emojis) .”After a discreet, long-term love that grew on the sets of their 2021 film Shershaah, Sidharth and Kiara were mar-



ried in a secret ceremony at Suryagarh Palace in Jaisalmer in 2023. Regarding Alia, her most recent appearance was in the Vasan Bala film Jigra. In it, Vedang Raina plays Alia, a disturbed young woman who must save her brother from a foreign prison after he is imprisoned for a crime he did not commit. Her

next appearance is in Alpha, the first female-led movie in the shared world and its seventh installment. In addition to Sharvari, Bobby Deol, and Anil Kapoor, the film is directed by Shiv Rawail. Hrithik Roshan makes a brief reappearance as Kabir. The movie will now be released in theaters on July 10, 2026.

Ranbir Kapoor’s Initial Appearance as Lord Rama on Hanuman Jayanti



Mumbai: There is great news coming up for Ranbir Kapoor fans. On Thursday, April 2, in honor of Hanuman Jayanti, the first glimpse of his role in the upcoming movie Ramayana will be revealed. How can we be certain? Namit Malhotra, the film’s producer, made the announcement directly on Instagram. Ranbir will play Lord Rama in the film directed by Nitesh Tiwari. “Shubh Rama Navami, This is a story that belongs to all of us, and every step we take has been guided by a deep sense of responsibility, devotion, and care to bring our very own Ra-

mayana to life in its truest spirit and scale with utmost sincerity,” Namit wrote in a special announcement on the auspicious day of Rama Navami. “We look forward to sharing the next glimpse, ‘Rama’ on April 2nd, on the auspicious occasion of Hanuman Jayanti, as we begin to showcase all these years of our effort through a grand launch with fans to celebrate this moment, across the world,” the producer continued. I appreciate your patience, love, and faith. Ranbir Kapoor became the focus of internet rumors earlier this month when purported pictures of him

playing Lord Rama from the Ramayana appeared on social media. As soon as the images appeared on various platforms, a sizable portion of the internet expressed dissatisfaction with the appearance. Ranbir was wearing a black cape over his otherwise bare torso and a kesariya dhoti with a janeu in the pictures that went viral on Reddit. Additionally, he was spotted wearing a wig that sparked internet backlash. A Redditor posted, “All that \$400 million budget and they couldn’t arrange for a decent-looking wig?” In addition to Ranbir Kapoor, Yash plays Ravana, Sai Pallavi plays Goddess Sita, Sunny Deol plays Lord Hanuman, and Ravi Dubey plays Lord Lakshman. Oscar-winning composers Hans Zimmer and AR Rahman are among the international heavyweights involved in the project’s technical aspects.

Guy Norris, the stunt director for Mad Max: Fury Road, is in charge of the action, while Terry Notary, a performance capture specialist best known for his work on the Avengers movies, is also involved.The epic is scheduled to be released as a two-part movie extravaganza on Diwali in 2026 and 2027, respectively.

Sonakshi Sinha’s interfaith marriage to Zaheer Iqbal is supported by Shatrughan Sinha



New Delhi: Veteran politician and actor Shatrughan Sinha has expressed strong support for his daughter Sonakshi Sinha’s marriage to Zaheer Iqbal, calling the pair “made for each other” and underlining that their wedding was both legal and based on happiness for both parties.In 2024, Sonakshi and Zaheer were married in an interfaith ceremony under the Special Marriage Act, an Indian law that permits people of various religions to wed without becoming followers of each other’s faiths. Due to discussions surrounding interfaith weddings in the nation as well as the couple’s famous position, the wedding attracted a lot of public attention. Shatrughan responded to queries about the marriage in a recent interview, mentioning both the interfaith aspect of the union and his home called “Ramayana.” In an honest

response, Shatrughan emphasized his family’s pleasure while brushing off any worries.“Bilkul theek thaak hai.” Sonakshi ki jo shaadi hui hai, designed for each other lagte hain dono. Hum bahut khush hai. (Everything is good. We are overjoyed. Sonakshi and her spouse appear to be a match made in heaven. He expressed his appreciation of Sonakshi and Zaheer’s love and compatibility by saying that they “look absolutely made for each other.” He emphasized the independence of his daughter Sonakshi and her partner Zaheer, pointing out that both are grown-ups with the capacity to make their own choices. “Bachche adults hai, bachche jawan hai.” Toh miya-bivi raazi toh kya karega Qazi agar woh khush hai. Hume unka saath dena chahiye. Chattaan ki tarah unke saath ho (The children are young, the children are adults) is a sin-

cere statement. What can the Qazi do if the husband and wife are content? “I stand by them wholeheartedly, like a rock,” he said. Salman Khan, who has served as a mentor to both Sonakshi Sinha and Zaheer Iqbal, originally introduced them at a party in 2016. They quickly became friends, and as they moved in similar social and business circles, their connection got stronger over time. The two apparently began dating around 2017, however they first kept their relationship mostly under wraps. Though neither of them publicly acknowledged the connection for a long time, rumors were progressively stoked by their joint public appearances, trips, and discreet social media contacts. After they collaborated on the 2022 movie Double XL, where their on-screen chemistry reflected their comfort in real life, their relationship became more apparent. They gained a reputation over time for having a good time and being encouraging, frequently posting humorous videos and intimate moments on social media. Following almost seven years of dating, they were married in 2024 under the Special Marriage Act, a momentous occasion that demonstrated their shared understanding and enduring dedication.

