

Mizoram seizes ₹1,047 crore drugs in year amid border security: Governor

Aizawl, Feb 17: Mizoram Governor Gen Vijay Kumar Singh (ret'd) on Tuesday announced that law enforcement agencies seized narcotics valued at Rs 1,047 crore during the 2025-26 fiscal year, reflecting intensified action against cross-border smuggling.

Addressing the state assembly at the opening of the budget session, Singh credited proactive policing and joint operations with Assam Rifles and the BSF along Mizoram's 325-km borders with Assam, Manipur, and Tripura, as well as its 828-km international borders with Bangladesh and Myanmar, for maintaining law and order. Authorities also seized large consignments of areca nuts, liquor, arms, explosives, and counterfeit currency, resulting in multiple arrests. The excise and narcotics department reported 652 drug trafficker arrests and confiscation of 487 kg of narcotics. Singh identified drug trafficking and substance abuse as ongoing threats. Between October and December, under the Mizoram Liquor (Prohibition) Act, 2019 re-



cently amended to permit limited sales for dignitaries and local wines 4,532 arrests were made and 4,915 cases registered. To strengthen en-

forcement, the state government set up a prosecution directorate, introduced biometric checks for foreigners, partnered with the National

Forensic Sciences University, and deployed mobile forensic units. The four-week assembly session will conclude on March 16, with

Chief Minister Lalduhoma scheduled to present the 2026-27 budget and 2025-26 supplementary budget on February 26.

In Brief

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MSCW stresses need for effective implementation of SHWW Act

Imphal: The Manipur State Commission for Women (MSCW), in collaboration with the District Administration Bishnupur, today organised a one-day sensitisation programme on "The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013" at the Conference Hall of the Mini Secretariat Complex, Bishnupur. The programme chaired by Th. Tiningpham Monsang, Chairperson, MSCW was attended by W. Phajantombi, Member Secretary, MSCW and Additional Director, DIPR; Sk. Sophia, Member, MSCW; Sh. Gunamani, AC to DC Bishnupur; S. Tryphena Reikhenamai, SDPO Bishnupur; along with District Level Officers and members of the Internal Committees of various offices and Local Committee. Speaking at the occasion, Chairperson Th.

BJP national president Nitin Nabin to visit Assam on Feb 18-19

Guwahati, Feb 17: BJP national president Nitin Nabin will undertake a two-day organisational visit to Dibrugarh in Upper Assam from Wednesday. Addressing a media conference at the party's state headquarters on Tuesday, BJP state spokesperson Kalyan Gogoi informed that Nabin would land at Mohanbari Airport in Dibrugarh on Wednesday afternoon. "The BJP national president will be accorded a grand and traditional welcome by nearly two thousand dedicated karyakartas and cultural performers. Upon reaching Khanikar Chariali, he will be ceremonially received by 15 cultural troupes showcasing Assam's vibrant heritage," Gogoi said. Thereafter, Nabin will be escorted in an open vehicle to the Mancotta Playground to participate in the Pristha Pramukh Sammelan organised by the Assam BJP.

AIUDF stages walkout from assembly after speaker rejects on CM's 'MIYA' remarks

Guwahati, Feb 17: Opposition All-India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) on Tuesday staged a walkout from the Assam Assembly after Speaker Biswajit Daimary rejected their adjournment motion seeking a discussion on Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's recent remarks about the 'Miya' community. AIUDF MLA Aminul Islam, while moving the adjournment motion in the House, alleged that the Chief

Minister was "inciting" people against the Miya (a pejorative term attributed to Bengali-speaking Muslims in Assam) are community through his "provocative statements". "Following the Chief Minister's provocative remarks, some miscreants have started torturing the Miya people, mostly in Upper Assam, physically attacking them and asking them to vacate their workplaces," the MLA said. The AIUDF legislator

further alleged that youths in some Upper Assam districts had even cautioned landlords against renting houses to Bengali-speaking Muslims. "There is no other state in India where one cannot even travel to other districts for work within the state. People are taking the law into their own hands, and the police are not doing anything," he alleged. Islam argued that the issue was of recent occurrence and urgent public importance,

warranting an adjournment motion. Responding to the demand, Speaker Daimary said, "The topic is important, but it can be discussed during Motion of Thanks of the Governor's address. You can raise your points then and the Chief Minister can also answer your queries." The Speaker further rejected the adjournment motion, saying that since the 'vote on account' was to be presented during the day, the motion could not be taken up.

Security forces apprehend four UG cadres

Imphal, Feb 17: Security forces arrested an active woman cadre of KCP (Apunba), identified as Sanasam Rozy Devi @ Zy (26) of Phumlou Mamang Leikai, Imphal West district yesterday from Taothong Khunou near Khutheibam Lampak under Lamshang-PS, Imphal West district. On the same day, security forces also arrested an active cadre of KCP (Noyon), one Phijam Rainson Singh alias Luwangcha, Amutombi, Tayai (29) of Pungdongbam Mayai Leikai, Imphal East district from Sawombung area under Lamlai-PS, Imphal East district. Security forces also arrested two cadres of KYKL from Jagnoi area, near IMB pillar No. 80, Moreh under Moreh-PS, Tengenoupal district. The arrested cadres have been identified as Hawaijam Ngan-thoiba (19) of Rajaram, Lakhipur-PS, Cachar district, Assam and Moirangthem Jenith Singh (24) of DSA Road, Ningthou Pareng Maning, Kakching-PS, Kakching district. Meanwhile, security forces continued to conduct search operations and area domination in the fringe and vulnerable areas across districts. A total of 103 Nakas/Checkpoints were installed in different districts both in the hills and the valley, however none was detained.

Defence lawyers intentionally delaying trial: Zubeen's sister

Guwahati, Feb 17: Zubeen Garg's sister, Dr. Palme Borthakur, has said that defence lawyers intentionally the delaying trial of her brother 's death case. Reiterating the family's demand for a fast-track court for expeditious trial, she alleged that the hearing of the case has been delayed due to the delaying tactics employed by the counsels representing the accused. She said, "The defence lawyers are deliberately buying time and trying to postpone the trial." For how many more months or years the people of Assam will have to wait to see justice being delivered to their beloved Zubeen Garg," she questioned. Earlier, Zubeen's wife Garima Saikia Garg had also demanded that the fast-track court promised by the state government be set up at the earliest for daily hearings. She had also written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for setting up a fast-track court.

Government committed to strengthening startup ecosystem: CM

Imphal, Feb 17: Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh launched the DIGI-SAPNE 2.0 at the Imperial Hall, Classic Grande, Imphal, today. The programme was organised by the Planning Department, Government of Manipur. Digi-SAPNE (Startup Acceleration Program for North East) is an initiative of AIC-SMUTBI supported by the Ministry of Electronics and IT to promote entrepreneurship and innovation in the North East. The programme supports selected startups with mentorship, market access, funding opportunities, and financial assistance of up to Rs. 80 lakh. It aims to help startups scale their ideas, generate employment, and compete at national and global levels while contributing to inclusive regional growth. Addressing the gathering, the Chief

Minister stated that the nation has witnessed a remarkable transformation - from a job-seeking nation to a job-creating nation over the past decades and Digi-SAPNE 2.0 carries this national vision to the grassroots level in Manipur. He informed with satisfaction that Start-up Manipur had been recognised as a leader in developing a strong Startup ecosystem under the 5th Edition of the States' Start-up Ecosystem Ranking. He appreciated the Startup Manipur for making the State a top performer among the Northeast states in the startup ecosystem. He expressed that many entrepreneurs had been providing jobs to many youths. He further elaborated on the crucial roles that could be taken by the Startups in bringing a united and progressive Manipur.

MSCW stresses need for effective implementation of SHWW Act



Imphal, Feb 17: The Manipur State Commission for Women (MSCW), in collaboration with the District Administration Bishnupur, today organised a one-day sensitisation programme on "The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013" at the Conference Hall of the Mini Secretariat Complex, Bishnupur. The programme chaired by Th. Tiningpham Monsang, Chairperson, MSCW was attended by W. Phajantombi, Member Secretary, MSCW and Additional Director, DIPR; Sk. Sophia, Member, MSCW; Sh. Gunamani, AC to DC Bishnupur; S. Tryphena Reikhenamai, SDPO Bishnupur; along with District Level Officers and members of the Internal Committees of various offices and Local Committee. Speaking at the occasion, Chairperson Th. Tiningpham Monsang stated that the Manipur State Commission for Women has been constituted to work for the welfare and empowerment of women, address complaints, and ensure enforcement of legal safeguards meant for protection. She said the main objective of the programme was to make Presiding Officers and members of Internal and Local Committees aware of their roles and responsibilities un-

der the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013, and stressed the importance of proper awareness for effective implementation. She further stated that the Act aims to safeguard women at workplaces and create a safe and dignified working environment. Clarifying misconceptions, she said the Act is not against men but is meant to ensure women's safety and protection. She also informed that the Social Welfare Department runs a 24x7 Women's Helpline (toll-free number 181) to provide assistance and support. Member Secretary Waikhom Phajantombi (MCS), Additional Director of DIPR, in her keynote address stated that the Act aims to protect women and uphold their dignity at the workplace. She said the law provides a proper system to address complaints and empower the Committee to function effectively in safeguarding women's rights and ensuring a safe working environment. She further informed that the Manipur State Commission for Women has conducted sensitisation programme in all the hill and valley districts of the state. The sensitisation programme aims to strengthen understanding and ensure proper implementation of the law. She appealed to all to sup-

port the Commission in creating a safer and more respectful workplace for women and wished a peaceful working environment for everyone. Thiyam Rajkishore, Advocate, attended the programme as resource person and elaborated on the complaint procedures under the Act. He informed that a complaint should be filed within three months from the date of the incident of sexual harassment, or within three months from the date of the last incident in case of a series of incidents. He also explained that the Internal Committee shall conduct an inquiry in a fair and impartial manner, ensuring that both the complainant and the respondent are given an opportunity to present their case and provide evidence. He emphasised that the Act mandates strict confidentiality regarding the proceedings of the inquiry and the identity of the parties involved. Later, the members of the committees also interacted with the resource person and sought clarification on various aspects of the Act. The programme was also attended by District Level Officers, officials of the District Administration Bishnupur, and members of Local Committee and Internal Committees from various departments.

Indian Army invites applications for Agniveer recruitment in lower & western Assam

Guwahati, Feb 17: The Indian Army has invited online applications from unmarried male candidates for enrolment as Agniveers under the Agnipath Scheme for the year 2027. Eligible candidates from lower and western Assam can apply online on or before April 1, 2026. Eligible candidates from the districts of Barpeta, Kokrajhar, Dhubri, Bongaigaon, Chirang, Goalpara, Kamrup, Kamrup (Metro), Baksa, Nalbari, Udalguri, Darrang, Bajali, Tamulpur and South Salmara Mancachar covered under Army Recruitment Office, Narangi, Guwahati can apply. The selection process will be conducted in two phases. Phase I comprises an Online Computer Based Common Entrance Examination (CEE), which will be held at design-

nated centres in the state. Candidates shortlisted on merit in the online examination will be called for Phase II, which includes the Recruitment Rally. Interested candidates must register through the official website, www.Joinindianarmy.nic.in. Applicants are required to create a personal profile, verify their eligibility and submit the application online. After successful submission, candidates will be redirected to the HDFC Bank payment gateway to pay an examination fee of Rs. 250 plus applicable bank charges. Payment can be made through debit/credit cards, internet banking or UPI. Applicants must possess a valid email ID and mobile number for future communication. Entry of Aadhaar number in the application form

is mandatory, and candidates are advised to link their Aadhaar with their mobile number. Candidates will also be required to select five preferred examination centres while applying ab official statement said. To assist aspirants, category-wise practice tests for the Online CEE and animated instructional videos on registration and examination procedures are available on the official website. For further information, candidates may contact Army Recruiting Office, Narangi at 0361-2640134 or email sis.putana@nic.in. Queries can also be submitted through the official recruitment portal. The Agniveer recruitment offers a unique opportunity for youth of Assam to serve the nation with pride and honour under the Agnipath Scheme, the statement added.

Congress high command rejects Bhupen Borah's



The Indian National Congress leadership has rejected the resignation of senior Assam leader Bhupen Borah after detailed discussions in New Delhi, with party leaders stating that internal differences have been resolved through dialogue. The episode had triggered speculation about internal rifts within the Assam Congress. However, this announcement signals an attempt by the central leadership to project stability and cohesion. Party sources indicated that discussions focused on organisational matters and future strategy in Assam. With the resignation issue now settled, the Congress leadership is expected to concentrate on strengthening its base in the state.

The development occurred as the Congress prepared for the upcoming Assembly election in Assam. The development was confirmed by Assam Congress in-charge Bhanwar Jitendra Singh. Speaking to media persons, Singh said he was thankful to Borah for withdrawing his

resignation and remaining committed to the party. "I thank Bhupen Borah for taking back his resignation. He is an important member of the Congress family," he said. According to Singh, Borah had sent his resignation to the party's national president amid reported differences of opinion within the state unit. However, the resignation was not accepted by the party high command. "Sometimes there are differences of opinion within the Congress family. The Congress president has not accepted his resignation. The party leadership, including Rahul Gandhi, held a long discussion with him. We have resolved this through discussions," Singh stated. He further highlighted Borah's long association with the party, noting that he has been with the Congress for the last 30 years. The statement underlined the leadership's effort to maintain unity within the Assam unit ahead of crucial political developments amid the upcoming Assembly election in the state.

In Manipur, security forces capture ten rebels and destroy ten kg of explosives

Imphal, Feb 17: While recovering a cylindrical pressure mechanism IED (Improvised Explosive Device) with 10 kg explosive, security forces in Manipur also nabbed 10 cadres of different armed outfits, including two female cadres, in separate operations in the last two days.

The security forces in the restive state have been conducting search operations and area domination in the fringe and vulnerable areas across districts aimed at curbing the circulation of illegal arms and explosives in sensitive areas of the state besieged by a protracted violent crisis. The police, in its daily law and order update said that the cylindrical pressure mechanism IED with 10 kg explosive was recovered from Sijang (Kuki village) to Sanamahi Temple (Meitei worship place) in the vicinity of Naga village, Lamna Kabui under Churachandpur police station of Churachandpur district on February 13. The IED was safely destroyed by a bomb disposal team in presence of representatives of 2 Jammu and Kashmir Light Infantry (JAKLI) and Churachandpur police, the police added. As many as 10 cadres linked to different armed outfits including two female cadres of PLA (People Liberation Army), the armed wing of Revolutionary People's Front (RPF) were also nabbed in other operations during the last two days, the police said. Four of the cadres, including the two female cadres, were linked to the PLA, while three belonged to PREPAK (Pro) faction and one each to a KCP faction, KYKL and UKNA (United Kuki National Front). The two female PLA cadres were apprehended from the general area of Indo-Myanmar border in between Sunrise ground and Gate No. 2 of border town Moreh under Moreh police station of Tengenpoual district on February 14.

The police identified them as Akoijam Sakhebi (23) of Khoijuman Mayai Leikai in Bishnupur district and Chongtham Hembaby (17) of Yumnang Huidrom Wangoi of Imphal West district. On the same day, security forces arrested two more active cadres of RPF/PLA including a self-styled lieutenant of the banned outfit in another operation at Pechi Khunou in Thoubal district. The alleged self-style lieutenant was identified as Mayanglambam Kiran Singh @ Shanti @ Boipu (47) of Ukhongshang Mayai Leikai while the other as Wairokpan Sanahal Meitei @ Nongdamba (46) of Yairipok Khoirom Mathak Leikai of Thoubal district. The three active cadres of PREPAK (Pro) were arrested in separate operations in Imphal East district on February 14, the police said. A small arm was also recovered from one of the cadres identified as Ingudam Ingocha Singh (50) @ Borobi of Seijang Makha Leikai. He was arrested from Napetpalli area under Lamlai police station of Imphal East district. A .32 pistol loaded with five live rounds, 10 PREPAK (Pro) visiting cards, one Honda Activa scooter and a sum of Rs 600 also recovered from his possession, the police source said. The security forces arrested an active cadre of KCP (Apunba) identified as Khetich Thongbam (19) of Thangmeiband Meisnam Leikai from his residence in Imphal West district in another operation on February 14. The active cadre of KYKL – Khumanthem Santosh Meitei (36) @ Kanta of Heirok Part-I was arrested during



an operation at Kairembikhok Mamang Leikai under Thoubal police station of Thoubal district on February 13.

The UKNA cadre who the police described as "extortionist" was nabbed from Matijang village under Churachandpur police station of Churachandpur district on February 13. A country-made 9 mm pistol with three live rounds was seized from the cadre identified as Lunjakai Vaiphei (20) of T Lhangkichoi village of Churachandpur district. Meanwhile, Manipur police arrested two individuals involved in a series of mobile phone thefts, cyber frauds, and related crimes across the Senapati and Imphal West districts.

They were identified as Linai Mercy (19) of Thingba Khunou village and Siipfine (18) of Phuba Khuman village of Senapati district, the police said. Apart from the intelligence base operation to curb the illegal arm network, the security forces, comprising Central and state agencies, were also cracking down on extortion activities with extensive operations.

