

Mizoram Governor Vijay Kumar Singh Participates In The Digital Census 2027 Self-Enumeration Exercise

Aizawl, Apr 07: Mizoram Governor, General (Dr) Vijay Kumar Singh, PVSM, AVSM, YSM (Retd), successfully completed his self-enumeration under Phase I of the Census of India 2027 (Houselisting and Housing Census) at Lok Bhavan in Aizawl this morning. General (Dr) Vijay Kumar described India's first digital census as a landmark initiative and urged all census officials in Mizoram to make every effort to ensure its smooth and successful implementation across the state. He appealed to the public to take the exercise seriously by registering themselves in the census and to extend full cooperation to the enumerators.

He instructed officials to reach even the remotest corners of the state, ensure the process remains as hassle-free as possible for citizens, and conduct the entire exercise in a clear, transparent, and doubt-free manner. Highlighting the strong Mizo tradition of community support and mutual assistance, the Governor emphasised the importance of close collaboration between census officials and Village Councils or Local Councils to make the fieldwork



smoother. He extended his best wishes for the census to be carried out as effectively as possible in Mizoram. On the occasion, senior officials from the Directorate of Census Operations briefed the Governor on the census preparedness, strategies, and progress in the state. Those present included Vinod P. Kavle, Director of Census Operations; Joseph H. Lalramsanga, Municipal Commissioner cum Principal Census Officer; Irene Zohlimpui Chongthu, Additional Secretary, GAD & Additional State Nodal Of-

ficer; Shivam Gupta, Assistant Director of Census Operations; and Sandip Panja, Assistant Director of Census Operations. The Census of India 2027 is the country's first digital census and will be conducted in two phases. The first phase Houselisting and Housing Census began on 1 April, 2026.

The second phase, Population Enumeration, is scheduled for February 2027. The self-enumeration window is open from 1 April to 15 April, 2026. This will be followed by the House Listing and Housing Census across

Mizoram from 16 April to 15 May, 2026. India news analysis On April 7, 2026, Mizoram Governor General (Dr) Vijay Kumar Singh (Retd) officially participated in the Census 2027 self-enumeration process. By completing his registration at Lok Bhavan in Aizawl, the Governor signaled the importance of the country's first-ever digital census and encouraged citizens across the state to follow suit. The Census of India 2027 marks a significant departure from traditional paper-based methods.

Mizoram to ink peace pact with HPC(D) April 14

Aizawl, Apr 07: The Mizoram government will sign a peace agreement with the Lalhmingthanga Sanate-led faction of the Hmar People's Convention (Democratic) on April 14 at Sakawrdai village near the Manipur border, aiming to end one of the region's longest-running insurgencies.

Officials confirmed the pact will be signed between the State Home Secretary and HPC(D) president Lalhmingthanga Sanate, in the presence of Adviser to the Chief Minister (Political) Lalmuanpuia Punte. The ceremony will also mark the surrender of 43 cadres, who will enter rehabilitation later this month. The accord follows recent talks in Aizawl, where the Sanate faction agreed to a settlement focused on developmental measures—particularly connectivity in the Sinlung Hills Council area—alongside rehabilitation, amnesty, and compensation for surrendered arms. Notably, the group did not press for political demands.

The Sanate faction is regarded as the last active strand of the Hmar insurgency, which began in the late 1980s. The movement originated with the Hmar People's Convention (HPC) in 1986, seeking self-governance. Armed conflict escalated in 1987, peaking in the early 1990s, before a 1994 settlement created the Sinlung Hills Development Council and saw 308 militants surrender.

Dissatisfaction with the accord led Sanate to form the HPC(D), which



continued armed activity. A rival faction under H. Zosangbera signed a separate peace deal in 2018, resulting in the Sinlung Hills Council. The Sanate faction, however, remained outside the peace process, operating from bases in Assam's Cachar district, with activities limited in recent years to sporadic extortion.