Dawood Ibrahim, Framed in a 40-Year-Old Picture , Finally Ages In Dhurandhar 2

Mumbai: Dawood Ibrahim and Bollywood have a long-standing romance. Two opposing depictions of the underworld don who is still causing a stir in India have emerged in the final two months of 2026.Aditya Dhar’s Dhurandhar 2 is the latest Hindi movie to revive Dawood Ibrahim in popular culture—not that he ever left. The director’s epic portrayal of Dawood Ibrahim in Dhurandhar 2, played by a fantastic Danish Iqbal in a performance that veers between being factual and wishful thinking, has become the talk of social media. This is how Bollywood has viewed Dawood Ibrahim over the years, especially Dhurandhar 2, where he may have reached adulthood.Some had a suspicion even before Dhurandhar 2 was released; others had read the “leaked” information on Dawood Ibrahim hee “Bade Sahab” that was circulating on social media. The guy, the myth, and the ghost are then introduced to us. There isn’t a chic low-angle picture that tries to elevate the character or give it more weight.When we first meet the underworld don in his bygone period, we are convinced that “Bade Sahab” is, in fact, Dawood Ibrahim. This is demonstrated by the enormous frame containing the well-known image of the man sitting in his plush office chair with his trademark glasses perched on his nose. Additionally, there are no cigarettes. The camera then pans down to reveal an elderly, weak, bedridden man in his

70s with a nearly hairless head and no teeth. This Dawood Ibrahim is reduced to a skeleton; he has to cough twice before he can speak. His breathing becomes labored when he becomes irritated. His blood pressure is constantly fluctuating and he is hooked up to cables. On rare occasions, the monitor displays “126/71,” but Dawood Ibrahim never quits scheming against India. When it comes to his age, Aditya Dhar’s portrayal of the feared criminal is by far the most accurate. Dawood Ibrahim is 70 years old and was born on December 26, 1955. He is reportedly not feeling well. During the 2020 pandemic, there were rumors that he passed away from Covid problems. Dawood Ibrahim was allegedly poisoned to death in Karachi, according to unconfirmed sources. Dhurandhar 2 also pays homage to the global terrorist’s prime, depicting him in a good mood at a party in the 1990s with Oye Oye deftly playing in the background, right before Jameel Jamali (Rakesh Bedi) poisons him. Even in this scene, the filmmaker highlights his superiority over the criminal by showing the audience how he transformed “Bade Sahab” from arsh to farsh. Vishal Bhardwaj debuted in theaters last month with O’Romeo, a picture set in the 1990s and based on the life story of Hussain Ustara, a prominent Mumbai underworld figure portrayed by Shahid Kapoor. In the movie, Ustara faces off against Jala-luddin “Jalal” Shah, a hefty,

blue-eyed Avinash Tiwary who is also a tough matador in Spain. It is no secret that Jalal is a stand-in for Dawood Ibrahim, even though his persona ultimately leans more toward parody than a formidable opponent for Ustara. In real life, Ustara operated independently as Dawood Ibrahim’s main competitor, challenging his hegemony in Mumbai during the 1990s. Ustara is thought to have been murdered in 1998 by Dawood Ibrahim’s goons. In Nikkhil Advani’s film D-Day, Dawood Ibrahim is depicted through the character Iqbal Seth, aka Goldman, portrayed by Rishi Kapoor, reflecting an aging fugitive underworld don. The narrative revolves around an Indian intelligence operation to capture him, climaxing with Goldman being killed by Major Rudra played by Arjun Rampal. Dawood’s glamorous image is linked to his connections with Bollywood. In Anirudh Iyer’s An Action Hero, the character Masood Abraham Katkar, also based on Dawood, presents an evolved look and comments on the media’s portrayal of him. Other films like Ram Gopal Varma’s Company and Anurag Kashyap’s Black Friday feature characters influenced by Dawood, characterized by their calculated and restrained personas, showcasing different facets of his mythos. Emraan Hashmi’s portrayal as Shahid Khan in Milan Luthria’s films further captures Dawood’s early years, with visual similarities underscored.

Sshura Khan, the wife of Arbaaz Khan, shares a sweet photo of her daughter Sipaara Khan

Mumbai: In October 2025, Bollywood superstar Arbaaz Khan and his spouse Sshura Khan welcomed their daughter Sipaara Khan into the world. Sshura recently gave followers a rare and endearing look of their child during Eid celebrations, and it’s all really cute. The pair has generally kept their child out of the spotlight. Sshura posted a close-up photo of her infant’s tiny feet on Instagram on Thursday. The child was wearing a gorgeous white costume with traditional silver anklets and exquisite needlework. The baby’s feet were the only focus of the

soft, personal frame, which provided a charming but discreet glimpse into her private life without showing her daughter’s face. Sshura’s straightforward caption, “Eid Vibes ,” wonderfully encapsulated the joyous mood of the occasion. Fans showered the comments area with love and blessings as soon as the post gained popularity on the internet. Many people couldn’t stop swooning over the lovely photo; one person said, “Awww... so adorable,” while another said, “Masha Allah, so cute.” Inquisitive admirers also asked Sshura to show the baby’s face.