Illegal coal mining, 7 linked to Thangsko mine blast



Dimapur, Feb 17: The East Jaintia Hills police have arrested 14 individuals in connection with illegal coal mining activities, including seven linked to the February 5 Thangsko tragedy that claimed 31 lives.

The seven accused—Forme Chyrmang, Shameki War, Process Phawa, Tensing Suchiang, Yoomiki Syih, Ernest Swer, and Rangsing Syienlieh (also known as Mithun), were specifically detained for their involvement in the deadly incident. Following the tragedy, the police registered a suo-motu case at the Khliehriat police station (Case No. 14 (2) 2026), invoking provisions under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, the Mines

and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, and the Explosive Substances Act. Key charges include Section 105 (culpable homicide not amounting to murder) and Section 118(2) (voluntarily causing grievous hurt by dangerous means).

Overall, 62 FIRs have been filed across different police stations in the district concerning illegal coal mining, resulting in the arrest of 14 individuals so far. Police investigations have also led to the seizure of 15,224.72 metric tonnes of coal, 25.5 kg of gelatin, 74 detonators, and five vehicles, underscoring the extent of illegal coal mining operations in the district.

NCYM young leaders are asked to hold faithful to their beliefs

Dimapur, Feb 17: Rev. Dr. James Thoppil, Bishop of Kohima, presiding over the Eucharist during the Kohima Diocese Youth Leaders Retreat cum Central Executive Council (CEC) Meet 2026 of the Nagaland Catholic Youth Movement (NCYM), called upon youth leaders to remain steadfast in faith, united in mission, and committed to authentic Christian witness. He emphasized that effective leadership must flow from prayer, integrity, and communion with the Church, while urging youth to resolve issues with objective justice rather than group or tribal divisions.

Held from February 13 to 15 at Mount Tabor Retreat House, Kohima, under the theme "Courageous Witness: Living Hope in Christ," the three-day gathering brought together diocesan youth leaders and CEC members to foster spiritual renewal, strengthen leadership commitment, and discern the future direction of youth ministry.

The inaugural Holy Eucharist was celebrated by Rev. Fr. Kokto Kurian, Diocesan Youth Director, who reminded that leadership is a mission of service, urging youth leaders to pause, listen, and discern before acting. The retreat was animated by Rev. Fr. Thomas SDB, Novice Master, who reflected on Jesus' servant leadership and the need for leaders to repent and convert like St. Peter.

Resource persons including Dr. Johnny Ru-



angmei, CAN President, Dr. John Murry, Public Leader, and Mhonbeni Florence addressed the youth leaders on leadership rooted in faith, responsible stewardship, collaborative ministry, and the role of youth as courageous witnesses in today's Church and society. Daily Eucharistic celebrations and common prayers enriched the retreat with moments of communion. The CEC Meet provided a platform to review past activities, deliberate on future plans, and strengthen coordination at parish and diocesan levels. Con-

structive discussions and decisions were made to enhance youth engagement and evangelization efforts.

Altogether, 54 youth leaders representing 24 parishes/centres and four tribal associations participated in the retreat, demonstrating active engagement and responsibility towards youth ministry. The NCYM office expressed appreciation to the resource persons and participants, praying that the fruits of the retreat may continue to strengthen the Diocese's youth ministry.

Arunachal: Idu Mishmi customs are displayed at Tamla-Du festivities

Dimapur, Feb 17: The 56th Tamla-Du Festival was celebrated with immense enthusiasm and spiritual reverence at Tezu in Lohit district of Arunachal Pradesh on February 15, drawing thousands from across the region to honour the deep-rooted traditions of the Idu Mishmi community. Organised by the Digaru Mishmi community, the grand annual event saw participants gather at Khoraliang to offer prayers to nature deities, seeking protection, prosperity, and bountiful harvest for the year ahead. Mohesh Chai, MLA for Tezu constituency, lauded the event's role in promoting social cohesion and heritage preservation across Lohit, Anjaw, and neighbouring districts, marking yet another successful celebration of Mishmi cultural pride. Chief guest Mama Natung, Minister for Home & Inter-State Border Affairs, Public Health Engineering & Water Supply, and Indigenous Affairs, delivered an inspiring address, highlighting the festival's timeless significance. He said, "Tamla-Du is a living testament to our unbreakable bond with nature, our ancestors, and one another. On this sacred occasion, let us renew our commitment to unity, peace, and prosperity for every Mishmi family and the entire state. May Amik Matai Jawmalo bless us with good health, bountiful harvest, and protection from all calamities." Natung also urged the younger generation to preserve their cultural heritage while embracing progress. "I urge our youth to carry forward these traditions with pride while embracing progress," he added.

Observed annually on February 15, Tamla-Du is one of the traditional festivals of the Idu Mishmi community. Rooted in indigenous beliefs, the cel-



ebration centres on prayers to the God of Earth and God of Water, seeking protection from natural disasters and ensuring communal well-being. According to Mishmi faith, nature alone holds the power to shield humanity from its fury, making these rituals vital not just for the community, but for global harmony. The festivities were marked by traditional Tanggong dances, vibrant attire, communal feasts, and cultural performances, all showcasing the community's enduring spirit. Guest of honour Emi Rumi, President of the Indigenous Faith and Cultural Society of Arunachal Pradesh, commended the organisers for upholding cultural integrity.

Assam: Final session of 15th Assembly to begin

Dimapur, Feb 17: The final session of the 15th Assam Legislative Assembly will commence on Monday, with Finance Minister Ajanta Neog scheduled to present the Vote on Accounts Budget for 2026-27 in the House on February 17. With the next Assembly elections due in March-April, the government will not present a full State Budget during this session. Instead, the comprehensive Budget for 2026-27 will be tabled by the new government after it assumes office. The four-day Budget Session (Vote on Account) 2026 will open with the Governor's Address on Monday, followed by obituary references. Speaker Biswajit Daimary will then announce the report of the



Business Advisory Committee outlining the agenda for the session. Subsequent proceedings will include the laying of ordinances, reports and rules, presentation of Assembly Committee reports, motions for the election of members to various committees and boards, introduction of Government Bills, the Motion of Thanks on the Governor's Address, and the presentation of Supplementary Demands

for Grants and Supplementary Appropriation for 2025-26. On February 17, the House will take up Question Hour before Neog presents the Vote on Account for 2026-27. The day's business will also feature discussion on the Motion of Thanks and other government matters. February 18 will include Question Hour, followed by discussion and voting on Supplementary Demands for Grants for 2025-26, along with other official business. By discussion and voting on the Vote on Account. The House will then take up the introduction, consideration and passage of the Assam Appropriation (Vote on Account) Bill, 2026, along with other scheduled government business.

Bhupen Borah hints at exit from Congress: to meet Assam CM

Guwahati, Feb 17: Former Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) president Bhupen Kumar Borah on Tuesday hinted that his leaving the Congress was all but certain, saying that a meeting with Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma was scheduled at his residence in the evening.

Speaking to mediapersons at his Ghoramara residence in Guwahati, Borah, who had tendered his resignation from the party on Monday, only to be requested hours alter by the Congress high command to reconsider his quit letter, said he has shared close ties with the Assam Chief Minister since the early 1990s and thereafter were in politics together in the Congress. “I fact, we had also taken part in an inter-college debate back in 1993. The Chief Minister had then represented Cotton College and I had represented Lakhimpur College. We also visited each other’s residences. So, I have shared close ties with him over a long period of time,” the veteran politician, who has been in Congress for 32 years, said.

In a veiled dig at Dhubri MP and Congress leader

Rakibul Hussain, Borah said that “the Assam PCC was now APCC (R) and not just APCC. While I would have remained in APCC, I cannot remain in APCC (R). From deciding who would be the CLP leader to the APCC president, or even tickets for seats such as Duliajan and Nowboicha, there is one leader in the party who has had a say.”

Notably, the Chief Minister has said that her would welcome Borah to the BJP if the latter wished to join. “He would be given a safe seat to contest the upcoming Assembly elections as well,” Sarma had said on Monday.

Borah had on Monday morning submitted his resignation to the AICC, only to seek some time to reconsider decision, hours after the AICC high command “refused to accept” his resignation and urged him to stay in the party.

Addressing mediapersons at Borah’s residence here after a marathon meeting with the veteran Congress leader, AICC leader and Assam in-charge, Jitendra Singh said the party high command has not

accepted Borah’s resignation letter.

“In this regard, the party leadership, including Rahul Gandhi, as well as the senior leaders in the APCC, have had a discussion with Bhupen Borah. We in the Congress are like a family and if there is any difference of opinion within the family, we ensure that such differences are ironed out,” Singh said.

Notably, Singh, along with a party delegation comprising Assam PCC chief Gaurav Gogoi, and senior party leaders, Debabrata Saikia, Pradyot Bordoloi and Ripun Bora, had visited Borah’s residence in a bid to persuade him to reconsider his decision, which has come at a crucial time when there are less than two months left for the Assembly elections.

Borah, in his address to the media, said, “Since the party leadership has urged me to reconsider my resignation from the party, I have decided to take some time to arrive at a final decision. I also need to discuss the matter with my family members and will let the party leadership know as soon as I make the decision.”

BJP national president Nitin Nabin to visit Assam on Feb 18-19

Guwahati, Feb 17: BJP national president Nitin Nabin will undertake a two-day organisational visit to Dibrugarh in Upper Assam from Wednesday.

Addressing a media conference at the party’s state headquarters on Tuesday, BJP state spokesperson Kalyan Gogoi informed that Nabin would land at Mohanbari Airport in Dibrugarh on Wednesday afternoon.

“The BJP national president will be accorded a grand and traditional welcome by nearly two thousand dedicated karyakartas and cultural performers. Upon reaching Khanikar Chariali, he will be ceremonially received by 15 cultural troupes showcasing Assam’s vibrant heritage,” Gogoi said.

Thereafter, Nabin will be escorted in an open vehicle to the Mancotta Playground to participate in the Pristha Pramukh Sammelan organised by the Assam BJP.

“An estimated 20,085 pristha pramukhs are expected to attend this historic congregation. Subsequently, he will grace the

Prabuddha Nagarik Sammelan (Intellectuals’ Conclave) to be held at the District Library Auditorium in Dibrugarh,” the party spokesperson said.

“In the evening, the party national president will convene an organisational meeting with party’s prabharis, saha-prabharis and karyakartas of the Dibrugarh and Lakhimpur Lok Sabha constituencies,” Gogoi said.

On February 19, nabin will offer prayers at Barekuri Namghar and subsequently pay floral tributes at the samadhi of Swargadeo Sarbananda Singha.

“He will also interact with booth-level karyakartas at a designated booth in Manohari Tea Garden, thereby concluding his Assam tour programme,” he said.

The BJP national president’s visit to poll-bound Assam is expected to provide momentum to the ruling party’s organisational activities and preparations for the Assembly elections, which are scheduled to be held in March-April.

SC reserves verdict on CBI probe into Arunachal CM contracts



Guwahati, Feb 17: The Supreme Court on Tuesday reserved its verdict on a plea seeking a CBI investigation into the awarding of public works contracts in Arunachal Pradesh to companies owned by relatives of Chief Minister Pema Khandu.

While reserving the order, a bench comprising Justices Vikram Nath, Sandeep Mehta, and N V Anjaria di-

rected the parties’ counsel to submit their written arguments within two weeks. Advocate Prashant Bhushan, representing the petitioner NGOs Save Mon Region Federation and Voluntary Arunachal Sena, highlighted a recent affidavit filed by the state government, alleging that multiple contracts were awarded to firms owned by the chief minister’s family. “There should be a CBI

Meghalaya reports 658 illegal Bangladeshis since 2021, deports 194 individuals

Shillong, Feb 17: Meghalaya has detected 658 illegal Bangladeshi nationals since 2021 and deported 194 after completion of their sentences, Deputy Chief Minister Prestone Tynsong told the Assembly on Tuesday while outlining the state’s stepped-up anti-infiltration measures.

“From 2021 till February 3, 2026, a total of 658 illegal Bangladeshi nationals were detected in the state and prosecuted under relevant legal provisions,” he informed, replying to a call-attention notice moved by Voice of the People Party (VPP) legislator Heaving Stone Kharpran. During the same period, 194 illegal Bangladeshi immigrants were deported after completion of their sentence and upon obtaining the requisite travel permit from the Bangladesh Embassy, he added. Tynsong said the government has put in place a “comprehensive and multi-layered anti-infiltration mechanism” to tackle illegal migration across vulnerable



stretches of the inter-state and Indo-Bangladesh border.

The Meghalaya government has set up 18 anti-infiltration checkpoints and gates along with a land customs station at strategic locations to strengthen surveillance and enforcement, besides deploying anti-infiltration special squads functioning in all districts, he said. “The squads regularly conduct anti-infiltration drives, surprise

naka checks and patrolling in vulnerable areas in close coordination with the labour department, village defence parties and local authorities,” Tynsong said.

The Deputy Chief Minister added that the government has also constituted 11 district task forces for identifying and deporting illegal foreign nationals. “These sustained measures have resulted in significant

detections and enforcement outcomes,” he said. Tynsong further said a state-level committee has been formed to identify and deport foreigners who have overstayed and to ensure coordination among various enforcement agencies. Meghalaya enforces Resident Safety Act, Immigration laws, Nyaya Sanhita, and MHA guidelines in East Khasi Hills against infiltration.

District level training for census begins in Senapati

Imphal, Feb 17: A three-day District Level Training for Census 2027: House listing and Housing Census (HLO) for Senapati District began today at the Conference Hall of Office of the Deputy Commissioner, Senapati. The training was jointly organised by the Directorate of Census Operations, Manipur and District Administration, Senapati under the supervision of Principal Census Officer (PCO), Senapati. Speaking at the event, the Deputy Commissioner of Senapati and PCO of Senapati Mamoni Doley, IAS welcomed the participants and emphasized on the significance of the exercise. She said that the 16th census was originally to be scheduled for 2021, but it was postponed due to covid pandemic. The DC urged the trainees to maximize their learning from the expert trainers and called for seamless cooperation between Sub-Divisional Officers (SDOs) and staff to ensure successful conduct of Census 2027. The sessions are led by Joseph Lanah, Deputy Director, Directorate of Census Operations (DCO), Manipur and Yeveinai Kh, Statistical Investigator Gr. II, DCO, Manipur. The curriculum covers on Introduction to Census 2027, Role of Census Functionaries and Legal Provisions, Fund management, Manpower, Publicity activities, building the foundation of census, procedures, concepts and definition used in census. The trainees were also provided hands-on training on the Census Management and Monitoring System covering user registration, modules features and Management.

Government committed to strengthening startup ecosystem: CM

Imphal, Feb 17: Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh launched the DIGI-SAPNE 2.0 at the Imperial Hall, Classic Grande, Imphal, today. The programme was organised by the Planning Department, Government of Manipur. Digi-SAPNE (Startup Acceleration Program for North East) is an initiative of AIC-SMUTBI supported by the Ministry of Electronics and IT to promote entrepreneurship and innovation in the North East. The programme supports selected startups with mentorship, market access, funding opportunities, and financial assistance of up to Rs. 80 lakh. It aims to help startups scale their ideas, generate employment, and compete at national and global levels while contributing to inclusive regional growth. Addressing the gathering, the Chief Minister stated that the nation has witnessed a remarkable transformation - from a job-seeking nation to a job-creating nation over the pass decades and Digi-SAPNE 2.0 carries this national vision to the grassroots level in Manipur. He informed with satisfaction that Start-up Manipur had been recognised as a leader in develop-

ing a strong Startup ecosystem under the 5th Edition of the States’ Startup Ecosystem Ranking. This recognition is a testament to the hard work of our officials, institutions, entrepreneurs, and policymakers, he added. Yumnam Khemchand maintained that the Government of Manipur remains fully committed to strengthening the Startup ecosystem and Digi-SAPNE 2.0 is designed to support concepts of students and aspiring entrepreneurs into scalable enterprises by providing all necessary support. Stating that innovation is born from experimentation, perseverance, and continuous learning, he urged the youths not to be afraid and think boldly and act confidently. He appreciated the Startup Manipur for making the State a top performer among the Northeast states in the start-up ecosystem. He expressed that many entrepreneurs had been providing jobs to many youths. He further elaborated on the crucial roles that could be taken by the Startups in bringing a united and progressive Manipur. Delivering his speech, Chief Secretary, Dr. Puneet Kumar Goel stated that the strength of the innovation eco-

system does not merely lie in policy announcement but in timely and effective implementation. While policies define the vision, initiatives like DIGI-SAPNE 2.0 translates vision into tangible grassroot impact, he continued. The Chief Secretary maintained that Manipur had made steady and variable progress, strengthening the startup ecosystem over the past few years. He informed that under the Manipur Credit Guarantee Scheme, a credit support of Rs. 106.87 crore had been provided to more than 1,400 entrepreneurs and that under the Chief Minister’s Entrepreneurship Support Scheme (CMESS) - One Family One Livelihood Scheme, bank loans amounting to Rs. 3.4 crore and subsidy of Rs. 1.02 crore had been provided to 60 entrepreneurs. Almost 2000 beneficiaries and 1500 candidates had successfully completed the mandatory Entrepreneurship Development Programme, he added. He appreciated the Chief Minister for his initiatives towards peace and progressive Manipur, stating that it is time for young entrepreneurs to innovate and give feedback on what more

schemes could be introduced by the Government. As a part of the programme, the Chief Minister distributed Certificates of Recognition to various Startups namely Kiita Dumbang Mountain Winds Pvt. Ltd., Labdig Innovations and Systems Pvt. Ltd, Stemcorp Dynamics, Addble Solutions Pvt. Ltd., Mwire Labs, Uplauz India Pvt Ltd., UraCab Private Ltd., Ebb & Flow Online studio, Sajilo Events, HN TECHNOVATIONS LLP, Greenbiotech EcoSolutions Pvt. Ltd. and Medilane HealthTech and Consultancy Services Pvt. Ltd. The Chief Minister also launched INSIGHT smart glasses by AkumenAI, which is a startup from Manipur. Vice-Chancellor, Manipur Technical University, Prof. W. Chandbabu Singh; Vice-Chancellor, Sikkim Manipal University, Prof. Gopalakrishna Prabhu; Joint Secretary, Department of Promotion of Industries and Internal Trade, Government of India, Sanjiv Singh; Director, NITI Aayog, Government of India, Prateek Deshmukh; senior officials and entrepreneurs from across the NE states also attended the programme among others.