The April 14 agreement is expected to formally close the chapter on the Hmar insurgency, marking a significant step toward long-term peace and stability in Mizoram. Despite these developments, the Sanate faction remained outside the peace process, operating from bases in Assam's Cachar district. Its activities dwindled in recent years, limited to sporadic extortion. The upcoming agreement is therefore seen as a final closure to the Hmar insurgency, ending nearly four decades of conflict.

Observers note that the accord could serve as a model for resolving other lingering insurgencies in the Northeast, where factions often splinter and prolong unrest. By prioritizing development, rehabilitation, and reconciliation over political demands, Mizoram hopes to secure lasting peace and stability.

Train Hits Buffalo Herd in Assam Tunnel, Rail Services Briefly Disrupted

Guwahati, Apr 07: Rail services on the Lumding-Badarpur hill section were briefly disrupted on Monday after the Kanchanjunga Express collided with a herd of buffaloes inside a tunnel near New Haflong in Dima Hasao district.

According to railway sources, the incident took place inside Tunnel No. 16, close to New Haflong Hill station. The train struck a group of buffaloes that had entered the tunnel, resulting in multiple animal deaths and a temporary obstruction of the railway track.

Initial reports stated that several buffaloes were trapped near the locomotive after the collision. While some were injured, at least eight buffaloes were found dead at the site.

Railway officials immediately deployed teams from the Engineering Department and the Railway Protection Force (RPF) to the location. Rescue and clearance operations were launched to remove the carcasses and restore normal train movement.

As part of the operation, the train was reversed back to New Haflong station to safely clear the tracks and ensure there was no damage to the rake. Officials confirmed that the track was cleared shortly after, and train services resumed normal operations on the hill section. No injuries to passengers or railway staff were reported. Authorities are expected to review safety measures to prevent animals from entering vulnerable areas such as tunnels, especially in hilly terrain.

Internet Suspended in Five Districts for Three Days

Imphal, Apr 07: The State Government has ordered suspension of internet and mobile data services in five districts amid mass public protests against the killing of two children in a bomb attack at Tronglaobi by suspected Kuki militants. As per an order issued by the Home Department, internet services, including mobile data, broadband, VSATs and VPN services, have been suspended in Imphal West, Imphal East, Thoubal, Kakching and Bishnupur districts for three days starting from 2 pm on April 7. "In view of the prevailing law and order situation in five districts of Manipur viz, Imphal West, Imphal East, Thoubal, Kakching and Bishnupur, there exists apprehension that some anti-social elements

might use social media for transmission of images, hate speech and hate video messages inciting the public which might have serious repercussions on the law-and-order situation in the State of Manipur," the order stated.

"Whereas, to thwart the design and activities of anti-national and anti-social elements and to maintain peace and communal harmony and to prevent any loss of life or danger to public/private property, it has become necessary to take adequate preventive measures to maintain law and order in public interest, by stopping the spread of disinformation and false rumours, through various social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter etc. on various electronic equipment like

tablet, computer, mobile phone etc. and sending bulk SMS, for facilitating and/or mobilization of mobs of agitators and demonstrators, which can cause loss of life and/or damage to public/private property by indulging in arson/vandalism and other types of violent activities, the State Government decided to order temporary suspension/curbing of internet services and mobile data services including Broadband, VSATs and VPN services in the territorial jurisdiction of 5 districts viz- Imphal West, Imphal East, Thoubal, Kakching and Bishnupur in public interest," it stated. Notably, huge protests erupted in different locations following the killing of two children in a bomb attack by suspected Kuki militants.

Mizoram to sign peace accord with HPC(D) faction on April 14

Aizawl, Apr 07: The Mizoram government is all set to sign a peace accord with the Lalhmingthanga Sanate-led faction of the Hmar People's Convention (Democratic), or HPC(D), on April 14. According to a State Home department official, the agreement will be signed at Sakawrdai village in Aizawl district bordering Manipur. The agreement follows recent talks in Aizawl between government representatives and an HPC(D) delegation led by Sanate. The official said that on behalf of the State government, the Home Secretary will sign the pact while Sanate will sign on behalf of the outfit. Political Adviser to the Chief Minister Lalmuanpuia Punte is expected to be present during the signing of the agreement, which will coincide with the surrender of 43 cadres of the group.