“Those little anklets are everything,” was one particularly noteworthy statement. Insha’Allah. For those who don’t know, Sshura Khan is a famous makeup artist with a wealth of experience in the film and television industries. On the Patna Shukla sets, she got to know Arbaaz Khan. The pair only made their relationship public at the time of their wedding after keeping it a secret for a long period. They were married in a small ceremony on December 24, 2023, at Arbaaz’s sister Arpita Khan Sharma’s home in Mumbai. Close relatives and a few business in-

siders attended the wedding. This was Arbaaz’s second marriage. He had a son, Arhaan Khan, with his former wife, Malaika Arora. Arbaaz and Sshura have delighted fans with their lighthearted and loving postings on social media since getting married. On October 5, 2025, the couple welcomed their daughter, Sipaara. Shortly before giving birth, Sshura was brought to a hospital in Mumbai, and the baby’s arrival was confirmed that same day. The Khan family’s Eid festivities, meanwhile, were just as memorable this year. Salman Khan was spotted welcoming



admirers gathered outside his Mumbai home as he celebrated the festival with his family. The actor thanked fans for their love and prayers for his father, Salim Khan, then waved and blew flying kisses. Salim Khan had just been released from the hospital a few days prior to Eid following treatment for a brain hemorrhage, making the event even more significant. The family got together to celebrate the festival, posing for pictures and wishing fans well, making it an unforgettable and happy experience for everyone.

Jitesh Sharma remembers the help from Hardik Pandya



New Delhi: Speaking about Hardik Pandya’s kindness off the field, RCB wicket-keeper-batter Jitesh Sharma mentioned that he frequently gives bats to young cricket players and is always ready to offer assistance when asked. Even though Hardik is well-known for leading an ostentatious lifestyle with expensive automobiles and watches, he maintains his humility and groundedness and never lets fame or fortune alter him. Despite his involvement in a few off-field scandals over the years, he remains one of the nation’s most well-liked athletes. His teammates often compliment him on his encouraging demeanor and ability to motivate others. The Pandya brothers’ kindness and assistance off the field were commended by Hitesh. He said that Hardik was quite helpful and even gave him one without being asked. He went on to say that Krunal Pandya is equally helpful and always willing to lend a hand when needed, underscoring the two players’ dedication to mentoring and

inspiring people outside of their on-field responsibilities. ”The most helpful person is Hardik bhai. I haven’t witnessed anyone giving children so many bats. He assists a lot of youngsters, like when he offered me a bat without my saying anything. Jitesh stated on Ranveer Allahbadia’s podcast, “Krunal bhai, whenever you call him, he’ll help and help a lot.”The RCB wicketkeeper-batter also recalled Hardik’s encouragement following his exclusion from the T20 World Cup team. He disclosed that Hardik was the first to get in touch, providing straightforward but insightful guidance. ”When I was left off of the World Cup squad, Hardik bhai was the first to message me. Just develop personally as a cricket player, he advised. That’s it,” he continued.He also commended Hardik’s work ethic and intelligence, characterizing him as a very intelligent cricket player who understands exactly what he is doing on the field. Speaking from his time spent playing for Baroda, the RCB star emphasized Hardik’s strict regimen, which included intense yoga and swimming classes as well as his unwavering commitment to bowling and batting. “He is an extremely intelligent cricket player. I’ve had numerous interactions with him. I play for Baroda, who is an extremely intelligent and skilled cricket player.”Everyone is aware of his intelligence, but maybe no one wants to acknowledge it. I think he adheres to his schedule like a crazy yoga or swimming pool. Nobody puts in as much effort as he does when batting and bowling. He’s so strong; I’ve never seen someone work so hard,” he continued.

It’s time for the BCCI to punish mediocrity and recognize the brutal reality of the IPL

New Delhi: With the 19th edition of the Indian Premier League (IPL) just one day away, the 2026 season is almost here. On Saturday, March 28, Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) and Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) will square off at Chinnaswamy Stadium. The IPL has developed into one of the world’s most competitive leagues throughout the course of its eighteen editions. Indian fans frequently draw comparisons between it and the NFL and the Premier League, citing the tournament’s enormous media rights deals and steadily expanding fan base as evidence that it is here to stay. Because of the level playing field created by the mega auction, there is no doubting that the IPL is extremely competitive, with every team having an equal chance to win. Each team is free to decide how to spend that money, but none of the ten teams can lament a lack of opportunities. However, after observing the IPL’s expansion over 19 years, it is necessary to ask: Do teams truly care if they routinely perform poorly and use deception? Relegation is used by leagues like Ligue 1, La Liga, and the Premier League to ensure accountability. For example, in the Premier League, the top teams from the lower division get promoted, giving them a chance to compete against well-known heavyweights like Manchester United, Chelsea, Arsenal, and Liverpool, while the bottom three teams in the 20-team league



fall to the second division. Promotion and relegation are impractical in T20 leagues due to the limited number of teams, but the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) can enhance the quality of the IPL by addressing underperformance among franchises. Currently, teams are financially insulated from poor performance, as most revenue comes from the central pool managed by the BCCI. Introducing penalties for franchises that fail to reach the playoffs for three consecutive seasons could incentivize higher performance levels. Such measures may reduce their share of media rights revenue, pushing teams to improve and eliminate complacency. The BCCI’s control over media rights revenue is critical for driving competitive standards in the league.