Assam Cabinet clears job reservation for tea tribes ahead of polls

Guwahati, Feb 17: With an eye on the upcoming Assembly elections in the state, the Assam Cabinet on Tuesday increased the reservation for the tea tribe community, which constitutes a sizable chunk of voters. A meeting of the Cabinet chaired by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has approved the proposal for 3 per cent reservation for the tea tribes and Adivasi community of Assam in Class I and Class II State Government jobs in addition to the earlier Class III and Class IV posts.

This is being seen as an apparent bid by the BJP-led government to woo the voters of the tea tribes and Adivasi community.

The State Cabinet also gave its nod to the Public Works Department (PWD)



to proceed with the construction of the second Sainik School at Langvoku, Karbi Anglong. For this purpose, the Union Ministry of Defence had approved the Detailed Project Report (DPR) for establishment of the school.

The Cabinet gave its green signal for the settlement of land measuring over 31 bighas in favour of Assam Cricket Association (ACA)

in Dhemaji district for the development of sports infrastructure. It also approved the Assam Agricultural Service (Amendment) Rules, 2025, for the amendment of the existing clauses of the Assam Agriculture Service Rule 1980, to provide relaxation on the requirement of minimum qualifying service period for promotion from one cadre to the next higher cadre.

Assam assembly polls: ECI delegation meets recognised political parties during review

Guwahati, Feb 17: Majority of the recognised national and state political parties in Assam on Tuesday urged the Election Commission of India (ECI) to conduct the upcoming state Assembly elections in either a single phase or a maximum of two phases.

The request was made during a review meeting in Guwahati on poll preparedness in the state held by a visiting ECI delegation led by Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar.

Among national parties, the Aam Aadmi Party, Bharatiya Janata Party, Communist Party of India (Marxist) and Indian National Congress attended the meeting.

State parties, including the All-India United Democratic Front, Asom Gana Parishad, Bodoland People’s Front and the United People’s Party Liberal, also held discussions with the Commission.

According to reports, a majority of parties requested that the polls be conducted “in a single phase or a maximum of two phases”. They also asked the ECI schedule the election dates keeping in mind the Bohag Bihu festival in the state.

The ECI delegation, which arrived in Guwahati on Monday afternoon, will also attend a review meeting where district election officers, magistrates and superintendents



of police are scheduled to brief the panel on election-related arrangements and ground-level readiness in the state. It will also

hold talks with the chief secretary, DGP, nodal and principal officers of enforcement agencies, chief electoral officer, besides

senior officers of concerned departments at the hotel on February 18 to assess security, logistics and administrative preparations.

EDITORIAL

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Reel Renaissance: India's Cinema Horizon

India's film industry, often synonymous with Bollywood, stands as the world's largest by viewership, churning out over 1,800 films annually across 20+ languages. Today, it thrives on a post-pandemic digital pivot. OTT platforms like Netflix and Hotstar have democratized access, with regional cinema—think Telugu blockbusters like RRR and Malayalam gems like Manjummel Boys—rivaling Hindi dominance. Box office recoveries, such as Pushpa 2's ₹1,600 crore haul, signal resilience, fueled by diaspora audiences and multiplex booms.Yet, challenges loom: piracy siphons ₹20,000 crore yearly, while star-driven budgets inflate risks amid flops like Bade Miyan Chote Miyan. Censorship debates and talent crunch from streaming poaching add friction.The future gleams with promise. AI-driven VFX and deepfakes will cut costs, enabling global spectacles. Pan-India collaborations, sustainability-focused stories aligning with SDGs, and Web3 for fan NFTs herald innovation. By 2030, projections peg the industry at \$50 billion, blending tradition with tech.India's silver screen must embrace inclusivity and IP protection to script a blockbuster tomorrow. (DB)

Unlocking safer adventure tourism potential in NE

A part from ecotourism, topography and natural landscape make the Northeast region an ideal destination for adventure tourism. The states in the region have started tapping the potential in adventure tourism activities such as paragliding, rock climbing, trekking, river rafting, etc. Increasing footprints of domestic and foreign tourists in the region have created new opportunities to explore new destinations, which are ideal for such adventure activities. Safety standards maintained in such tourism activities are a key determinant in boosting the confidence of tourists willing to explore adventure tourism in the region. The National Strategy for Adventure Tourism formulated by the Ministry of Tourism is a ready reckoner for stakeholders in adventure tourism to ensure safety in adventure tourism activities. Key advantages of adventure tourism listed in the national strategy are that it is resilient, attracts high-value customers, and supports local economies; adventure tourism practitioners encourage sustainable tourism because without a pristine natural environment and meaningful cultural experiences, adventure tourism cannot exist. These factors are highly relevant for the northeast region, which has rich biodiversity and cultural diversity, but a sustainability approach is vital to ensure that over-tourism does not cause irreversible damage to its fragile ecology or pose any threat to its cultural integrity, especially cul-



tural practices of smaller ethnic populations who live in harmony with nature and are custodians of rich biodiversity in their area. The guiding principles listed in the strategy emphasize that adherence to safety standards is especially important for the adventure sector, where activities can be risky and the strategy adopted must ensure compliance and strict enforcement of regulations regarding safety and service standards. The strategy document highlights that the guidelines on safety and quality norms for adventure tourism in India formulated by the Tourism Ministry in collaboration with the Adventure Tour Operators' Association of India cover 15 land-based, seven air-based, and seven water-based activi-

ties, and these cover the entire gamut of adventure tourism available in India. States are keeping a vigil that any new adventure tourism activities started in the region strictly adhere to these guidelines. Key objectives of the safety framework spelled out in the national strategy underpin mitigating risks in adventure activities, providing guidance to adventure service providers for safety to encourage them for skill upgradation, building confidence among the adventure tourists, and setting up internal and external audit systems. The National Adventure Tourism Safety Management Framework follows the core guiding principles, which include setting up safer conditions for the adventure tourists and the

activity providers, keeping a check on all the adventure tourism activities, and keeping the standards at par with global standards. Continuous improvement of the Safety Management System Coordinating with global tourism bodies on adventure tourism safety included in this framework plays a crucial role in raising the standards of safety level, which is essential to boost the confidence of adventure tourists. Among the strategic elements in the framework, risk management, incident recording and analysis, root cause analysis, corrective action, and emergency response planning systems deserve top priority so that in emergency situations the tourists can be safely rescued. As the region recorded heavy landslides in the past and is prone to severe landslides that badly disrupt communication for long periods, sometimes for several days, safety assessment of adventure tourism sites calls for regular coordination with disaster management authorities and weather stations, besides local administration, so that emergency response is well coordinated and timely measures can be initiated based on early warnings. The national strategy correctly insists that the risk level varies in adventure tourism activities, and sometimes it may be due to natural conditions like weather and terrain; sometimes it may be due to some machine or equipment failure or due to human error. "Some of the adventure activities, like high-alti-

tude mountaineering and trekking, may put adventure tourists in danger and require immediate rescue and evacuation to save casualties. The immediate evacuation or rescue may have a different impact on the adventure tourism perspective of the adventure tourists," it adds, and the stakeholders in adventure tourism keeping these in mind and remaining prepared all the time is vital for responsible and sustainable adventure tourism activities. The central government's position on the development of responsible tourism in the country is that the development and promotion of tourism, including adventure tourism, and the enhancement of safety and convenience at adventure tourism sites are primarily the responsibility of the state governments and Union Territory administration. Nevertheless, continuous updating of the safety protocols in accordance with the national strategy and guidelines is critical to providing the best safety standards and emergency response mechanisms across all adventure tourism sites. Skill development of adventure tourism activity organizers followed by certification is essential to build a stronger brand on adventure tourism. Disaster management integrating an inventory of adventure tourism sites and regular assessment of the safety protocols is crucial for promoting safer and environmentally sustainable adventure tourism and unlocking its full potential in the region.

Palestine Action: banning the group was a step too far

The high court ruled last week that the British government's proscription of Palestine Action is unlawful and disproportionate. Its judgment, however, is hardly one in praise of militant protest. That makes it all the more awkward for ministers. The bench rejected Palestine Action's claim that it was engaged in Gandhian civil disobedience. The judges also accepted that a number of incidents involved serious property damage that technically satisfied the statutory definition of terrorism.

But they were clear and correct: the existing criminal law "is available to prosecute those concerned". This judicial distinction between terror and crime matters – and is devastating for the government. Ministers, the bench reasoned, can't ban every organisation that meets the legal terror threshold just because it brings "significant disruptive benefits" to do so.

Crucially, the high court found against ministers because proscription amounted to disproportionate interference with the right to protest, which rests on the fundamental rights to freedom of expression and assembly. The judges obviously had a point: the ban did not merely punish acts; it also made it an offence to belong to Palestine Action, or even to speak in support of it. That is how more than 2,700 people found them-



selves arrested after the ban – mostly for waving placards. More than 500 of those arrested have been charged.

Critics of the ruling say ministers answer to parliament alone. But MPs gave the then home secretary discretion to proscribe groups. The court, in effect, said Yvette Cooper breached her own policy on that discretion without lawful justification. The government will appeal, and the ban stands for now. An indication of the unlikelihood of the appeal succeeding is that the Metropolitan police have stopped arresting protesters. Ministers may argue that courts should show deference to parliament, which passed the ban, and on national security grounds. But deference works both ways: judges defer to security assessments. They do not

defer to overreach.

This is the first successful challenge to proscription. That alone should make ministers pause. It is a disgrace that support for Palestine Action can mean 14 years in prison. Until now, such bans have been used for al-Qaida, Islamic State and neo-Nazi groups which advocate terror and murder to achieve political ends. Palestine Action aims to disrupt British factories that it says supply and support the Israeli military. It drew attention to the rising civilian death toll in Gaza, as well as to the UK's role in what many considered an ongoing genocide by an ally.

History has lessons. In 2003, five protesters broke into RAF Fairford to sabotage equipment linked to the impending bombing of Baghdad. They argued they were acting to prevent

a greater crime – the Iraq war – and were charged with criminal damage, not terrorism. The courts treated them as protesters: some were convicted and given light sentences, and others were acquitted. Notably, none were treated as terrorists, a view shared by one of their defence barristers at the time – Keir Starmer.

Yet last summer, within days of Palestine Action activists breaking into RAF Brize Norton and splashing two planes with red paint, Sir Keir's government announced the group's proscription. He knows that juries can side with conscientious protesters – especially over an issue such as Gaza. Maybe he thought it better, then, to ban the group outright. If so, for a man who frequently invokes the rule of law, it is a shabby way to circumvent it.

A parliament of firsts and youthful lawmakers

The incoming 13th parliament promises renewal. More than two-thirds of lawmakers-elect will take their seats for the first time. The country will see a first-time prime minister, a first-time opposition leader, and six young members of parliament from the National Citizen Party who helped organise the 2024 July uprising. Eight parties will be represented, and five party chiefs will enter the House as first-time MPs. The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), which secured 209 seats, brings 132 newcomers. Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami has 59 first-time MPs. While seasoned stalwarts, particularly within the BNP, remain, the overall composition of the parliament signals a more vibrant and diverse legislature, backed by an active opposition. This marks a clear departure from recent parliaments led by Awami League, where the absence of a credible opposition reduced proceedings to ritual. The treasury benches were filled by the same figures elected through controversial polls. Instead of lively debate on public-interest issues and meaningful legislative scrutiny, the chamber too often became a stage for sycophancy. MPs competed in praising the prime minister, while dissenting voices, whether individuals or institutions, were branded "enemies of the state," with little opportunity for rebuttal. Arbitrary laws were passed unchallenged. Among the most damaging was the Digital Security Act, later recast as the Cyber Security Act, widely criticised for stifling freedom of expression and enabling arbitrary arrests. Such measures became symbols of a legislature that failed in its duty to safeguard democratic freedoms. Hopefully, this time, the presence of many young MPs and a strong opposition bench should ensure substantive debate on legislation



and policies affecting citizens' lives. Also, the opposition must remember that its role is to be constructive, not disruptive. The country cannot afford a return to habitual walkouts and street agitations that once paralysed parliamentary politics. Sharp disagreements are inevitable, but they must be addressed within the House, in language befitting its code of conduct. The Speaker's role will be pivotal. Neutrality and equal opportunity for all members to speak are key to restoring public trust in parliamentary procedures. Women MPs must be given equal time to speak. With a two-thirds majority, the BNP bears special responsibility. Power demands restraint. More than half of the new MPs are businesspeople, many from the ruling party. This raises legitimate concerns about

conflicts of interest, an issue that also plagued past parliaments. MPs must not exploit public office to advance private business. Party leadership must remain vigilant against such transgressions. There are also reports that 11 winning BNP candidates are loan defaulters; most of them secured court stay orders to contest. Under the Representation of the People Order, defaulters are barred from running. If loans remain unpaid beyond the stay period, or if fresh defaults occur, the Election Commission has the authority to cancel membership. That rule must be enforced without any bias. This parliament has the numbers, diversity, and generational shift to reset democratic norms. Whether it succeeds depends on integrity, accountability, and respect for the institution it now represents.

Team GB's Winter Olympics success: sporting inspiration lifts the grey February mood

For most of January and February, Britons have endured relentless, record-breaking rain, often accompanied by a biting wind. But in recent days many will have taken solace from contemplating a very different winter landscape, as skiers, skaters and snowboarders compete beneath the purest of blue skies. As a visual spectacle, the Milano Cortina Winter Olympics have been a feast for the eyes and balm for the soul.

Given the glory of the Dolomites, that much might have been anticipated. More unexpected was a weekend of unprecedented sporting triumph for Team GB. For a nation that has not traditionally been – to put it kindly – a winter sports heavyweight, two gold medals in the space of five hours on Sunday was a moment to savour. Competing in the mixed snowboard cross, Charlotte Bankes and Huw Nightingale became the first ever British athletes to win

on snow. In Milan, Tabitha Stoecker and Matt Weston hurtled down the ice track to edge out German competition in the first mixed team skeleton event.

Norway, sitting once again at the top of the medals table, will not feel that its remarkable historic dominance is under threat just yet. But the bravura performance of Bankes – who grew up in the French Alps and began her career competing for France – was a highlight of the tournament so far. Elsewhere, targeted investment is paying off.

Weston, a current double world champion, was already a hot favourite. But over the last four-year cycle between Winter Olympics, UK Sport has spent millions on building up a formidable skeleton-racing team: a fourth place in the mixed event for Freya Tarbit and Marcus Wyatt reflected the growing strength in depth. For Team GB generally, the bathos

of Eddie the Eagle, the spectacularly unsuccessful British ski jumper who touched the hearts of crowds at the 1988 Winter Games, is a distant memory.

Britain's most successful Winter Olympics ever, in a time zone congenial to primetime viewing, will surely spark growing UK interest in sports that have, for cultural and climatic reasons, remained on the margins. That will test resources and outreach. In Weston, the nation may boast the best skeleton racer in the world, but it still does not possess even one suitable ice track on which those dreaming of emulating him could try their luck. The fearless Stoecker was a gymnast and trained trapeze artist before being spotted at a talent identification event. Weston himself played rugby and practised taekwondo.

Hopefully Bankes's scintillating performance on the slopes will inspire a new gener-

ation to take to the indoor variety in Britain, which have already nurtured the extraordinary talent of her fellow snowboarding star Mia Brookes. But for the popular cut-through of Milano Cortina 2026 to truly launch a golden age of British winter sports, the Games should become a catalyst for further investment in grassroots participation.

For now, though, the focus of many viewers will turn to an increasingly compelling and ill-tempered curling competition, in which allegations of foul play have led to calls for the use of video assistant referees or Hawk-Eye-style technology. Team GB has a chance of qualifying for the semi-finals of the men's and women's events, which would put more medals within touching distance in northern Italy. As we seek inspiration and distraction in the middle of a grey February, the drama may be only just beginning.



Suzlon Energy shares: Rs 55 mark could be a make

New Delhi: Shares of Suzlon Energy are stuck in a bear grip in the short term. The downtrend in the multibagger stock extends up to two years too, when the stock is down nearly a percent. The multibagger stock, which gained 421% in three years and zoomed 865% in five years has fallen 22.71% in six months. Suzlon Energy stock has also lost 12% this year. Suzlon Energy shares have traded range-bound in the last one year, capping prospects of gains for the shareholders.