In Brief

Train Hits Buffalo herd in Assam Tunnel,

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Amit Shah Rallies in Assam

Guwahati: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday launched a strong political offensive during multiple election rallies across Assam, sharply criticising the Indian National Congress and reiterating the BJP's commitment to eliminate illegal infiltration from the state. Addressing rallies in Hailakandi and Patharkandi on the final day of campaigning for the April 9 Assembly elections, Shah urged voters to support the Bharatiya Janata Party for a third consecutive term. He emphasised that the election was not about electing individuals like Himanta Biswa Sarma, but about empowering the BJP to take decisive action against infiltrators.

CM condemns bomb attack

Imphal: Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand vehemently condemned in the strongest terms, the cowardly bomb attack at Tronglaobi Awang Leikai, Moirang in Bishnupur district by suspected armed militants early today, leading to the death of a five-year-old boy and a six-month-old girl and injuring their mother. The Chief Minister assured that the Government will hunt down the perpetrators involved in the heinous crime and justice will be delivered at the earliest.

Amit Shah Rallies in Assam, Promises Crackdown on Infiltration

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that the election was not about electing individuals like Himanta Biswa Sarma, but about empowering the BJP to take decisive action against infiltrators.

Shah claimed that illegal immigrants in Assam have already been identified and asserted that the next phase would involve their systematic deportation. He added that infiltration, which he described as a major threat to livelihoods, identity, and security, would be completely halted if BJP governments are formed not only in Assam but also in neighbouring

states like West Bengal and Tripura. Taking a sharp dig at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, Shah accused the opposition party of indulging in vote-bank politics and allowing Assam to become a "gateway for infiltration." He alleged that during Congress rule, several districts became heavily affected by illegal immigration and claimed that the party continues to rely on such voters for political gains.

Highlighting policy differences, Shah defended key initiatives like the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA)

and proposed implementation of the Uniform Civil Code (UCC), stating that these measures are aimed at ensuring justice and equality. He criticised Congress for opposing these reforms and accused it of misleading the public. The Home Minister also outlined development promises made by the BJP, including infrastructure expansion, flood control measures through construction of large water reservoirs, establishment of institutions like AIIMS in Barak Valley, and financial assistance schemes for women and tea

garden workers. He noted that eviction drives have already freed thousands of acres of government and forest land from alleged illegal occupation.

Referring to peace and security, Shah stated that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, around 11,000 insurgents have laid down arms and joined the mainstream, while multiple peace accords have contributed to stability in the Northeast.

He also accused Congress of weakening legal frameworks in the past, citing the

repeal of the Immigrants (Expulsion from Assam) Act, 1950, and introduction of the Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunals) Act, 1983, which he claimed were designed to protect infiltrators. Shah concluded by urging voters to press the BJP's lotus symbol with determination, stating that strong public support would ensure the removal of infiltrators and continued development in Assam. Polling for all 126 Assembly constituencies will be held on April 9, with counting scheduled for May 4.

Mizoram Governor participates in Census 2027 self-enumeration

Aizawl, Apr 07: Mizoram Governor General Vijay Kumar Singh (Retd) successfully completed his self-enumeration under Phase I of the Census of India 2027 (Houselisting and Housing Census) at Lok Bhavan in Aizawl this morning. General Singh described India's first digital census as a landmark initiative and urged all census officials in Mizoram to make every effort to ensure its smooth and successful implementation across the state. He appealed to the public to take the exercise seriously by registering themselves in the census and to extend full cooperation to the enumerators. He instructed officials to reach even the remotest corners of the state, ensure the process remains as hassle-free as possible for citizens, and conduct the entire exercise in a clear, transparent, and doubt-free manner. Highlighting the strong Mizo tradition of community support and mutual assistance, the Governor emphasised the importance of close collaboration between census officials and Village Councils or Local Councils to make the fieldwork smoother. He extended his best