Inside Yamuna air-conditioned VIP boat plans that raised questions in Delhi

New Delhi, Mar 27 : For two boats valued at more than ₹3 crore each in Delhi, a variety of facilities were planned, including air-conditioned cabins, business class pushback VIP seats, vegan leather, hand rests with wooden finishes, a luxury aesthetic appeal, and more. Why? VIP Yamuna River inspections. Two top officials involved in the purchase of these boats have been suspended, and the contract procedure for these boats has been canceled due to criticism of these expensive plans.An investigation of the March

12 tender was started the day after it was reported on in its March 18 report in order to ascertain “the circumstances under which they were issued.” Reports of these VIP boats sparked a political storm, with the Congress and AAP attacking the BJP-led Delhi government and calling the boat plan a “wastage of public funds and case of misplaced priorities.” The previous tender sought to purchase “luxury” boats with a number of features and amenities, such as “cassette-type rooftop marine air conditioners,” “customized business class

push-back VIP seats,” “a dedicated pantry for serving food,” and the ability to hold 16 to 20 people.

The VIP seats were “made of vegan leather with exquisite stitching” and had a “premium aesthetic look” with ambient lighting and hidden LED lights. Each boat was intended to include an open-rear deck with three to four-seater couches to further facilitate the VIP public appearances. The VIP seats included bottle containers and incorporated wooden-finished hand rests, among other features.

Days after the Hormuz Passage, the LPG ship “Jag Vasant” docks in Gujarat Port

Vadinar, Mar 27 : Days after tensions over ships passing through the Strait of Hormuz persisted, the LPG tanker Jag Vasant anchored at a port in Gujarat late on Thursday. At a time when the Center is still trying to allay worries over the country’s LPG scarcity, the ship’s arrival at Vadinar port provides relief after it was stuck in the vital canal for about 23 days due to the Middle East conflict.This tanker, which is loaded with 47,600 metric tons of LPG, is one of several that were stuck in the Strait of Hormuz and that Iran has

virtually shut down while attacking its neighbors for nearly a month. Pine Gas, a second LPG tanker, will shortly reach the New Mangalore Port with 45,000 metric tons of LPG. These ships are safe for all sixty seamen. With their arrival, India’s current stock of LPG will increase by more than 92,000 metric tonnes, or “roughly a day’s cooking gas consumption of the country.”Two sizable LPG tankers have already crossed the Strait of Hormuz and reached India in the last ten days. Twenty Indian-flagged ships are still

stuck in the Strait of Hormuz as a result of the ongoing turmoil in the Middle East, the Ministry of Shipping stated on Wednesday. These are five sizable LPG tankers flying the Indian flag, which together hold 2,30,000 metric tons of LPG. Within the following day or two, another sizable LPG tanker flying the Indian flag is expected to be loaded with LPG cargo before sailing for India. About 60% of India’s LPG needs are imported from international markets, and 90% of these imports arrive in India via the vital canal that links



the Gulf countries that produce gas and oil to the rest of the globe.Although there have been no reports of supply problems at distributor outlets, the Ministry of Petroleum acknowledged that the current geopolitical crisis is having an impact on the LPG supply.



Allahabad, Mar 27: The Allahabad High Court recently made a major ruling when hearing a criminal writ petition from a live-in couple from Shahjahanpur, Uttar Pradesh, stating that a married man cannot be arrested for engaging in a consenting, live-in relationship with an adult woman. The woman’s mother had launched a police complaint against the pair, which they had attempted to have quashed.The court emphasized the distinction between

“morality” and the law, stating that the man’s live-in relationship with the adult woman looked to be voluntary and that no prima facie offense appeared to have been committed in the latter’s view.The court emphasized that morality or societal opinion could not control its actions to defend citizens’ rights. As a result, the court prohibited any members of the female petitioner’s family from harming the couple and ordered the police not to arrest the petitioner couple.