The green energy stock is trading near its 52 week low of Rs 44.86 reached on January 27 this year. The multibagger stock rose to a 52-week high of Rs 74.30 on May 30, 2025. Given the current setup, it is better to avoid initiating positions in the stock. Any short-term bounce should be treated as an opportunity to exit existing positions. The bearish trend may persist as long as the stock remains below Rs 55," said Kamble. About Suzlon EnergySuzlon Energy is a provider of renewable energy solutions. The company is a producer of wind turbines. It offers a range of solar energy solutions, such as solar irradiance assessment, land acquisition and approvals, infrastructure and power evacuation, supply chain, installation and commission and life cycle asset management. Stock outlook Kunal Kamble, Sr. Technical Research Analyst at Bonanza Portfolio considers Rs 55 mark as a key level for the Suzlon Energy stock. "Suzlon is currently trading near a strong support zone of Rs 46–45. The overall trend remains negative, with the stock having corrected from Rs 74, wiping out nearly 40% of its previous gains. The stock is trading below major EMAs, indicating a bearish trend. On the momentum front, the RSI, after moving to neutral, has again started moving downward, supporting the ongoing bearish price action. A break below Rs 45 could lead to further downside towards Rs 42, followed by Rs 38. The stock



is stuck in the bear trap confirms its simple moving averages. Suzlon Energy shares are trading lower than the 5 day, 10 day, 20 day, 30 day, 50 day, 100 day, 150 day and 200 day simple moving averages.However, the company has strong fundamentals and a growing order book of 6.2 GW in December 2025 against 5.6 GW at the end of fiscal year 2025. Stock Movement In the current session, Suzlon Energy stock was trading on a flat note at Rs 46.33. Suzlon Energy's market cap stood at Rs 63,531 crore. The green energy stock saw a turnover of Rs 7.96 crore as 17.19 lakh shares changed hands today.

Tata AIA introduces Enhanced Value Index Funds to strengthen wealth creation and retirement planning

Aizawl: Tata AIA Life Insurance has announced the launch of two new offerings; Enhanced Value Index Fund and Enhanced Value Index Pension Funddesigned to provide investors with value-based equity exposure while combining life insurance protection through unit-linked life and pension solutions. The New Fund Offer (NFO) will remain open from February 9 to 16, 2026, with policies issued at a Net Asset Value (NAV) of ₹10. The funds track the BSE 500 Enhanced Value 50 Customised Index, providing diversified ex-

posure to 50 large-, mid-, and small-cap companies selected based on valuation metrics such as book value-to-price, earnings-to-price, and sales-to-price ratios. With 70–100% allocation to equities, the funds aim to deliver long-term capital appreciation, while the pension variant focuses on helping investors systematically build retirement savings with life cover. As of December 31, 2025, Tata AIA's assets under management stood at ₹1,45,256crore, reflecting 21% year-on-year growth. Commenting on the launch,



HarshadPatil, Chief Investment Officer, Tata AIA Life Insur-

ance, said, "Equity markets reward patience and discipline over time. Our Enhanced Value Index strategy simplifies long-term investing by offering a systematic, fundamentals-driven approach that is transparent and accessible." In Aizawl, financial advisors are observing growing awareness of market-linked insurance products, with investors increasingly seeking diversified, rules-based investment options that combine wealth creation, retirement planning, and financial protection.

'Decoupling revenue from IT headcount' UBS on structural evolution, IT outlook

New Delhi: UBS in its latest note on IT sector said the recent sharp selloff in Nifty IT, down 13 per cent in the past two weeks, was triggered by investor concerns over long-term terminal value post the Anthropic and Palantir events, as rapid advances in Agentic AI could structurally weaken the traditional IT services model, which has thus far largely been a staff augmentation model. The foreign brokerage said the prevailing valuations suggest that investors are now pricing in terminal free cash flow (FCF) growth of 4-6 per cent compared with 6-7 per cent just a month ago. The valuations suggest FCF yields of 6 per cent, not too far from earlier peaks during the cloud and Covid downturns, thus reflecting a growing scepticism around the sustainability of linear, headcount driven growth. UBS said a struc-

tural evolution in business model is key."The first and most visible aspect of this evolution is the need to break the historical linkage between revenue growth, and headcount growth. Management commentary across the sector increasingly points to rising non linearity. outcome based work rather than through outright workforce reduction," UBS said. UBS said IT firms such as Persistent Systems Ltd and Coforge Ltd have already demonstrated sharper increases in revenue per employee, with 17-32 per cent increase over the past 3 years, while HCL Technologies Ltd, Tata Consultancy Services Ltd (TCS) and Infosys Ltd have seen the largest increases amongst the large caps (11-15 per cent). "Client conversations also suggest rising interest in fixed price and outcome based models, where fees

are tied to measurable business results such as cost reduction, cycle time improvement, or revenue uplift. That said, we believe this is still in extremely nascent stages (T&M is still over 50 per cent of revenues in most cases), and we will keep an eye on this likely (and needed) shift," it said. UBS said while there has been some near-term overreaction, the questions around terminal growth cannot be ignored. While it did not revise its views for now, UBS said it would keep a close eye on how quickly and effectively the IT Services companies adapt to this structural change.Beyond pricing and delivery models, defending terminal value requires moving up the value chain through a combination of platforms, talent, and ecosystems, panding partnerships in the ecosystem, especially with AI.

HAL, BEL, Bharat Forge, GRSE, Mazagon Dock, Cochin Shipyard shares climb

New Delhi: Defence stocks such as Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL), Bharat Electronics Ltd (BEL), Bharat Forge Ltd, Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers Ltd (GRSE), Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders and Cochin Shipyard were trading higher in Tuesday's trade, with select counters witnessing renewed traction even as experts remain divided on valuations and execution visibility. Anand James, Chief Market Strategist at Geojit Investments, highlighted that defence stocks have selectively come into the limelight lately, with companies involved in aircraft manufacturing, avionics, radar modules, UAVs and related technologies gaining strength

and attention since last week.He said, "Stocks such as HAL, BEL and Bharat Forge have seen notable traction, with delivery volumes jumping nearly 100 per cent above their key averages over the past two days."James added, "The average RSI of the Nifty Defence Index constituents remains below 50, whereas the RSI levels of HAL, BEL and Bharat Forge are around 60, indicating relative strength and momentum in these counters. Meanwhile, the shipbuilding segment has shown early signs of a reversal, but it may require broader participation before momentum builds further." He further stated, "We will continue to ride stocks like HAL, BEL, and Bharat Forge,

while keeping a close watch on Mazagon Dock, GRSE and Cochin Shipyard to capture emerging opportunities as they develop."However, market expert Ambareesh Baliga urged caution, flagging elevated valuations and potential execution challenges in the sector despite the recent correction."Valuations are still fairly expensive. Although we have seen a correction in the defence space, valuations continue to remain elevated. Whenever new contracts are signed, you immediately see some sort of upmove -- it is clearly sentiment-linked. However, when you look at performance, we could see some execution issues in the defence space," Baliga stated.

Infosys inks strategic collaboration with Anthropic To develop enterprise

New Delhi: Indian IT firm Infosys has announced its collaboration with AI firm Anthropic for the development of enterprise AI solutions for companies spanning telecommunications, financial services, manufacturing, and software development, the company announced in its regulatory filing.The partnership starts in telecommunications. Infosys will create a dedicated Anthropic Center of Excellence to build and deploy AI agents for industry-specific operations. It will then expand across other industries like financial services, manufacturing, and software development.Infosys and Anthropic: Scope of collaboration Under the scope of this collaboration, Anthropic will integrate its Claude models, including Claude Code, with Infosys's AI Topaz. This is aimed at helping the IT major automate complex workflows, accelerate software delivery, and adopt AI with the governance and transparency that regulated industries require, the company said in its filing. "Together, Infosys and Anthropic aim to help clients reimagine the enterprise operating model by

combining deep industry expertise, frontier AI, and engineering scale into one unified approach," Infosys said in its filing. It added that the core focus of the partnership will be agentic AI. This essentially includes systems that not only answer questions but also handle multi-step tasks independently, like processing claims, generating and testing code, or managing compliance reviews. Using tools like the Claude Agent SDK, Infosys and Anthropic will help clients build AI agents that can work persistently across long, complex processes rather than one-off interactions," the IT major added.Infosys and Anthropic: Industry-specific AI modelAs part of this partnership, both companies will develop custom AI agents to deliver industry-specific solutions. These include:For telecommunications: AI agents will help modernize networks, simplify customer management, and improve service delivery. For software development: Infosys said that teams would utilize Claude Code to write.

Reliance-backed Zivame plans aggressive store rollout



Mumbai: Reliance Industries-backed lingerie retailer Zivame is planning a fresh store expansion, with 60 to 80 franchise-led outlets slated to open over the next year, its chief operating officer Kiruba Devi said, as per Reuters.Founded in 2011 as an online-only brand, Zivame has steadily built an offline footprint over the years and now operates 174 exclusive brand outlets. Reliance Retail took a stake in the company in 2021, as part of its broader push into apparel and innerwear.Focus shifts to tier-2 and tier-3 markets

Zivame is now targeting tier-2 and tier-3 cities as the next phase of growth, Dei said on the sidelines of a Retailers Association of India event in Mumbai.

India to join US-Russia elite club: Tata-led consortia shortlisted to build fighter jetsShe said demand in smaller cities is increasingly mirroring metro markets, aided by social media-driven adoption. Devi did not share a regional revenue split. Devi said Zivame turned profitable in the

previous quarter, but declined to provide further details, noting that the company now operates under a listed entity, Reuters added. Zivame, which is already available online in markets such as the United States through Amazon, and in the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia through local partners, is also exploring overseas growth via franchise arrangements. Devi said the company's initial focus is Southeast Asia, calling it the "right place" for the brand's next international push, as per the Reuters report.

Zivame, which started as an online aggregator of lingerie brands, has since expanded its portfolio to include shapewear, activewear and loungewear

Devi said the company also plans to pilot an entry into kidswear, though she did not share further details, the report added. Zivame is now targeting tier-2 and tier-3 cities as the next phase of growth, Devi said on the sidelines of a Retailers Association of India event in Mumbai.

India to join US-Russia elite club: Tata-led consortia shortlisted to build fighter jets

New Delhi: According to The Indian Express' exclusive report, three private sector contenders — Tata Advanced Systems Ltd, a Larsen & Toubro-led consortium, and a Bharat Forge-led consortium — have been shortlisted to design and develop prototypes of India's proposed Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA), the country's ambitious fifth-generation stealth fighter programme.According to The Indian Express, seven consortiums had originally submitted bids, including Adani Defence and state-run Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL). After screening, three private sector groups have now been selected for the prototype development stage.According to information accessed by The Indian Express, Tata Advanced Systems Ltd is in the race as a standalone bidder. The other two shortlisted entities are a consortium of Larsen & Toubro and Bharat Electronics Ltd, and another consortium comprising Bharat Forge, BEML Ltd and Data Patterns.The shortlisting has been carried out by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO). The agency, through the Aeronautical Development Agency, had floated tenders in July 2025 seeking Indian industry partners for the AMCA project.The shortlisted companies are expected to receive government funding support to build AMCA models. Manufacturing rights are likely to be granted after successful development and evaluation of the prototypes.The AMCA is India's plan to develop a homegrown fifth-generation stealth fighter jet. It is designed as a single-seat,



twin-engine aircraft with advanced stealth coatings and internal weapons bays to reduce radar visibility. The programme is expected to lead to the production of more than 125 fighter jets. These aircraft could be ready for induction into the Indian Air Force by 2035.If completed as planned, India would join a small group of countries operating fifth-generation fighters, including the United States (F-22 and F-35), China (J-20) and Russia (Su-57). Defence acquisition council clears 114 Rafale Jets, 6 P-8I aircraft for IAF and NavyLast Thursday, the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) cleared a long-awaited proposal to buy 114 Rafale fighter jets from France under an inter-gov-

ernmental agreement for the Indian Air Force. Of these, 90 jets are expected to be manufactured in India. The Indian Express had reported earlier. The clearance came days before French President Emmanuel Macron's visit to India between February 17 and 19.The DAC, chaired by Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, also approved the procurement of six additional P-8I maritime surveillance and anti-submarine warfare aircraft from the United States for the Indian Navy.Why was HAL not shortlisted for AMCA prototype stage

According to sources, HAL's bid was rejected at the screening stage due to a mistake in paperwork linked to a mandatory eligi-

bility criterion, not just an evaluation parameter. While it remains theoretically possible for HAL to participate later, sources told The Indian Express, that the company which develops the prototype would naturally have an advantage in securing final manufacturing rights.Last week, HAL Chairman and Managing Director DK Sunil had told The Indian Express that the company would still participate in the bidding process for licence manufacturing of the indigenous fifth-generation fighter jet, even if its consortium was not shortlisted initially. "We are yet to receive any official communication about the firms being shortlisted in the screening process," he said.

INTERNATIONAL

Mine collapses in eastern Congo



Garmany: A landslide earlier this week collapsed several mines at a major coltan mining site in eastern Congo, leaving at least 200 people dead, rebel authorities said Saturday. The collapse took place Wednesday at the Rubaya mines, which are controlled by the M23 rebels, Lumumba Kambere Muyisa, the spokesperson of the rebel-appointed governor of North-Kivu province told The Associated Press. He said the landslide was caused by heavy rains. In May 2024, M23 seized the town and took control of its mines. According to a U.N. report, since seizing Rubaya, the rebels have imposed taxes on the trade and transport of coltan, generating at least \$800,000 a month. Eastern Congo has been in and out of crisis for decades. Various conflicts have created one of the world’s largest humanitarian crises with more than 7 million people displaced, including more than 300,000 who have fled their homes since December. Despite the signing of a deal between the Congolese and Rwandan governments brokered by the U.S. and ongoing negotiations between rebels and Congo, fighting continues on several fronts in eastern Congo, continuing to claim numerous civilian and military casualties. The deal between Congo and Rwanda also opens up access to critical minerals for the U.S. government and American companies. “For now, there are more than 200 dead, some of whom are still in the mud and have not yet been recovered,” Muyisa said. He added that several others were injured and taken to three health facilities in the town of Rubaya, while ambulances were expected to transfer the wounded Saturday to Goma, the nearest city around 30 miles away. The rebel-appointed governor of North Kivu has temporarily halted artisanal mining on the site and ordered the relocation of residents who had built shelters near the mine, Muyisa said. Congo’s government in a statement on X expressed solidarity with the victims’ families and accused the rebels of illegally and unsafely exploiting the region’s natural resources. A former miner at the site told The Associated Press there have been repeated landslides because the tunnels are dug by hand, poorly constructed, and left without maintenance. “People dig everywhere, without control or safety measures. In a single pit, there can be as many as 500 miners, and because the tunnels run parallel, one collapse can affect many pits at once,” Clovis Mafare said. Rubaya lies in the heart of eastern Congo, a mineral-rich part of the Central African nation which for decades has been ripped apart by violence from government forces and different armed groups, including the Rwanda-backed M23, whose recent resurgence has escalated the conflict, worsening an already acute humanitarian crisis. Congo is a major supplier of coltan, a black metallic ore that contains the rare metal tantalum, a key component in the production of smartphones, computers and aircraft engines.

The country produced about 40 percent of the world’s coltan in 2023, according to the U.S. Geological Survey, with Australia, Canada and Brazil being other big suppliers. Over 15% of the world’s supply of tantalum from Rubaya’s mines.