Up till now, Vaibhav Sooryavanshi has been a showman, but it’s cricket, not movies

New Delhi: Vaibhav Sooryavanshi is a bit of a mystery at fifteen. In Indian cricket, he is predicted to be the next big thing. Is he truly worth the hoopla, though?A teenage Indian cricket player has previously frequently made headlines. Amol Muzumdar, Prithvi Shaw, Unmukt Chand, Sachin Tendulkar, and numerous others demonstrated early potential. Unfortunately, the others—aside from Tendulkar—failed miserably subsequently. Sooryavanshi appears to be more of a slogger based on what we have observed thus far. When he’s playing well, he can defeat any bowling opponent. However, those players often short-lived, particularly in international cricket. For a batsman, proper technique and stroke selection are crucial. Sadly, Sooryavanshi is devoid of both.Consider Abhishek Sharma. He was heavily exposed during the just finished T20 World Cup because some facets of his game, like the ones mentioned above, were not sufficiently refined. The only format where you can tolerate those flaws for some time is T20. Everyone believed that India had finally discovered a prodigious talent when Sooryavanshi scored a century off of 35 balls for Rajasthan Royals against Gujarat Titans in the Indian Premier League last year. which makes sense. Every world-class cricket player participates in the IPL, therefore any century there must be considered seriously. But there was no consistency in the subsequent games. His reputation naturally rose enormously after he became the youngest player to score a List-A hundred in men’s cricket later in the year while playing for Bihar against Arunachal



Pradesh. Your competitors haven’t seen much of you, so it’s easier to take the world by storm in your first appearances. But eventually they do, and that’s when your true problem starts. In actuality, not even Indian selectors are yet persuaded that he is international material. He wouldn’t be playing for underage teams if they believed he was. He produced a powerful knock in the final, 175 off 80 balls, when playing for the Under-19 World Cup winning squad last month. He performed well in the competition, but it wasn’t entirely due to his amazing abilities. The reason behind this was that he was competing against bowlers who had very little high-quality experience. In essence, it was a contest between teenagers and toddlers. Additionally, he participat-

ed in the ACC Under-19 Men’s Asia Cup, where he seemed to have trouble against teams with strong bowling. Additionally, he was frequently dropped several times when he scored a major goal. Tendulkar is one example; prior to making his India debut, he only participated in a few List A and first-class games. Thus, Tendulkar is not Sooryavanshi. Virender Sehwag’s supporters will argue that his foot movement was lacking and that he also lacked excellent technique. However, Sehwag had excellent shot selection, and when he executed such shots, he looked stunning. He averaged over fifty in Test cricket, the most challenging format. It’s just physical force in Sooryavanshi’s situation. As of right now, there isn’t much of a technique. Definitely not eligible for ODIs or tests at this time. The global stage is significantly different. The bowlers there are of the highest caliber. Additionally, unlike in underage cricket, no one will drop your catches. The opposing teams have completed their assignments! Sooryavanshi will therefore need to get better. He needs to develop his innings. He needs to have patience and choose his bowlers. Evaluate the circumstances. How to perform when under duress. He has been more of a showman thus far. But it’s cricket, not movies. For him, the next several years are crucial. He ought to focus on the aforementioned skills rather than attempting to score runs quickly. Perhaps we will have a player for the future if he accomplishes that. If not, don’t be shocked if he becomes the next Chand or Shaw. The birthday boy is listening, I hope.

another adult, there is no criminal conduct for which he may be charged.

The court also mentioned that the first petitioner had admitted to the police that she is an adult and that she voluntarily lives with Netrapal.

The petitioners brought up the potential of “honour killing” in an unsettling series of arguments; the first petitioner said that her parents and other family members had threatened to kill her.In light of this, the Superintendent of Police was brought before the court for inaction. As required by the Supreme Court in its 2018 Shakti Vahini v. Union of India and Others ruling, the court stated that the police have a duty to provide the protection and security of these two consenting adults living together.

Center Prioritizes Important Industries and Increases Commercial LPG Supply to 70%



New Delhi, Mar 27 : In order to meet industrial needs, like as steel and autos, the federal government has raised the quota to 70% of pre-war demand by increasing commercial LPG supplies to states by 20%. Oil Secretary Neeraj Mittal instructed that labor-intensive industries including steel, autos, textiles, dyes, chemicals, and plastics—which underpin other vital sectors—be given priority for the extra supply in a letter to state chief secretaries.

The entire commercial LPG allocation would reach 70% of the pre-crisis level of the packaged non-domestic LPG if an extra 20% was added to the current 50% allocation, he said.

“Lockdown in India rumors are totally untrue”: The government speaks out amid rumors

New Delhi, Mar 27: Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri declared on Thursday that the administration was “clearly stating” that the rumors of a lockdown in India are wholly untrue. The administration advised citizens to maintain their composure amid the current global crises and declared that spreading rumors during this time was “irresponsible and harmful.” Shortly after the government announced a reduction in gasoline and diesel excise taxes amid disruptions to the world’s energy supply owing to the ongoing Iran-US war, Puri clarified the widespread rumors of a lockdown.In a post on X, he stated that the state of the world is still changing and that “we are closely monitoring developments across energy, supply chains, and essential commodities on a real-time basis.” Puri stated that all required measures are being taken under PM Modi’s direction to guarantee our folks’ continuous access to petrol, energy, and other essential commodities. He continued, “We are fully prepared to handle emerging challenges.” He declared, “India has continuously shown resilience in the face of global uncertainties, and we will continue to act in a timely, proactive, and coordinated manner.”In 2020, India experienced a nationwide lockdown following the declaration of the Covid-19 epidemic. Following Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s recent speech in Parliament,

where he discussed the existing crisis in West Asia as a result of the ongoing Iran-US war, rumors of a similar lockdown surfaced once more. Searches like “Is lockdown coming back to India” and “India lockdown news” were sparked by the rumors that PM Modi was alluding to the prospect of a lockdown.The Prime Minister did mention the Covid-19 outbreak in his speech, but only to highlight India’s response to a worldwide emergency. He never used the word “lockdown” in his speech, but he did call on people to stay “prepared and united, just as it had stood together during the COVID-19 pandemic.” The persistent issues with LPG supply and fuel-saving initiatives in other nations appear to have contributed to the confusion.Even though the coronavirus no longer poses a serious threat to India, rumors of another such catastrophe gained traction on March 24, the day the government announced a lockdown for the sixth time. The government announced on Friday that the national excise duty on gasoline and diesel for domestic consumption has been lowered by ₹10 per litre, providing Indians with a significant reprieve amid worries over a rise in fuel prices.Additionally, according to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, export tariffs of ₹21.5 per litre for diesel and ₹29.5 per litre for Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) have been levied to guarantee their sufficient availability.

Delhi Receives Unusual Rainfall and More Showers Are Predicted by the Weather Bureau

New Delhi, Mar 27 : The nation’s capital experienced moderate rain in the late morning, and the initial temperature was 2.5 degrees over the typical minimum.A yellow alert has been issued by the India Meteorological Department (IMD) for light rain, thunderstorms, and strong gusts throughout the day in a number of locations.According to the IMD, residents should stay informed as areas like southwest Delhi, sections of west Delhi, central Delhi, Shahdara, east Delhi, north Delhi, south Delhi, and southeast Delhi are likely to see rainfall along with thunderstorms and lightning. Additionally, it forecasted winds of 30 to 40 km/h.IMD authorities claim that a number of west-

ern disturbances striking northwest India are connected to the current period of anomalous weather in March. Since March 15, the area has been affected by these disruptions, which are entering at a lower altitude than normal and affecting Delhi’s weather patterns.According to the officials, isolated areas of the city may therefore see strong winds, light rain, and minor dust storms during the day, although the current weather activity is unlikely to significantly affect temperatures. On Friday morning, the city’s lowest recorded temperature was 20.6 degrees Celsius.At nine in the morning, the Air Quality Index had a reading of 148, placing it in the “moderate” category.

Italy Keeps World Cup Hopes Alive While Gyokeres Treble Powers Swedish Victory

Italy nears return; Gyokeres fires Sweden forward

New Delhi: Italy kept their FIFA World Cup 2026 hopes alive with a composed 2-0 win over Northern Ireland in Bergamo, taking a crucial step forward in the European play-offs. The result means the four-time world champions are now just one win away from ending their 12-year absence from the tournament. After a tense first half, Italy found their breakthrough in the 56th minute through Sandro Tonali, whose clean half-volley settled nerves and shifted momentum firmly in their favour. From that point, Italy looked far more assured, controlling possession and dictating the tempo.

The second goal arrived in the 80th minute, and once again Tonali was at the heart of it. His crossfield pass found Moise Kean, who took a composed touch before sliding his finish past the goalkeeper to seal the win. It was a performance that combined patience with precision, something Italy have often lacked in recent campaigns. Under Gennaro Gattuso, Italy now move on to face Bosnia and Herzegovina in a high-stakes playoff final. With two consecutive World



Cups missed, the pressure remains immense, but this victory at least keeps their revival on track. Elsewhere, Viktor Gyokeres delivered one of the standout performances of the playoff round, scoring a hat-trick in Sweden's 3-1 win over Ukraine. The striker, who had endured a quiet qualifying campaign, stepped up when it mattered most. Gyokeres struck early, added a second soon after the break, and then completed his hat-trick from

the penalty spot to cap a dominant display. His performance not only secured Sweden's progression but also reignited belief after a difficult group stage. Sweden will now face Robert Lewandowski and Poland in the playoff final, setting up a clash between two of Europe's most dangerous attacking focal points.

With a World Cup spot on the line, Gyokeres' timely return to form could prove decisive. Based on the provided

articles, there is no information regarding a football match between Italy and Northern Ireland or the goal scorers for such an event. The available sources focus primarily on the T20 World Cup 2026 (cricket), the Hockey World Cup 2026, and various club football results from late 2025 and early 2026. The sources detail several significant sporting events, including India winning their third T20 World Cup title after defeating New Zealand at the Narendra Modi Stadium. In club football, Kylian Mbappe scored a Panenka penalty for Real Madrid in a win over Villarreal, and Kepa Arrizabalaga became a hero for Arsenal by saving a decisive penalty in a Carabao Cup shootout against Crystal Palace. Additionally, Pakistan successfully qualified for the Hockey World Cup 2026 for the first time in eight years. The national team of Sweden defeated Ukraine in the European football playoffs for the FIFA World Cup 2026. Viktor Gyökeres was the decisive figure in the match, scoring both goals in a 2-0 victory for the Swedish side. The defeat ended the qualification hopes for Ukraine.