American attacks in Venezuela raise concerns in the region and throughout the world

Garmany: The impact of the Trump administration’s stunning airstrikes and “capture” of Nicolás Maduro are already being felt well beyond Venezuela’s borders — the most significant U.S. intervention in the region since the 1989 invasion of Panama. President Gustavo Petro in neighboring Colombia, announced that security forces were deployed along the border to prepare for a possible refugee influx. Colombia hosts the largest Venezuelan diaspora. Petro confirmed multiple strikes in Caracas, including a military airbase, other installations, and the legislative building. He condemned the attack as an aggression against Venezuela and Latin America, urging de-escalation. Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva condemned the U.S. attack on neighboring Venezuela and the seizure of Maduro, saying the strikes “crossed an unacceptable line” and set a “dangerous precedent.” Lula said the action evoked “the worst moments of interference” in Latin America and threatened the region’s status as a zone of peace. Despite his past alliance with Maduro’s predecessor Hugo Chávez, relations have cooled since Brazil refused to recognize Maduro’s disputed 2024 election victory, widely dismissed as fraudulent. Other regional powers, including Chile and Mexico, echoed strong condemnation. Mexico called the strikes a violation of the U.N. Charter and urged an immediate halt to acts of aggression. In a Fox News interview on Saturday, President Trump said Mexico was run by drug cartels and he said quote “something is gonna have to be done with Mexico.” Cuba and Nicaragua — two of Venezuela’s closest allies — are closely monitoring the crisis. Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel labeled the U.S. action “state terrorism” and called for urgent international intervention. Cuba, facing its most severe economic crisis since the fall of the Soviet Union, relies heavily on Venezuelan oil. Any disruption could worsen an already dire situation, and the government in



Havana — which has been in power since 1959 - has been watching the unfolding situation closely. But a number of staunch Trump allies in Latin America backed the U.S. operation in Venezuela. Argentina’s President Javier Milei hailed Maduro’s capture as a victory for freedom. El Salvador’s Nayib Bukele signaled support via social media, and Ecuador’s Daniel Noboa called it a blow to Venezuela’s “narco-Chavista” structures. Close allies China and Russia have also reacted. Russia condemned the strikes, reaffirming solidarity with the Venezuelan people. In a statement, Russia’s Foreign Ministry called the Trump administration’s pretext for attacking Venezuela unfounded and said if the reports of Maduro’s capture were true, the U.S. action marked an “unacceptable assault” on Venezuela’s sovereignty. Despite such expressions of support, Moscow has stopped short of challenging the U.S. more forcefully amid a months-long pressure campaign by the Trump admin-

istration against the Venezuelan leadership. China said it strongly opposed the U.S. action condemning the move as a violation of international law. In a statement, the foreign ministry said Beijing was “deeply shocked” by what it called Washington’s “blatant use of force” against a sovereign state, arguing it infringed Venezuela’s sovereignty and threatened peace and security in Latin America and the Caribbean. European leaders responded cautiously to the U.S. operation in Venezuela. French President Emmanuel Macron said any transition must be “peaceful, democratic and respectful of the will of the Venezuelan people.” In a separate post, he said he had spoken with opposition leader Maria Corina Machado and that she could count on France’s support for a peaceful, democratic transition. U.K. Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer declined to say whether the strikes breached international law, telling the BBC he was awaiting the facts and describing himself as a “lifelong advocate of

international law.” He said Britain was not involved or consulted and hoped opposition figure Edmundo González could guide a transition. German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said the legality of the operation was “complex,” stressing that international law must apply and warning that political instability in Venezuela must be avoided. The European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said the E.U. supports “a peaceful and democratic transition” in Venezuela. But she stopped short of criticizing the U.S. attack. “We stand by the Venezuelan people and support a peaceful and democratic transition,” she said, adding that any solution must respect international law and the U.N. Charter. The U.N. Security Council is set to meet Monday at the request of Colombia, with backing from Russia and China. In a statement U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres said he was “deeply alarmed” by the overnight developments, expressing concern “that international law hasn’t been respected.”

U.S. to exit 66 international organizations in further retreat from global cooperation



Garmany: The Trump administration will withdraw from dozens of international organizations, including the U.N.’s population agency and the U.N. treaty that establishes international climate negotiations, as the U.S. further retreats from global cooperation. President Trump on Wednesday signed an executive order suspending U.S. support for 66 organizations, agencies, and commissions, following his administration’s review of participation in and funding for all international organizations, including those affiliated with the United Nations, according to a White House release. Most of the targets are U.N.-related agencies, commissions and advisory panels that focus on climate, labor, migration and other issues the Trump administration has categorized as catering to diversity and “woke” initiatives. Other non-U.N. organizations on the list include the Partnership for Atlantic Cooperation, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance and Global Counterterrorism

Forum. “The Trump Administration has found these institutions to be redundant in their scope, mismanaged, unnecessary, wasteful, poorly run, captured by the interests of actors advancing their own agendas contrary to our own, or a threat to our nation’s sovereignty, freedoms, and general prosperity,” Secretary of State Marco Rubio said in a statement. Homes covered by snow are seen from the sea in Nuuk, Greenland, on March 6, 2025. (AP Photo/ Evgeniy Maloletka, File) Politics White House says ‘all options’ are on the table for Greenland, including diplomacy Trump’s decision to withdraw from organizations that foster cooperation among nations to address global challenges comes as his administration has launched military efforts or issued threats that have rattled allies and adversaries alike, including capturing autocratic Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro and indicating an intention to take over Greenland. U.S. builds on pattern of exiting global agencies The administration previously sus-

pended support from agencies like the World Health Organization, the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees known as UNRWA, the U.N. Human Rights Council and the U.N. cultural agency UNESCO. It has taken a larger, a-la-carte approach to paying its dues to the world body, picking which operations and agencies it believes align with Trump’s agenda and those that no longer serve U.S. interests. I think what we’re seeing is the crystallization of the U.S. approach to multilateralism, which is ‘my way or the highway,’” said Daniel Forti, head of U.N. affairs at the International Crisis Group. “It’s a very clear vision of wanting international cooperation on Washington’s own terms.” It has marked a major shift from how previous administrations — both Republican and Democratic — have dealt with the U.N., and it has forced the world body, already undergoing its own internal reckoning, to respond with a series of staffing and program cuts. Many independent nongovernmental agencies — some that work with the United Nations — have cited many project closures because of the U.S. administration’s decision last year to slash foreign assistance through the U.S. Agency for International Development, or USAID. Despite the massive shift, the U.S. officials, including Trump himself, say they have seen the potential of the U.N. and want to instead focus taxpayer money on expanding American influence in many of the standard-setting U.N. initiatives where there is competition with China, like the International Telecommunications Union, the International Maritime Organization and the International Labor Organization. The latest global organizations the U.S. is departing The withdrawal from the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change, or UNFCCC, is the latest effort by Trump and his allies to distance the U.S. from international organizations focused on climate and addressing climate change. UNFCCC, the 1992 agreement between 198 countries to financially support climate change activities in developing countries, is the underlying treaty for the landmark Paris climate agreement, policies, and decisions that would have advanced our economy and protected us from costly disasters wreaking havoc on our country,” McCarthy, who co-chairs America Is All In, a coalition of climate-concerned U.S. states and cities, said in a statement. Gina McCarthy, former White House National Climate Adviser, said being the only country in the world not part of the treaty is “shortsighted, embarrassing, and a foolish decision.”

A historic election BNP to power

Garmany: The Bangladeshi Nationalist Party (BNP), led by Tarique Rahman, claimed victory Friday in the first elections held since the previous government was toppled in a student-led revolution in 2024. Final results have yet to be announced, with the Election Commission expected to do so in the coming days, but the BNP says it has secured a majority. Developments in Bangladesh are being closely watched beyond its borders. It is the world’s eighth-most populous country and second-largest garment exporter after China, supplying major brands to Europe and the United States - a position the BNP will be keen to protect. Rahman, 60, hails from a political dynasty. Both of his parents were central figures in the party for decades. His father, military officer and former president Ziaur Rahman, founded the BNP in 1978. His mother, Khaleda Zia - who died in December - had led the party for more than 30 years and served three times as prime minister. Rahman’s rise follows the uprising in July and August 2024 that resulted in up to 1,400 deaths, according to the United Nations. The unrest ended with former prime minister and Awami League leader Sheikh Hasina fleeing the country. Jon Danilowicz, an independent political analyst and retired U.S. diplomat who previously served in Bangladesh, told NPR he believes the uprising may serve as a warning for Rahman. He said: “Tarique Rahman would not be in the position he is in had he not been Khaleda Zia and Ziaur Rahman’s son. But it seems he has understood what has changed in the country. He has acknowledged the July revolution and the sacrifices of those who were on the front line.” Rahman faced a tough challenge from Bangladesh’s third-largest party, Jamaat-e-Islami, which contested the election as part of an 11-party alliance that included the National Citizen Party (NCP), formed by students who led the uprising. He now faces the daunting task of steering the South Asian nation of around 180 million people through high inflation, rising unemployment and the growing impacts of climate change. While abroad, Rahman was convicted in Bangladesh of multiple offences while the Awami League was in power, including corruption and money laundering - convictions he and

his party rejected as politically motivated. The rulings were overturned between 2024 and 2025 during an interim period led by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus, paving the way for his return. Challenges ahead As prime minister, his immediate challenge will be to form a government capable of tackling economic pressures, creating jobs and restoring law and order. “There have been a lot of promises made in terms of social welfare programs and family cards, which give women with families a monthly stipend,” Danilowicz said. “But there’s a fiscal reality the government will face. Bangladesh has one of the lowest taxation rates, and there are limits to how much revenue it can generate.” On foreign policy, the BNP government is expected to consolidate its relations with both the United States and China. The BNP has already said it plans to deepen relations with China, Bangladesh’s largest trading partner. Relations with neighboring India, however, could prove more complicated. Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s government enjoyed close ties with the Awami League while it was in power and has been sheltering Sheikh Hasina since she fled. New Delhi has so far not responded to requests from Bangladesh to extradite her after a Bangladeshi court sentenced Hasina to death in November last year for crimes against humanity linked to the uprising - a verdict she refutes. Danilowicz said: “Bangladesh’s population has turned against India over the past 18 months. The challenge for Rahman will be how far the BNP can go towards restoring relations with India without facing a public backlash.” Rahman and his party must also contend with a package of reform proposals designed to prevent a return to authoritarian rule. Known as the July National Charter, the plan outlines constitutional, institutional and electoral changes. It will be an especially challenging task for someone who has never held public office in Bangladesh and returned to the country less than two months ago after 17 years of self-imposed exile in London. It was signed in October last year by leaders of major political parties and approved by voters in a referendum held the same day as the parliamentary elections.

Falling Sick Repeatedly Despite Normal Immunity Tests? Doctors Explain Why

Every now and then, we come across family members, friends, or colleagues who seem to fall sick multiple times a year despite having normal immune test results. It can be confusing, if the reports are normal, shouldn't immunity be strong?"We often become overly dependent on routine tests and assume that if the reports are normal, everything is fine," says Dr Ravi Kesari, MBBS, MD (General Medicine), Apollo Spectra, Bangalore – Koramangala. "But test results alone do not provide a complete assessment of immune system health."According to Dr Kesari, the body's ability to fight infections depends on multiple factors, including daily habits, environmental exposure, genetic predisposition, and overall health status. Laboratory values may appear normal, yet functional immunity can still be compromised.

The Role of Nutrition and Vitamin Deficiencies

"The immune system

depends heavily on proper nutrition," explains Dr Ravi Kesari. "It requires a balanced intake of proteins, vitamins, minerals, and healthy fats to function optimally." Diets high in sugar and processed foods can disrupt gut health and weaken immune responses. One of the most common deficiencies observed in clinical practice is vitamin D deficiency, which is associated with an increased risk of respiratory infections such as influenza and viral illnesses."Low vitamin D levels can also worsen autoimmune conditions like rheumatoid arthritis and multiple sclerosis," notes Dr Kesari.

Sleep, Hydration, and Hygiene Matter

Sleep is not optional when it comes to immune resilience. "People who consistently sleep less than six hours a night are at higher risk of infections," says Dr. Ravi Kesari. "Their bodies also tend to produce fewer antibodies after vaccination."Hydration plays an

equally important role. Water helps transport nutrients, remove toxins, and maintain mucosal barriers that defend against pathogens."Even simple measures like proper hand hygiene significantly reduce infection risk," Dr. Kesari adds. "Basic preventive habits remain powerful tools."Gut Health and Antibiotic Overuse

Nearly 70 percent of immune activity originates in the gut. The balance of beneficial bacteria plays a crucial role in regulating immune responses."Frequent antibiotic use, chronic stress, processed diets, and irregular eating patterns can disrupt gut microbiota," explains Dr. Ravi Kesari. "While antibiotics are essential in certain medical conditions, their overuse or misuse can increase susceptibility to future infections."

When gut health deteriorates, immune efficiency declines, even if standard blood tests appear normal. Other Hidden Factors

Recurrent infections may also stem from:

Genetic predisposition

Structural defects in certain organs

Underlying conditions such as multiple myeloma

Chronic stress

Obesity

Prolonged exposure to air pollution

"Immunity is influenced by a combination of internal and external factors," says Dr Kesari. "It cannot be evaluated through a single test."The Bigger Picture

A strong immune system develops through a holistic approach to health rather than focusing on one isolated factor."Repeated sickness is often a signal that lifestyle adjustments are needed," Dr Kesari emphasises. "Balanced nutrition, adequate sleep, stress management, and timely medical guidance can significantly strengthen the body's natural defence mechanisms."In other words, normal lab results do not always mean optimal immunity. True immune health is built daily through consistent, mindful choices that support the body from within.



Pooping menaces or 'flying puppies'? How pigeons are dividing a UK city

At nine o'clock on Saturday morning, Norwich market is only just stirring: shutters are still down and the aisles are quiet. In the nearby Memorial Gardens, however, a large crowd has already gathered: the market's pigeons are waiting to be fed.Jenny Coupland arrives on the scene a little later than her usual hour, with a backpack brimming with seed. As she begins doling it out, the birds descend from their perches and cover the ground, pecking furiously. The sun catches their bobbing heads, sending iridescent shimmers across their brown and grey feathers.A few passersby stop to watch; one takes a photo. The sheer number of birds is a spectacle – not to mention startling, when they all abruptly take flight. "They're a bit jumpy today," says Coupland, 43. Judging by the wary glances she shoots at the onlookers, she's not just referring to the birds.As the founder of the avian welfare group Peck Savers, Coupland has been feeding pigeons around Norwich for 10 years, but in recent months, she says, it has become "a tinderbox situation".Over the past year, the flock here has swelled to about 300 pigeons, causing an increasing number of complaints from shoppers and traders. "I think they're a damned nuisance, that's my opinion," says Eddie Graci from Horsford, who I find nursing a mug of tea at the picnic tables on the fringe of the market. He has seen the birds taking over these tables, trying to pinch chips, defecating on people's clothing. And the Memorial Gardens, Graci adds, are a "damn mess. There's bird droppings everywhere."National media have described scenes here as Hitchcockian. Norwich city council has come up with various solutions, including sending a Harris's hawk over the market to scare the pigeons off and feeding the flock contraceptives. But giving birds contraceptives, it turns out, isn't actually licensed in the UK and the four-week hawk pilot was put on hold. Councillor Carli Harper, the Labour cabinet member for finance and major projects, accused some people of inflaming the issue with "industrial amounts of birdfeed" to save the pigeons. Though feeding birds is not against the law, Harper has said the council is considering legal avenues to crack down on the "irresponsible ... selfish few who do not see reason". This is a local story, but a global issue. Norwich is far from the only place with a pigeon problem: Rome, Venice, New York, Singapore and London have restrictions – and penalties – for feeding pigeons in certain areas (breaking the ban in London's Trafalgar Square incurs a £500 fine). After a citywide ban on feeding pigeons in public spaces was introduced in Mumbai in July, where pigeon feeding is a longstanding pastime for some communities, months of protests and clashes with police followed. There was even a failed attempt to create a political lobby with the formation of a "Pigeon party". Activists have attempted to rebrand the birds as "sky puppies".



Coupland needs no persuading. Pigeons are "just perfect", she says, describing their jewelled plumage and beady eyes. "If you've seen one robin, you've basically seen another one – but not with pigeons." She accepts that not everyone feels the same. "Maybe you don't like the way they flap their wings, or their coos, or something. But don't not like them because you think they're dirty, or spread disease – because it's just not true."Pigeons do carry parasites and bacteria that can be hazardous to humans, particularly in cases of overcrowding, but the risk tends to be greatly overstated, says Will Smith, an evolutionary biologist at the University of Nottingham, who specialises in the birds.There are also respiratory illnesses, such as the flu-like psittacosis, and allergies caused by prolonged exposure to the dust accumulated in pigeon roosts. But again, "that's not something most people will experience", Smith says. "I wouldn't advise anyone to go and touch any wild bird and not wash their hands, but there's nothing specific about a pigeon that makes it more dirty than a robin." As for avian influenza, now being actively managed across the UK, pigeons are actually lower risk than ducks, geese, seabirds and swans, having been shown to be unusually resistant to infection. Though the virus may evolve, "at the moment they don't really get it", Smith says. That's not to say there aren't legitimate concerns about population numbers, he adds. A single pair of pigeons can produce up to 12 squabs every year, meaning flocks can grow exponentially. And though they are capable of flying great distances, they tend to stay put in just one or two streets. Feral pigeons are the descendants of wild rock doves that were domesticated centuries ago, then escaped and formed self-sustaining populations. "They wouldn't exist if not for us, and they're completely dependent," says Smith. Many discussions about management, as in Norwich, proceed under the assumption that problematic flocks can be pushed to "just go somewhere else and

forage in the wild", Smith continues. "But for a feral pigeon, 'the wild' is the concrete jungle ... Their natural diet is McDonald's." The overcrowding risk means populations do sometimes need to be managed, for the pigeons' health as much as people's, Smith says. The question is how to go about it.Guardian writer Elle Hunt with a pigeon on her head while reporting on the story at Norwich market.View image in fullscreenGuardian writer Elle Hunt while reporting on the story at Norwich market. Photograph: Joshua Bright/The GuardianAs for avian influenza, now being actively managed across the UK, pigeons are actually lower risk than ducks, geese, seabirds and swans, having been shown to be unusually resistant to infection. Though the virus may evolve, "at the moment they don't really get it", Smith says.That's not to say there aren't legitimate concerns about population numbers, he adds. A single pair of pigeons can produce up to 12 squabs every year, meaning flocks can grow exponentially. And though they are capable of flying great distances, they tend to stay put in just one or two streets. Feral pigeons are the descendants of wild rock doves that were domesticated centuries ago, then escaped and formed self-sustaining populations. "They wouldn't exist if not for us, and they're completely dependent," says Smith. Many discussions about management, as in Norwich, proceed under the assumption that problematic flocks can be pushed to "just go somewhere else and