Punjab FC Academy stars lead India to 3-0 victory over Pakistan in SAFF



Male: Roundglass Punjab FC Academy athletes delivered a masterclass performance to power the India Under-20 men's football team to a commanding 3-0 victory over Pakistan in their SAFF U-20 Championship in Maldives. The high-octane clash at the National Football Stadium in Male saw the Blue Colts secure their spot in the semi-

finals while simultaneously eliminating Pakistan from the tournament, according to a release. With this commanding victory, the Indian side comfortably advanced to the knockout stages. The Blue Colts will next face Bangladesh on March 28 to conclude their group-stage campaign. The Indian squad got off to a fiery start, with academy

talent heavily involved in the opening breakthrough and ultimately accounting for every goal scored in the match. In just the third minute, Gurnaj Singh displayed exceptional vision, floating a perfectly weighted through ball into the box. Vishal Yadav, who is the third youngest player to make his Indian Super League (ISL).

Hardik Pandya honors Wankhede ground staff with financial rewards successful World Cup

Mumbai: Hardik Pandya once again showed why his impact goes beyond the cricket field, this time with a heartwarming gesture towards the Wankhede stadium groundsmen. The T20 World Cup-winning all-rounder fulfilled a promise he had made months earlier, taking time out to honour the groundsmen with gifts and financial help. The Mumbai Indians captain had spent long nights training at the venue in the lead-up to the ICC T20 World Cup 2026, often his practise session stretching well beyond regular hours. During that phase, the groundsmen ensured he had uninterrupted access and support, something Hardik had acknowledged and promised to repay.

On Thursday, he did exactly that. Hardik felicitated the grounds staff at the Wankhede, handing out gifts and financial incentives as a token of gratitude for their efforts.



The hard work, both his and theirs, eventually paid off. India went on to successfully defend their T20 World Cup title, defeating New Zealand by 96 runs in the final in Ahmedabad. Hardik played a key role throughout the campaign, contributing with both bat and ball to seal another memorable triumph. The title win also made him a two-time T20

World Cup champion, having been part of the 2024-winning squad as well. But it was this off-field moment that stood out, reinforcing his reputation as someone who values the people working behind the scenes. Hardik's act was not a one-off. Over the years, he has consistently shown support to teammates, fans and those around the game, often

in ways that do not always make headlines. His impact off the field extends to his teammates as well. In a podcast with YouTuber Ranveer Allahbadia, Indian wicket-keeper-batter Jitesh Sharma revealed how Hardik reached out to him during a difficult moment. "Hardik bhai was the first one who messaged me when.

Iran bans sports teams from hostile nations; 2026 World Cup participation now uncertain

New Delhi: Iran has banned its national and club sports teams from travelling to countries it considers hostile until further notice, citing concerns over athlete safety, Iranian media reported on Thursday. The Sports Ministry issued the directive amid rising tensions affecting the nation's sporting engagements. The ministry stated that the presence of Iranian teams in countries deemed hostile and unable to guarantee the security of athletes and team members is prohibited. This move directly impacts Iran's participation in international competitions, including the upcoming FIFA World Cup 2026. The Iranian football federation and clubs have been instructed to notify the Asian Football Confederation to facilitate the relocation of match venues. The ministry referenced Tractor FC's recent match against a United Arab Emirates team in Saudi Arabia but did not specify which venues or countries are considered hostile.

Iran has qualified for the 2026 FIFA World Cup, which will be jointly hosted by the United States, Canada, and Mexico. However, the team's participation is under threat due to the travel ban



And ongoing geopolitical tensions, particularly with the U.S. and Israel. Earlier this month, former U.S. President Donald Trump commented that while Iran's national team is welcome to compete in the U.S., concerns remain regarding their safety. This has added uncertainty to Iran's World Cup plans. In response, the Iranian football federation is in discussions with FIFA about moving Iran's World Cup matches from the United States to Mexico, federation President Mehdi Taj said last week. These talks aim to secure Iran's con-

tinued participation in the tournament. Meanwhile, the Iranian squad is training in Turkey ahead of friendly internationals against Nigeria and Costa Rica scheduled for this week. These matches are part of the team's preparation for the World Cup. The travel restrictions and venue relocation discussions underscore the challenges Iran faces in securing its place at the 2026 FIFA World Cup amid complex international relations and security concerns. These talks aim to secure Iran's continued participation in the tournament.

Indian compound mixed team wins gold while the women's team settles for silver in Bangkok



Bangkok: India's compound archers dished out a strong show, clinching the mixed team gold and women's team silver at the Asia Cup-World Ranking Tournament Stage 1 in Bangkok, India's compound archers delivered a clinical performance on Friday, March 27, 2026, clinching the mixed team gold and securing a silver in the women's team event. This success was part of a larger Indian dominance in the compound category, which included a historic clean sweep of the men's individual podium and a bronze in the women's individual event, bringing India's total medal tally to 10. The highlight of the morning session at the SAT Football Stadium was the performance of the top-seeded Indian mixed team pair, Chikitha Taniparthi and Rajat Chauhan. Facing the second-seeded Malaysian duo of Fatin Nurfatehah Mat Salleh and Mohd Juwaidi Mazuki, the Indians held their nerve in a high-stakes final that ended 158-156. India took an early lead with four successive 10s. While Malaysia momentarily seized momentum in the third end with a perfect 40 while India managed 39. However, in the decisive final end, Chikitha and Rajat showcased their experience under pressure, firing four successive 10s to close out the match. Malaysia could only manage 39, hand-

to edge past second-seeded Malaysia 158-156 in a tense gold-medal clash. In a contest defined by precision and composure, the difference boiled down to narrow margins as India dropped just two points across 16 arrows, while Malaysia dropped four. The Indian duo got off to a perfect start with four consecutive 10s and maintained their rhythm despite minor lapses in the middle phase. After three ends, they held a slender one-point lead at 118-117.

The Malaysian pair of Fatin Nurfatehah Mat Salleh and Mohd Juwaidi Mazuki had briefly seized momentum in the third end, shooting a perfect 40 while India managed 39. However, in the decisive final end, Chikitha and Rajat showcased their experience under pressure, firing four successive 10s to close out the match. Malaysia could only manage 39, hand-

Manpreet Singh dismisses Tirkey rumors, targets historic 500-game milestone for

New Delhi: Manpreet Singh has dismissed rumours of a rift with Dilip Tirkey, revealing that the Hockey India president has in fact encouraged him to go past his record tally of international appearances. Speaking during a media interaction on March 27, Manpreet said he had personally spoken to Tirkey to clear the air amid speculation over tensions between the two. A lot of things happened. I have spoken to Dilip sir personally as well. He told me he does not have any problem if I play the 412th game. He wants me to break the record. He wants me to become the first Indian to play 500 games. That's what he wants. He said that he would be very happy if I break the record," Manpreet said. The comments come after reports earlier this year suggested friction over Manpreet's selection and his pursuit of Tirkey's long-standing milestone. Tirkey, one of India's most decorated players, remains among the most capped hockey players in the world, having crossed the 400-match mark during his career. However, Tirkey himself had recently dismissed any notion of rivalry, backing Manpreet to surpass his achievements. "I will be very happy if Manpreet breaks my record. Records are meant to be broken," Tirkey said during a session at RevSportz Trailblazers 4.0. Reflecting on his own career, Tirkey underlined the demands of sustaining such longevity at the highest level. "I was the first player in the world



to cross 400 international caps and that feat will always remain with me. I am well aware of the hard work that goes into it - one has to be extremely fit and perform consistently for the country," he said. Tirkey added that Manpreet has the potential to go well beyond his mark if he maintains his current standards. If Manpreet continues to play the way he is playing right now and maintains his fitness, he stands a good chance to not only cross my milestone but also bring more laurels to India. What could be more special than seeing another Indian player become the most capped player of all time during my leadership as President of Hockey India," he added.

Manpreet, meanwhile, reiterated that selection remains firmly in the hands of the team management, with fitness the primary criterion under coach Craig Fulton. "Coach Fulton's idea is simple. He will pick the play-

ers who are fit. For me also, if I am not fit, I cannot play. In world hockey, fitness is the most important thing," Manpreet said. With both player and administrator now aligned, the focus shifts back to Manpreet's journey towards history - one that could see him become India's most capped hockey player in the years to come. MS Dhoni has joked about playing in the Indian Premier League until the age of 45, though former teammates suggest his professional career is nearing its conclusion. During a recent interaction, the veteran wicketkeeper-batter addressed his future with Chennai Super Kings, where he currently continues to play at age 44. Former teammate Robin Uthappa said that the upcoming IPL 2026 season will "well and truly" be Dhoni's last, citing the franchise's significant investment in youth. While the 44-year-old remains a key figure for CSK, experts like Ravichandran

Ashwin argue that if he is in the squad, he should feature in the starting XI rather than being relegated to the Impact Player list. Based on the provided information, there are no articles available regarding the T20 World Cup 2026 or a final match between India and New Zealand. The current sources focus exclusively on football events, specifically the Carabao Cup final and the return of club football to Delhi.

The available records discuss the Carabao Cup final between Arsenal and Manchester City at Wembley Stadium. Additionally, reports highlight the return of the Indian Super League to Delhi, where Sporting Club Delhi played its first home match at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium after a seven-year absence. MS Dhoni has joked about playing in the Indian Premier League until the age of 45, though former teammates suggest his professional career is nearing its conclusion. During a recent interaction, the veteran wicketkeeper-batter addressed his future with Chennai Super Kings, where he currently continues to play at age 44. Former teammate Robin Uthappa said that the upcoming IPL 2026 season will "well and truly" be Dhoni's last, citing the franchise's significant investment in youth. While the 44-year-old remains a key figure for CSK, experts like Ravichandran Ashwin argue that if he is in the squad, he should feature in the starting XI the Impact Player list.

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