Square shopping complex a mile away, sending that flock in search of a new home. Banning people from feeding pigeons wouldn't necessarily make a dent in the numbers, Smith says. But if the food supply were to be abruptly cut off, there would be "a lot of suffering".Coupland argues that feeding the market flock is not just a private ritual, but a civic tradition and important for animal welfare. Along with providing nutritious seed, she and others in Norwich routinely remove entangled debris from pigeons' feet (a common issue that can cause infection and even death) and facilitate veterinary care for sick birds. "They rely on us to help them, and to live." She also says that without people like her feeding the birds, the result would be "hundreds of dead and dying pigeons on the street. Which is what Norwich city council is advocating for."Harper declined an interview, but said in a statement that the council was continuing to explore "humane, legal and proportionate measures" to manage the pigeons and support traders. "Let me be absolutely clear: we are not anti-pigeon. We are pro-Norwich market."Coupland, meanwhile, has designed stickers to drum up support for the pigeons' cause stating: "Give Seeds a Chance", "Your City Needs Coo" and "Norwich Shitty Council". "The council has demonised us as

these militant pigeon-feeders," she says. "But people have been putting seeds down there for at least 10 years – it's just that they've noticed now."The most ethical way to thin a flock, says Smith, is to gradually reduce food over several months, slowing reproduction, but "it's quite difficult to do", and authorities often lack the will. Part of this may be because of "bad PR" rather than fact, he continues. First dubbed "rats with wings" in 1966, by a New York City official looking to clean up parks, today pigeons occupy an uneasy no man's land: not quite pets, not quite wildlife – and lower status than both. Yet, for millennia, pigeons were cherished for sport, communication and companionship. Historically, doves ("basically white pigeons", Smith points out) were symbolic stand-ins for gods. Messenger pigeons were used as far back as 950BC, and were bested only by the telegraph, invented in the 1830s. And pigeons informed Darwin's theory of evolution. "They have given so much to us culturally ... and we've kind of abandoned them," Smith says. Worse, their reputation as vermin has made them a target. In Portsmouth last month, 29 pigeons were found dead, believed to have been killed with a slingshot. And in 2021 in Norwich's Memorial Gardens, a man allegedly decapitated two pigeons. According to Coupland, who spoke to horrified witnesses, he said he thought he was doing everybody a favour. "You don't have to love pigeons to think that's wrong," she says indignantly.Coupland says she has been verbally abused for feeding pigeons, which she considers proof of the impact of a decades-long "smear campaign". "Trying to break all of that down is quite difficult."But not everyone is resistant. For 19-year-old Summer Loh, who moved to Norwich from Singapore last September to study, the flock at the market helped the city feel like home. In Singapore, Loh worked

at a wildlife reserve, handling birds of prey, but she'd largely overlooked pigeons because of the strident national position against them. In Norwich she began feeding the flock and de-stringing birds' feet in order to feel connected to animals again.Loh has since been working with Coupland to stand up for pigeons. "They're just little guys," she enthuses. "They are genuinely so full of personality ... They're like dogs."If you watch pigeons for a while, Loh suggests, "you realise that they're actually pretty nice to be around, and don't mean any harm". Some people in Norwich have told her that they find the birds beneficial for their mental health. "To watch them, feed them, the sound they make – it's quite calming."If we can't expect to eradicate pigeons from towns and cities, Loh and Coupland argue, one solution is to accommodate them better. They propose building a dovecote in nearby Chapel-field Gardens, drawing birds away from the busy market and enabling proactive management. For example, eggs can be removed from nests and replaced with dummies, effectively and ethically reducing numbers over time. "It's a win-win solution," says Loh. Her Change.org petition, outlining the dovecote proposal, has received more than 4,000 signatures since December. Loh says that at a council meeting Harper dismissed it as a poor use of taxpayers' money – yet, she says, "they spent £4,000 on a hawk".In her statement, Harper said the council was exploring "more suitable locations ... for pigeons to gather", but declined to comment specifically on the Chapelfield dovecote. Smith says the dovecote is a good idea, and similar solutions have been successful overseas, but foresees it being a "tough sell" in the UK. "It seems like the sort of thing that, culturally, we're not ready for."Pigeons are routinely overlooked in science and conservation. Despite their global abundance, we understand "disproportionately little" about them, Smith says, reflecting researchers' preference for more charismatic or threatened species. "They're always going to be here." And even local people agree there are bigger issues at the market.At the picnic tables, Wymondham, Norfolk, doubts that there will ever be a "cure" for the pigeons: "They're everywhere." He's more exercised by the council's planned market revamp – a misuse of funds, he says. Long after Coupland is gone from the Memorial Gardens, 13-year-old Amelie turns up to spread some seed herself. "I've always adored them," she says, as the birds crowd around her hand.Amelie has no intention of stopping. The council's effort to shift pigeons from the war memorial is ironic given the part they played in the first world war, delivering coded messages, saving lives, she points out. And if they really did spread disease, "surely half of Norwich would be sick by now", Amelie says. "I just think that it's rather silly."

ENTERTAINMENT

AR Rahman Focuses on the Ramayan Event by Going Through A 40-Day Digital Detox



Mumbai: In order to concentrate entirely on the approaching Ramayan event, AR Rahman, who is renowned for his remarkable devotion to his profession, has made the decision to embark on a 40-day internet detox. Fans were curious when

Rahman revealed his choice at a live performance in Chennai. In March 2026, a significant ceremony for Namit Malhotra and Nitish Tiwari's Ramayana will take place, during which the public will be informed of all the performers and crew members

involved. Rahman must finish his work prior to that occasion. To make the deadline, he will be working faster than normal," Bollywood Hungama reported, quoting a source. Rahman is working with Oscar-winning composer Hans Zimmer for the first time in Nitesh Tiwari's Ramayana. Rahman talked about his well-known partnership in an interview with The Hollywood Reporter India, saying, "It's terrifying for both of us." We're achieving something so significant and iconic for the entire world. I believe he had a soundscape in the trailer, so I used it and added the Sanskrit lines at the end, along with everything else. The difficult part is that we have to give them something new while taking something so epic that all Indians are familiar with. From India to the rest of the world, we must contribute. "We have to unlearn certain things, like how our instincts demand, 'Oh, this is how Ramayana should be done,' but also imbibe the timeless quality that exists in the culture," he said about his approach to the film's soundtrack. Still, it's a process. I work with Dr. Kumar Vishwas, who is an expert on the Ramayana and Hindi, practically at the level of a professor. He speaks Ramayana with every atom in his body. He's a really kind guy and he writes songs like that. It's new, and we're enjoying ourselves." Ranbir Kapoor, Yash, Sai Pallavi, Ravi Dubey, Sunny Deol, Kajal Aggarwal, Arun Govil, and Indira Krishnan are among the cast members of Ramayana, which was directed by Nitesh Tiwari.

Aamir Khan becomes a mediator for the production house of Farhan and Ranveer Singh

Mumbai: Only a few days ago, a number of well-known producers and studio executives were spotted departing Aamir Khan's Mumbai home on Thursday night, leading to much conjecture on the purpose of the event. Rumors of a major partnership or something larger have been stoked by the unexpected meeting of prominent figures in the business. Producers were spotted leaving Aamir's home, including Karan Johar (Dharma Productions), Sajid Nadiadwala (Nadiadwala Grandson Entertainment), Ekta Kapoor (Joint Managing Director of Balaji Telefilms), Excel Entertainment co-founders Farhan Akhtar and Ritesh Sidhwani, Zoya Akhtar (co-founder of Tiger Baby Films), and Punit Goenka (MD and CEO of Zee Entertainment Enterprises).



The agenda for the meeting has so far been kept under wraps by sources close to the parties.

According to a knowledgeable source, one of the sessions was in fact held to settle a long-standing dispute between Excel Entertainment and a well-known celebrity. It seems that the

meeting at Aamir's residence was a way to settle the ongoing problems between actor Ranveer Singh and Farhan Akhtar's Excel Entertainment, which have been in the news lately. "Aamir is attempting to settle the disputes between Excel Entertainment and Ranveer Singh. Some out-

standing conflicts between the two have drawn attention. Our insider says, "The meetings at his place are for the same." Actor Ranveer Singh's departure from the eagerly awaited movie Don 3 sparked a major argument between him and Excel Entertainment, the production company of director Far-

han Akhtar. In the mediation process, the Producers Guild of India became involved. Excel Entertainment's demand for ₹40 crore in compensation from Ranveer for pre-production costs, scheduling delays, and associated losses is at the heart of the dispute. The actor reportedly quit because he was unhappy with the storyline, the lack of a "bound script," and what he saw to be a lack of professionalism in the project's administration, despite the production company's insistence that substantial groundwork was completed with Ranveer's consent. According to reports, Ranveer responded to the demand by claiming that he did not accept any upfront cash and that he was not paid for his own time while other projects, like Bajju Bawra, were put on hold.

In the Rs 14.5 lakh cheque-bounce case, Ameesha Patel responds to the non-bailable warrant



Mumbai: Following rumors that a Moradabad court had issued a non-bailable warrant against her in relation to a 2017 event-related dispute, actor Ameesha Patel responded. The warrant is reportedly related to a cheque bounce case that Pawan Kumar Verma, the owner of a Moradabad-based business, filed. An alleged wedding event booking from 2017 is connected to the allegation. Ameesha responded to the warrant's announcement by saying on her Instagram Stories that the problem is not new and has already been fixed. According to media sources, one Pawan Verma is involved in some processes in Moradabad. I would like to let everyone know that this is an old issue that dates back years, and the aforementioned Pawan Verma signed a settlement deed and was paid the whole sum that was agreed upon," Ameesha stated. "Despite this, it

appears that he has filed a complaint with false allegations," she continued. While I would rather concentrate on my business and ignore those who chose to create a public spectacle in order to draw attention to bogus pretexts, my lawyers are starting the proper criminal proceedings of cheating against this individual in order to expose his lies." According to reports, a complaint concerning a wedding event set for November 16, 2017, was taken up by the court. Ameesha was paid an advance of Rs 14.50 lakh to perform at the event, according to event organizer Pawan Verma. Additionally, he asserted that she was given lodging at a hotel on Delhi Road in Moradabad, but she chose not to attend the function. According to the complaint, she allegedly promised him that the entire sum will be reimbursed following conversations. According to reports, the court issued

the non-bailable warrant because she failed to show up for a scheduled hearing. She has since been ordered to appear on March 27. The actor has already dealt with legal problems including cash conflicts. Ameesha turned himself in to a Ranchi Civil Court in 2023 in relation to a lawsuit involving a bounced check from 2018. She had met businessman Ajay Kumar Singh in 2018 while attending a program at Harma Ground. According to reports, he used his business, Lovely World Entertainment, to invest in a movie project. Singh requested a refund because the movie never came out. A check for Rs 2.50 crore that Ameesha purportedly issued later bounced. She was also in the headlines earlier in November 2021 when it was revealed that a check for Rs 32.25 lakh made out to UTF Telefilms had bounced. With Gadar 2, which costarred Sunny Deol and Utkarsh Sharma, Ameesha made his big-screen comeback after a five-year hiatus. At the box office, the movie made a total of Rs 686 crore globally. Her most recent appearance was in the romantic comedy Tauba Tera Jalwa, which was produced by Madanlal Khurana and Naresh Bansal under the banners of Shreeram Productions and Victorious Enterprises and directed by Akashaditya Lama. Angela Krislinzki and Jatin Khurana played important parts in the movie as well.

John Abraham acknowledges that being an outsider in Bollywood has led to criticism

Mumbai: Actor John Abraham recently talked about his experience as an outsider in Bollywood and disclosed that he has been the target of constant criticism since the start of his career. He recalled that he was insecure when he first started out in 2003, when foreigners were uncommon in the sector. In a recent conversation, John reflected on his experiences in Bollywood and his struggles as an outsider. He acknowledged that since 2003, he has been the target of criticism. "I have probably been the most criticized in this industry, from the time I started," John stated during the session. There were no outsiders when I arrived in 2003. Only Shah Rukh Khan and Akshay Kumar

had previously made their debuts in the motion picture business. No one else in my era has experienced the level of criticism I have. It was easy for me. I was like a blinkered horse. I didn't anticipate and could only see in front. A publicist has never worked for me. Although it might expose me as well, I don't go out there to support media articles because I believe that people are aware of my moral character and my background. John also talked candidly about how he forged his own career despite the competition and discussed working with peers who had a bigger presence in the field. "The best approach is to teach your mind that you are complementing rather than competing.

My male co-stars and I have a much better relationship. I have collaborated with Abhishek Bachchan, Varun Dhawan, Shah Rukh Khan, and Akshay Kumar. I've even given Abhishek a kiss.

They see me as an asset to their process, and I see them in the same light. I am not competitive in that regard; I feel really at ease with guys, and the movie reflects that beauty," he continued. Regarding his career decisions, John disclosed that he is searching for a decent comedy script and that, should the sequel be produced, he would be delighted to join the cast of No Smoking 2. Following a career in modeling, John gained recognition for his roles in films including Shootout at Wadala,

Kabul Express, New York, Dostana, Water, Dhoom, Garam Masala, and Paap. After the 2012 Delhi bombing, John was last seen in Tehran as special officer Rajeev Kumar, who swears vengeance. Manushi Chhillar costarred in the action-packed thriller, which was directed by Arun Gopalan. Last year, the movie was released. At the 56th International Film Festival of India (IFFI) in Goa, he also presented the official trailer for the new documentary, Oslo: A Tale Of Promise, which he is supporting. He is allegedly working on a biopic about Rakesh Maria, and there is also conjecture regarding Force 3. The actor hasn't formally announced his upcoming project yet, though.

Shah Rukh Khan alone introduced chivalry to Bollywood

Mumbai: Anubhav Sinha has frequently produced films that have provoked discussion. His films, whether Mulk, Thappad, or Bheed, have served as a social mirror. His upcoming film, Assi, explores what justice means while telling the tale of a rape victim and her legal team's struggle for justice. The director took a seat to talk about the transformational potential of film before the movie's premiere. When asked if movies have the ability to transform society, Anubhav responds that it "can't be quantified." According to him, change happens gradually and isn't always instantaneous. He gives an example when discussing how movie stars and movies alike may effect change. "I never witnessed a hero dash down the stairs to help the woman up until Shah Rukh Khan rose to fame. He re-



marks, "I have never witnessed an actor do that." The filmmaker goes on to say that Shah Rukh's repeated actions over the years have made it standard practice in the business. "You see that kind of aspirational behavior a lot these days. That's a change now. For women, doors are being opened. He argues that Shah Rukh Khan is solely to blame for this chivalry. In 2018, Shah Rukh made the historic decision to honor his female leads' achievements by placing their names first in the credits of his movies. He has remained loyal to this pattern. The director makes the case that an actor, most likely unintentionally, contributed to this beneficial social transformation. Therefore, change is not a very challenging thing. Continue to act morally. There are numerous ways that change can occur," Anub-

hav continues. Shah Rukh was directed by Anubhav Sinha in Ra. One was the 2011 science fiction thriller, which starred Kareena Kapoor and Arjun Rampal in the key parts. Although the movie didn't do well at the box office, it has since developed a cult following, with many praising its visual effects.

Taapsee Pannu plays a lawyer battling a violent rape case in Anubhav's upcoming film Assi, while Kani Kusruti plays the survivor. With appearances by Naseeruddin Shah and Divya Dutta, the film, which was scripted by Gaurav Solanki, features a strong ensemble cast that includes Mohammed Zeeshan Ayyub, Kumud Mishra, Supriya Pathak, and Manoj Mafra. The movie, which was produced by T-Series, opens in theaters on February 20.

Regena Cassandra's South Indian identity was being disparaged in Bollywood

Mumbai: In a recent interview, Regena Cassandra, who has made an impression in Hindi movies and on over-the-top platforms, asserted that she was subjected to "derogatory" treatment in Bollywood because she is South Indian. Regena continued by saying that the behavior was demonstrated by both words and deeds. "I received negative treatment from many people, not just in words but also in deeds. It's kind of a negative attitude toward me. Furthermore, it would be obvious to everybody that I was being put down in a particular manner. I sensed it. In the North, I did have certain inhibitions. However, that's not always the case, isn't it?" Regena said. In addition to the dynamics of the industry, Regena believed that she was being typecast by the industry's fixation on female performers' appearances: "I think it's very easy for us to



be stereotyped as a woman in this industry," she said. After all, it's a visual medium, and once you see something, it sticks in your mind, so that's the only reason it's evident. However, I've always aspired to versatility. The actor explained her film selection by saying, "It is really hard for me to pick and choose my films because I don't want to always do mainstream commercial films." "I was a South Indian actress," Regena stated, discussing her proficiency in Hindi in comparison to other South Indian actors. My Hindi is

far superior to that of most South Indians. All of the work I have done in Hindi so far is in my own voice, and I am able to read, write, and speak the language. It's my own Hindi, and I've made an effort to fulfill the responsibilities assigned to me. Prior to becoming well-known for her roles in Siva Manasulo Suthi, Routine Love Story, Kedi Billa Killadi Ranga, Power*, Pilla Nuvvu Leni Jeevitham, Subramanyam for Sale, Jyo Achyutananda, Maanagaram, Awe, and Vidaamuyarchi, Regena made her debut in the Tamil film Kanda Naal Mudhal (2005) as a minor character. She debuted in Hindi in the film Ek Ladki Ko Dekha Toh Aisa Laga, starring Anil Kapoor and Sonam Kapoor. She has since made appearances in Hindi movies such as Kesari Chapter 2 and Jaat. She also plays a significant role in good OTT series like Farzi and Rocket Boys.

Regarding Arijit Singh's Retirement, Anurag Kashyap



Mumbai: Regarding singer Arijit Singh's recent decision to stop playback singing, filmmaker Anurag Kashyap has expressed his opinions. He explained why the well-known musician decided to scale up his professional obligations following years of controlling the music business in an interview with Tried and Refused Productions. Anurag Kashyap clarified throughout the discussion that Arijit's choice was not due to a lack of musical love, but rather to creative tiredness. "Arijit Singh announced his retirement because he was sick of singing the same thing over and over again," he claimed. The heartbreak song, always. He is incredibly gifted. He composed the soundtrack for Pagglait, sung by Sanya Malhotra. He is a filmmaker

as well. He looks after his whole community. He doesn't want to continue singing the same songs because he is a very private person. Arijit Singh is more than just his melancholy ballads. The director claims that Arijit's choice demonstrates his wish to pursue several artistic paths and not be restricted to a specific musical persona. Anurag continued, "Woh bohut kuch karna chahta hain (He wants to try a lot of other things)," adding to the significance of artistic freedom. Since no one had asked him to sing that type of song, he performed almost 100 renditions of it when we performed Nishaanchi. That's the way he is; he does things his way. The soul is the source of music. Pure singers and musicians are soul-driven. They will come up with something else if you allow them that space. However, they feel constrained if you tell them, "Aisa hi chahiye" (just this we desire). They believe they aren't doing enough self-exploration. Arijit declared on January 27 that he would no longer accept playback vocalist gigs. He will still, however, provide the voice of Sai Pallavi and Junaid Khan in the upcoming movie Ek Din. Arijit Singh has been the indisputable voice of melody and heartbreak for a new generation for more than ten years. From Salman Khan to Shah Rukh Khan, Ranveer Singh to Ranbir Kapoor, he has consistently been the go-to composer for big-budget productions.

After a challenging year, India’s global ambitions are affirmed at the AI Summit

New Delhi, Feb 17: Six months ago, US President Donald Trump was verbally attacking Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who was also attempting to retake control of Pakistan following an armed conflict and dealing with concerns about the future of his economy. Two months into the new year, he has negotiated significant trade agreements with the US and the EU, will host a number of foreign leaders who wish to finalize their own agreements in the upcoming weeks, is enjoying a surge in public support after important state elections, and his top officials anticipate economic growth to surpass the government’s own projections. When PM Modi takes the stage at a high-profile artificial intelligence event in New Delhi this week, he will have the chance to highlight both India’s aspirations for the world and his personal comeback. More than a dozen heads of state, including those from France and Brazil, as well as some of the most powerful figures in the

tech industry, including Sam Altman of OpenAI, Sundar Pichai of Alphabet Inc., and Dario Amodi of Anthropic PBC, will be present at the India AI Impact Summit. PM Modi sees the summit as an opportunity to solidify his position in the AI race and draw attention to the nation as it looks to recover from a challenging year. PM Modi, who is over two years into his third term, wants to reestablish India as a growing economic force and seek a political reset. Swaran Singh, a professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University’s School of International Studies in New Delhi, stated that the AI conference “offers a great stage for the prime minister to project his image as a developer or a modernizer - someone who has a vision of future for India.” “And he’s good at utilizing such opportunities.”PM Modi seemed like he was in a bad position for a large portion of last year. An armed conflict in May brought tensions with Pakistan, a neighbor with nuclear weapons, to a peak.



Trump made things more confusing by saying he put an end to the war, a remark that Pakistan hated but PM Modi and his officials vehemently denied. A few months later, Trump attacked India for its trade restrictions and connections to Russia, imposing 50% tariffs on Indian imports. India’s relations with the US have improved in 2026, with reduced tariffs on Indian goods and renewed trade efforts, including a free trade pact with the EU. PM Modi is strengthening trade ties amidst past diplomatic

crises with Canada and addressing challenges such as economic growth and unemployment. The government anticipates growth of 7.2% thanks to reforms and US trade agreements. India is also becoming a key player in AI, attracting significant investments, although concerns about job automation from AI pose risks to its labor market. Modi’s domestic support remains strong, reflecting victories in regional elections, though he faces future challenges, particularly regarding economic equity and job creation.

Smriti Mandhana was chosen as Indian sportswoman of the year



New Delhi: At the BBC’s Indian Sportswoman of the Year awards, Smriti Mandhana was crowned Indian Sportswoman of the Year, capping off an incredible year in cricket. After leading the Royal Challengers Bengaluru to their second WPL championship and playing a key part in India’s World Cup victory, the Indian opener deserved the recognition. One of the tournament’s highlights, Mandhana, 29, was India’s vice-captain during their successful 2025 ICC Women’s World Cup campaign. She amassed

434 runs as India easily won the championship. She defeated fierce competition for the title, including hurdler Jyothi Yarraji, chess star Divya Deshmukh, shooter Suruchi Singh, and Harmanpreet Kaur. Smriti Mandhana had a successful year in women’s cricket while going through a challenging time in her personal life. Mandhana reminisced on the exceptional year for the Indian women’s cricket team as she accepted the prize. “I am grateful to the BBC for bestowing upon me the title of Best Sportswoman

of the Year. In particular, the World Cup at the close of 2025 made it a memorable year for women’s cricket, and I’m glad I was able to help India win games,” she remarked. That’s what the left-hander has been doing for a while. She made her India debut at 16 and has gone on to score 17 international centuries — a record she shares with Australia great Meg Lanning. Furthermore, it extends beyond the national arena. In addition, Mandhana has won two Women’s Premier League championships with Royal Challengers Bengaluru, adding to her already impressive trophy collection. The award was chosen by a grand jury that included long-jump legend Anju Bobby George, Paralympic standout Deepa Malik, and tennis veteran Leander Paes. The night also belonged to Divya Deshmukh, a chess prodigy who received Emerging Player of the Year for her incredible victory at the age of 20 in the FIDE Women’s World Cup. Shooter Anjali Bhagwat won the Lifetime Achievement Award for her groundbreaking career on the international scene, while Preethi Pal was named Para-Sportswoman of the Year for her two bronze medals in athletics at the 2024 Paralympics in Paris.

Shoaib Akhtar’s quick U-turn: Mohsin Naqvi went from being a bad man to a good man in a day

New Delhi: Just one day after his remarks were widely perceived as a vicious assault on Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Mohsin Naqvi in the wake of Pakistan’s crushing loss to India in the T20 World Cup, Pakistani legend Shoaib Akhtar quickly changed his mind about his criticism of the PCB chief, calling him “a good guy.” Akhtar has since stated that his comments were not directed at Naqvi specifically. Akhtar had burst in rage following Pakistan’s humiliating 61-run defeat in Colombo on February 15. The former fast bowler stated that he never meant to call the PCB chairman incompetent, but Indian TV stations misrepresented his statements. “Mohsin Naqvi was never the target of my remarks. He was not the target of the incompetent statement; rather, it was intended for the top executives who oversee international cricket. Akhtar said that some Indian TV stations misrepresented what he had said. “I even requested people not to say anything bad about Mohsin bhai in that same program because I won’t put

up with that. I’ve always maintained that he is a decent man who sincerely wishes to support Pakistani cricket. However, he also acknowledged that he doesn’t always receive the best guidance. Following Akhtar’s vehement tirade earlier this week, which was perceived as a direct jab at Naqvi and the PCB administration, the clarification was made. Akhtar had launched a scathing attack on the board’s operations and the leadership in charge of Pakistan cricket after the team’s most recent lopsided defeat against India. The former pacer cautioned against putting unfit people in positions of authority, arguing that bad decisions made at the top will unavoidably affect the field. His remarks were widely perceived by spectators as being directed directly at Mohsin Naqvi, who has continued to play a major role in Pakistan cricket’s recent issues, especially in the lead-up to the intense India match. More political headlines have frequently been made during Naqvi’s tenure as captain than on cricket’s advancement.

The Rajasthan Royals have approached Gautam Gambhir about coaching in the IPL

New Delhi: Gautam Gambhir has reportedly been offered a return to the Indian Premier League (IPL), over two years after his last IPL stint, during which he guided Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) to the 2024 championship before taking over as head coach of the senior men’s Indian side. One of the new owners of the Rajasthan Royals has suggested that Gambhir play not just one, but a sweeping triple role, according to a report in Dainik Jagran. According to the article, Gambhir received a proposal from one of the three new investors in the Rajasthan franchise, offering him the position of “partner, mentor, and CEO.” The new



owners are purchasing the majority of the Rajasthan Royals’ stock. At the moment, the agreement is transferable. In addition to the positions of mentor and CEO, one of the shareholders in RR’s new management has offered Gambhir a two to three percent inter-

est, according to the report. Gambhir, however, is unable to accept the offer while he is still the Indian team’s head coach. Citing a conflict of interest, a Supreme Court decision based on the recommendations of the Lodha Committee prohibits a person from working for both the Indian team and an IPL club at the same time. Gambhir would have to resign as India’s head coach if he accepted Rajasthan’s offer. Although they declined to comment, people close to the former India batter said he is still dedicated to his current position. However, following the 2027 ODI World Cup in South Africa, his contract as head coach of India would

expire. Gambhir has been a part of two IPL teams since he retired from playing. From 2022 to 2023, he coached the Lucknow Super Giants, leading them to the postseason each year. Before taking Rahul Dravid’s place as India’s head coach in July 2024, he then joined KKR in a similar capacity for the 2024 season. At the moment, Gambhir is in charge of India’s domestic T20 World Cup campaign. The reigning champions have advanced to the Super 8s by winning all three of their group-stage games against the USA, Namibia, and Pakistan. Later this week, they play the Netherlands in their last group match.

At the AI summit, the Army displays its domestic systems, from XFace to Nabh Drishti

New Delhi, Feb 17: The Indian Army demonstrated a variety of domestic dual-use AI solutions at the AI Impact summit, highlighting its transformation into a data-centric, AI-enabled force that supports India’s drive for technological independence and secure digital capacity.

The Additional Directorate General of Public Information at the Ministry of Defense’s (Army) Integrated Headquarters announced the development in a post. The Army emphasized that the technologies, which cover education, cybersecurity, disaster management, logistics, and operations planning, are made for both military and civilian uses. Among the tools showcased are SAM-UN, a geospatial situational-awareness tool designed for mission planning, disaster response, and smart command centers, and AI Examiner, an automated evaluation and feedback platform for training and education. Additional options include PRAKSHEPAN, an AI-driven climatology and disaster-prediction system that can send out advance alerts for avalanches, floods, and landslides, and EKAM,



a safe domestic AI cloud platform that guarantees data sovereignty. The Army also unveiled Nabh Drishti, a mobile telemetry-based real-time reporting and visualization platform, and XFace, a face recognition-based security and identity verification tool. An AI-enabled vehicle tracking system for fleet monitoring and optimization, an AI-in-a-Box portable edge computing system for deployment in distant areas, and a driver tiredness detection device for real-time drows-

iness alarms all address operational safety and logistics. To combat malware, synthetic media, and new cyberthreats, deepfake detection and AI-powered cybersecurity solutions have also been developed. The Army characterized the projects as a “decisive move toward a secure, networked, and AI-empowered ecosystem” that aims to improve cybersecurity, disaster resilience, and overall national growth in addition to bolstering defense readiness.

Five Maharashtra teachers were suspended for encouraging mass copying during an exam

New Delhi, Feb 17: On Tuesday, an official announced that five teachers had been suspended for allegedly enabling widespread copying of an HSC (Class 12) exam paper at a center in the Beed district of Maharashtra. On February 10, the first day of the Class 12 exams administered by the Maharashtra State Board of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education, at Centre 224 in

Chousala, a drone camera revealed extensive copying, prompting the police to file a first information report (FIR) against 17 instructors. Authorities used drone-mounted surveillance cameras to record supervisors in 16 test rooms, allegedly aiding students in blatantly cheating while also failing to stop copying. According to the official, 12 teachers from three different schools and

junior colleges are being investigated and could be suspended as the investigation continues, while five teachers from Bhalchandra Vidyalaya in Limbaganesh have been suspended in relation to the misconduct. Beed Collector Vivek Johnson ordered stern action against individuals guilty for the lapse after learning about the February 10 event. As a result, charges under the Ma-

harashtra Universities, Boards and Other Specified Examinations (Prevention of Malpractices) Act and the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita were brought against 17 teachers, including the main conductor of the exam center, in a formal complaint filed at the Neknorkar police station. The relevant institutions were then instructed to suspend the implicated staff by the Education Department.

Yogi Adityanath Says “Opposing” Vande Mataram Is Treason

Lucknow, Feb 17: Making “insulting remarks” against national symbols and “opposing” Vande Mataram, according to Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, on Monday was tantamount to treason. He charged that the Samajwadi Party and Congress were insulting the National Song and deceiving people in the name of the Constitution. Speaking during the Budget Session in the Legislative Council, Adityanath stated that the state is proud of its history and feels that legacy-based development creates the groundwork for a promising future. But he warned that “the new India and the new Uttar Pradesh will not accept it” if anyone extols “invaders” who “attacked the soul of India” and attempted to shackle its faith for political ends. “You observe how remarks are made in favor of anti-national sentiments or disparaging remarks are directed at emblems of patriotism. Treason is what this is,” he declared. The Constituent Assembly recognized the National Song on January 24, 1950, and Adityanath said it represents India’s honor and dignity. According to him, it is the responsibility of every Indian to honor national sym-

bols, such as the tricolor, the national anthem, the national hymn, and national icons. In honor of Vande Mataram’s 150th anniversary, the Center just released new codes. Adityanath added that rejecting Vande Mataram was an insult to the Constitution and its framers, including B R Ambedkar, and that he was thankful that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had issued a notification requiring the National Song to be played at public events. “I have a question for the Congress and Samajwadi Party: while you claim to be misleading the public in the name of the Constitution, your MPs have stated that they will not support Vande Mataram. What does it signify? Do you wish to reside in India but find the national anthem and music offensive? “This is unacceptable,” he declared. In response to the debate on the governor’s speech, he stated that 51 members from all parties enhanced the discussion with their insightful recommendations and maintained its dignity, and he thanked them for their efforts. The governor’s address outlines government achievements and future plans, emphasizing the importance of respect for constitutional offices.

Suryakumar Yadav refused to sledging Pakistan



New Delhi: During the T20 World Cup Group stage, the Indian cricket team’s deeds were more vocal than their words. A match on Sunday in Colombo versus Pakistan. India scored 175/7 in the first innings and crushed their bitter rivals by 61 runs. Jasprit Bumrah, Hardik Pandya, and the spinners had a great day with the ball, but Ishan Kishan was the outstanding batsman. Everyone applauded Suryakumar Yadav’s captaincy during this time. The India skipper stayed composed and made no hostile gestures or needless yelling. Before India started defending the total, Yadav actually instructed everyone in the team huddle to “say nothing to anyone.” “Keep running in between the overs. Kisi se kuch bolna nahi (Don’t say anything to anyone). We have to play good cricket. We will win this game with good skills,” said Suryakumar during the huddle. India crushed Pakistan

by 61 runs in the ongoing T20 World Cup on Sunday in Colombo, and Indian cricket veteran Sunil Gavaskar hailed Suryakumar Yadav for bringing situational awareness to India’s batting. When he saved India at 77/6 against the USA and later steadied the innings at 88/2 against bitter rivals Pakistan, where he batted through to the 19th over for 32 runs, he demonstrated Surya’s leadership from the front. India reached 175/7 in their 20 overs thanks to a cool knock of 32 runs off 29 balls, including three fours, by Suryakumar. With this victory, India guaranteed their place in the T20 World Cup 2026 Super 8 round. Captain Suryakumar Yadav has demonstrated strategic leadership in T20 cricket, exemplified by his performance against the USA and Pakistan. Despite challenging situations, he played crucial roles, stabilizing the team’s innings by focusing on wicket preservation rather than aggressive scoring. His awareness of match dynamics and conditions has significantly impacted the team’s performance, contributing to India’s 8-1 lead in head-to-head encounters with Pakistan in the ICC Men’s T20 World Cup.

Unable to cope with the loss of their son, couple commits suicide

New Delhi, Feb 17: After failing to deal with the loss of their only kid in a car accident a few days prior, a couple in the Janjgir-Champa district of Chhattisgarh committed suicide. After leaving a four-page suicide note and a video, the couple allegedly used a saree noose to hang themselves on a tree in their courtyard. The event took place on February 16. The house’s main entrance was closed from the inside, and neither Ramabai Patel (47) nor her husband, Krishna Patel, were seen by the neighbors. They began referring to the husband and wife by their names after growing suspicious. But no answer was received, and the neighbors became even more agitated. Both victims were dangling in the courtyard from the moose when they later peered through the window. The cops were swiftly dispatched to the scene

when the neighbors alerted them. The bodies of the victims were removed from the moose and transported for a post-mortem examination. A video and the suicide note the couple left before committing suicide were also taken by the police. They may be seen in the video asking the husband’s older brother for an insurance payout. A case has been filed in the interim, and every possible explanation for the death is being looked into. According to the preliminary inquiry report, the couple chose to hang themselves because they were unable to cope with the loss of their son, who died in a car accident. The whole community was shrouded in sadness after the occurrence. The townspeople bemoaned that if the couple had gotten mental care during their difficult period, they would not have gone to such extreme lengths.

Hockey India announces 24-member squad for FIH Men’s Pro League Hobart leg 2025-26

New Delhi: Hockey India announced a 24-member Indian Men’s Hockey Team for the Hobart leg of the FIH Men’s Pro League 2025-26, scheduled to take place from February 20 to 25 at the Tasmania Hockey Centre in Hobart, according to a release from Hockey India. The upcoming leg of the tournament will feature India alongside Spain and hosts Australia, promising high-octane and competitive hockey action.

Following the conclusion of the Rourkela leg of the tournament, where the team squared up against Belgium and Argentina, the team now turns its attention to the upcoming Hobart leg. The 24-member Indian Men’s Hockey Team boasts a strong mix of experienced players and exciting young talent as the team looks to bounce back with improved performances. Experienced campaigner Hardik Singh, who is a two-time Olympic Bronze Medalist in Tokyo 2020 and Paris 2024, has been appointed as the captain of the side. The team will also feature a strong mix of talented youngsters, including Amandeep Lakra and Manmeet Singh, who made their debut appearances for the senior team during the Rourkela leg. Meanwhile, Harmanpreet



Singh will not be part of the squad due to personal reasons. The squad comprises Suraj Karkera and Mohith Honnen-Ahalli Shashikumar sharing the goalkeeping responsibilities. Meanwhile, Amit Rohidas, Jarmanpreet Singh, Jugraj Singh, Sanjay, and Sumit add the experience to the defensive unit that also includes exciting youngsters such as Amandeep Lakra, Yashdeep Siwach, and Poovanna Chandura Bobby. Captain Hardik Singh, Sanjay, Vivek Sagar Prasad and Raj Kumar Pal will anchor the

Midfield alongside Rajinder Singh, Manmeet Singh, Moirangthem Rabichandra Singh and Vishnu Kant Singh. The forward line will be led by established stars, including Mandeep Singh, Abhishek and Shilanand Lakra. Maninder Singh also marks his return to the team, having been part of the Hero Asia Cup in 2022, where he played six matches, while also being part of the squad in the FIH Hockey Pro League 2022-23 and 2023-24. Angad Bir Singh, who made his debut for the senior team

last year, also returns to the team for his first international tour, while young guns Arajeet Singh Hundal and Aditya Arjun Lalage complete the attacking line. The Hobart leg of the FIH Men’s Pro League 2025-26 will offer the squad an opportunity to regroup as they look to build towards the Men’s FIH Hockey World Cup and Asian Games later this year. Speaking on the squad, Indian Men’s Hockey Team Chief Coach Craig Fulton said, “After a disappointing four in Maninder Singh

Yamal misses penalty, Barcelona collapse late as Girona claim 2-1 La Liga victory in dramatic fashion

Barca suffer second defeat, now trail Madrid by

Girona: Lamine Yamal missed a penalty as Barcelona lost at Girona 2-1 on Monday and passed up a chance to overtake Real Madrid at the top of La Liga. The defeat was the second in less than a week for Barca and left it second in the table, two points behind Madrid. A win would have taken it above its archrival but, instead, a crisis brewed for coach Hansi Flick, whose side lost to Atletico Madrid 4-0 in the Copa del Rey last week.

The second loss came even though Barcelona took the lead early in the second half. Yamal hit the post with his spot kick on the stroke of halftime but 14 minutes into the second period Pau Cubarsí met Jules Kounde’s cross from the right and placed his header perfectly into the top corner. The goal was Barcelona’s 100th in all competitions this season and made it the second club in Europe’s big five domestic leagues to hit the century after Bayern Munich. However, Girona roared back into the game just three minutes later. Barcelona’s Joan Garcia was already the busier of the two goalkeepers but he



Could not stop Thomas Lemar side-footing home from close range after nice work from Vladyslav Vanat on the left wing. Both sides pushed for a decisive second and it was Girona who executed with three minutes remaining, substitute Fran Beltrán scoring with a low shot from just inside the box. Girona’s Joel Roca was sent off in the dying seconds but there were no more goals. The victory ended a three-game winless streak for Girona and lifted it three places into 12th, equal on points with Getafe. Only seven points separate the 11 clubs from eighth to 18th in La Liga. Despite a coaching change and some poor play that irked its fans, Real Madrid returned to the top of La Liga after Klyian

Mbappé scored a brace in a 2-0 win at Villarreal on Saturday. Mbappé scored early in the second half and added an injury-time penalty to ensure Madrid rose two points above Barcelona, which will need to beat bottom side Real Oviedo at home on Sunday to reclaim first place. Those were Mbappé’s La Liga-leading 20th and 21st goals in 20 appearances by the France star. Madrid has stayed close to Barcelona even though it has not been playing up to the standards of its demanding club executives and supporters. The club fired coach Xabi Alonso after it lost to Barcelona in the Spanish Super Cup final two weeks ago, only for the team to also endure an embarrassing exit

to a second-tier team in the Copa del Rey in the debut of his replacement, Álvaro Arbeloa. The sudden coaching change and poor play sparked fan protests during Madrid’s last two home games, a pair of wins in La Liga and the Champions League.

But a loss by Barcelona at Real Sociedad last weekend opened the door for Madrid to slip ahead at Villarreal. And now Arbeloa has overseen three comfortable victories in a row. Arbeloa praised Mbappé and fellow forward Vinicius Júnior, whose incisive play with the ball helped set up both goals. Vinicius received the worst of the jeers in the Santiago Bernabeu this week. They are two of the best players in the world, they break down defenses and we try to get them as many touches as we can,” Arbeloa said. “Winning at this ground has a lot of merit and it is thanks to the work of all my players.” Villarreal still has one more game to play but it fell into fourth place at 10 points behind Madrid. Morocco a lead late in stoppage time, went on as a second-half substitute for Madrid.

Mohammed Shami scalps eight wickets in Ranji semis, putting India’s selectors on high alert with his dominant performance



Kolkata: Mohammed Shami came knocking loudly on the doors of India’s selectors with a sensational eight-wicket haul for Bengal in the Ranji Trophy semi-final against Jammu & Kashmir in Kalyani on Tuesday, February 17. The veteran pacer continued his red-hot domestic form with a spell that could reignite national selection conversations. Shami starred with the ball at the Bengal Cricket Ground, dismantling the J&K batting line-up with pace, control and experience. He brought up his five-wicket haul in the 59th over of the first innings, getting wicketkeeper-batter Kanhaiya Wadhawan caught behind before celebrating fiercely with his teammates.

The eight-wicket match haul was another reminder of Shami’s growing rhythm in domestic cricket this season. The 35-year-old has been consistently among the wickets, producing match-winning spells at a time when India’s pace depth is under constant scrutiny. Shami’s form surge has been building steadily. He had also claimed a five-wicket haul against Services last month, returning figures of 5/51 in the second innings. Overall, the 35-year-old has now snapped up 38 wickets in seven matches, including three five-fors, cementing his place among the standout bowlers of this Ranji season. Shami’s strong domestic run has extended beyond red-ball cricket as well.

He was equally impressive in the Vijay Hazare Trophy, where he claimed 15 wickets in seven matches at an economy rate of 6.09. Yet, despite these performances, he was overlooked for the recently concluded ODI series against New Zealand and did not feature in the squad for the 2026 T20 World Cup. Mohammed Siraj was drafted in late as an injury replacement for Harshit Rana. The pacer has also endured setbacks off the field, including losing his BCCI central contract. His last appearance for India came during the 2025 Champions Trophy, and since then, Shami has been working his way back into contention through consistent performances in domestic cricket.

Bengal, meanwhile, posted a solid 328 in their first innings, led by Sudip Kumar Gharami’s superb 146. With Shami spearheading the bowling attack, they kept Jammu & Kashmir under constant pressure, ensuring Bengal remained firmly in control of the semi-final contest. Following the Ranji Trophy, Shami is set to return to franchise cricket, with his next assignment coming for Lucknow Super Giants in IPL 2026. But with India’s international calendar packed with major Test challenges in 2026, Shami’s resurgence could soon become impossible for selectors to ignore.

FIH Pro League: Hardik Singh to lead India in Hobart leg, Harmanpreet Singh ruled out

New Delhi: India will be without regular captain Harmanpreet Singh for the upcoming FIH Pro League matches in Hobart, with midfielder Hardik Singh named skipper for the February 20-25 leg. Harmanpreet has opted out due to “personal reasons”, Hockey India confirmed in a statement on Tuesday.

The leadership change comes at a challenging time for the Indian men’s team, which endured a forgettable outing in the Rourkela leg, losing all four matches. The low point was a stunning 0-8 defeat to Argentina, a result that exposed defensive frailties and dented confidence. In Hobart, India will face Spain and hosts Australia at the Tasmania Hockey Centre, with an eye on restoring momentum midway through the tournament. “After a disappointing four matches in Rourkela, where the results didn’t go our way, we’ve learned some good lessons and made some notable improvements,” chief coach Craig Fulton said.



Going into the Hobart leg, we’re aiming for improved performances and looking to finalise our squad for the World Cup and the Asian Games.” Hardik, a two-time Olympic bronze medalist, now takes charge of a side blending experience with youth. The midfield mainstay has been one of India’s most consistent performers in recent years and will be tasked with steadying the group after a turbulent phase. Suraj Karkera and Mohith Honnenahalli Shashikumar will share goalkeeping duties, with Mohith replacing Pawan from the previous leg. The defence will be marshalled by experienced names such as

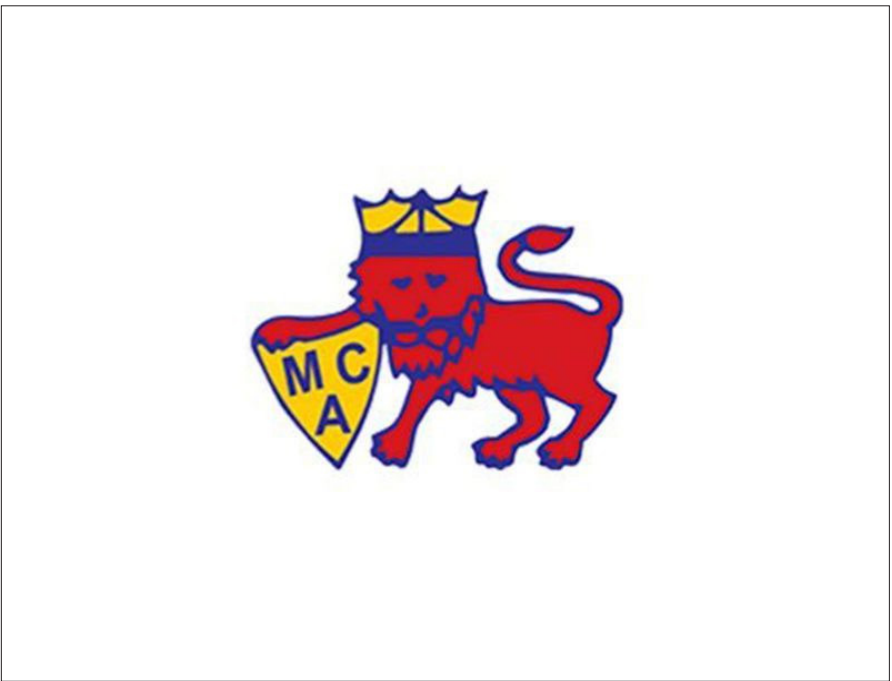
Amit Rohidas, Jarmanpreet Singh, Jugraj Singh, Sanjay and Sumit, alongside promising youngsters Amandeep Lakra, Yashdeep Siwach and Poovanna Chandura Bobby. In midfield, Hardik will be supported by Vivek Sagar Prasad, Raj Kumar Pal, Rajinder Singh, Manmeet Singh, Moirangthem Rabichandra Singh and Vishnu Kant Singh. The forward line features established attackers Mandeep Singh, Abhishek and Shilanand Lakra. Striker Maninder Singh returns to the national setup after last appearing in the 2023-24 Pro League season, while Angad Bir Singh is back for his first international tour.

Jarvis replaces injured Sharif in Scotland

New Delhi: Scotland’s Jack Jarvis has been approved as a replacement for Safyaan Sharif by the Event Technical Committee (ETC) of the ICC Men’s T20 World Cup 2026 on Monday, according to ICC. Sharif injured his right groin during a team training session on February 12. He will be replaced by Jarvis, who has played eight T20I matches for Scotland and was already with the squad as a travelling reserve. The ETC of the ICC Men’s T20 World Cup 2026 consists of Wasim Khan - ICC General Manager - Cricket (ICC Representative), Gaurav Saxena (IBC Representative), Hemang Amin (Host Representative), and Shaun Pollock (Independent Representative). Scotland have won one out of their three group-stage matches in the tournament so far, and they will face Nepal on Tuesday at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai. The Richie Berr-Dushan Hemantha.

Mumbai Cricket Association officially invites team bids for inaugural T20 Mumbai Women’s League tournament

Mumbai: The Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) has invited bids from interested and eligible parties for the right to operate three teams in the T20 Mumbai Women’s League, according to an official statement. Interested parties or participants can obtain the bid documents from the MCA office at the Cricket Centre, Wankhede Stadium, upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Rs 25,000. The Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) is the governing body of the T20 Mumbai Women’s League.



Chinmay Sutar (53) anchored the MSC Maratha Royals’ chase with a fluent half-century, supported by valuable contributions from Sahil Jadhav (22), Sachin Yadav (19), and the explosive Awais Khan (38). Skipper Siddhesh Lad (15) and Sahil gave the Royals

a Steady start with a quick 32-run opening stand. Chinmay then took charge, constructing two crucial partnerships -- a 41-run stand with Sachin Yadav followed by a 63-run alliance with Awais Khan -- that put the Royals firmly in control of the chase. However, with just

eight Runs required off 10 balls, left-arm spinner Kartik Mishra brought the Falcons back into the contest with a dramatic penultimate over, dismissing both Awais and Chinmay to swing the momentum momentarily. But with seven needed off the final over, victory.

Ezzejari double powers East Bengal victory

Kolkata: A double strike within six minutes in the second half by Youssef Ezzejari and an injury time goal by Miguel Ferreira guided East Bengal to a 3-0 win against North-East United in Match 6 of the Indian Super League (ISL) 2025-26 season which was played here at the Vivekananda Yuba Bharati Krirangan. Oscar Bruzon started Jeakson Singh alongside Anwar Ali in the centre of the defence with Lalchungnunga shifted to the right back position, and Jay Gupta starting on the left flank. Juan Pedro Benali gave a start to Parthib Gogoi to lead the attack for North-East United with Jithin M.S and Jairo Samperio supporting the youngster, as per a press release from ISL. East Bengal were quick off the blocks and put some early pressure on the NorthEast backline, pressing them high up the pitch, which led to some misplaced places in the midfield. The 11-year-old prodigy made history as the first female driver coaches.

Jose Mourinho’s Benfica not banking on miracles versus wounded Real Madrid



New Delhi: Jose Mourinho believes Real Madrid will respond fiercely after their shock loss to Benfica, warning that a “wounded king” is often the most dangerous. Benfica stunned the 15 time European champions 4-2 in the final round of the league phase, a result that denied Madrid automatic qualification for the round of 16 and pushed them into the playoffs. The two sides meet again in Lisbon on Tuesday in the first leg of their knockout tie. Speaking ahead of the clash, Mourinho said the defeat has only sharpened Madrid’s edge. “They are wounded,” Mourinho said. “And a wounded king is dangerous. We will play the first

leg with our heads, with ambition and confidence. We know what we did to the kings of the Champions League.” Despite Benfica’s recent victory, Mourinho made it clear he understands the size of the task. I do not think it takes a miracle for Benfica to eliminate Real Madrid,” he said. “I think we need to be at our highest level. I do not even say high, I mean maximum, almost bordering on perfection, which does not exist. But not a miracle.” He was equally respectful of Madrid’s stature. “Real Madrid is Real Madrid, with history, knowledge, ambition. The only comparable thing is that we are two giants. Beyond that, there is nothing

else. But football has this power and we can win.” Benfica’s dramatic win in Lisbon three weeks ago came courtesy of an extraordinary moment, as goalkeeper Anatoliy Trubin scored a last minute header to secure progression on goal Difference. Trubin will not be in the attack this time,” Mourinho joked. A veteran of European knockout football, Mourinho also dismissed the idea that the first leg would define the tie. I am very used to these kinds of ties, I have been doing it all my life,” he said. “People often think you need a certain result in the first leg for this or that reason. I say there is no definitive result.” As Benfica prepare to host the Spanish giants once more, Mourinho’s message is clear. His side do not need a miracle, but they must be close to perfection to overcome a wounded Real Madrid. Atiqa Mir is breaking barriers by competing as the only female driver on the elite WSK Super Mastersgrid and securing historic milestones for Indian Motorsport.