wishes for the census to be carried out as effectively as possible in Mizoram. On the occasion, senior officials from the Directorate of Census Operations briefed the Governor on the census preparedness, strategies, and progress in the state. Those present included Vinod P. Kavle, Director of Census Operations; Joseph H. Lalramsanga, Municipal Commissioner cum Principal Census Officer; Irene Zohlimpui Chongthu, Additional Secretary, GAD & Additional State Nodal Officer; Shivam Gupta, Assistant Director of Cen-

sus Operations; and Sandip Panja, Assistant Director of Census Operations. The Census of India 2027 is the country's first digital census and will be conducted in two phases. The first phase - Houselisting and Housing Census - began on April 1, 2026. The second phase, Population Enumeration, is scheduled for February 2027. The self-enumeration window is open from April 1 to April 15, 2026. This will be followed by the House Listing and Housing Census across Mizoram from April 16 to May 15, 2026.

NE/EAST

Efforts are underway to evacuate visitors from Lachen an inspection

Sikkim, Apr 07: In the wake of the breach in the road formation at Taram Chu, which has led to the closure of the Chungthang-Lachen road axis, a joint site inspection was conducted to assess the extent of damage and explore the feasibility of restoring traffic movement on Monday.The inspection was carried out by Anant Jain, District Collector, Mangan; L. B. Chettri, Superintendent of Police; Arun Chettri, SDM Chungthang; Chandan Chhetri, SDPO Chungthang; along with the SHO, Chungthang and AE,BAC, an official press release informs.

During the visit, the team conducted a detailed assessment of the damaged stretch and held discussions with officials from the Border Roads Organisation (BRO), including the Commander



and Officer Commanding of 86 RCC, who are responsible for the maintenance and restoration of the affected road.The inspection aimed to evaluate the severity of the breach, identify immediate risks, and explore possible measures for early restoration of connectivity along this vital route. Necessary directions were issued to the concerned executing agencies to take prompt and appropriate action for re-opening the road at the earliest, subject

to safety considerations, informed the Chungthang SDM.

Meanwhile, a coordinated effort was carried out today to clear the thick layer of snow along Lachen- Donkyla- Shiv Mandir axis.

However, the work could not be completed due to adverse weather conditions. Despite best efforts by the Indian Army and BRO in coordination with District Disaster Management Authority and local stakeholders.

Mother injured in suspected projectile attack in Bishnupur Two children killed

Aizawl, Apr 07: Fresh violence was reported in Manipur on Tuesday after two children were killed and their mother injured in a suspected projectile attack in Tronglaobi village of Bishnupur district, officials said. Authorities are also monitoring other sensitive villages along the hill-valley boundary to prevent any further flare-up.According to sources, the attack took place in Moirang Tronglaobi in the early hours, when a projectile, suspected to be a rocket launched by suspected Kuki militants, hit a civilian residence The blast killed a five-year-old

boy and his five-month-old sister, while their mother sustained serious injuries, sources said.

The explosion also caused extensive damage to the house and triggered panic in the village, with residents rushing to the spot after the blast. Local residents alleged that the projectile was fired from nearby hill slopes, with the launch point believed to be more than three kilometres away. Tronglaobi is located along the vulnerable hill-valley fringe of Bishnupur district, near the elevated areas of Churachandpur district, a region that has witnessed



recurring tensions in recent months.Following the incident, security has been tightened in the area. Additional forces have been

deployed to prevent further escalation, while surveillance and search operations have been launched in adjoining hill areas.

Towing back in Bengaluru Central Corporation will cover all areas soon

The police said there will be no break in towing operations to maintain orderly traffic across the city.

Bengaluru, Apr 06: Four years after it was stopped following a severe backlash from the public, towing of vehicles parked in no-parking zones have made a comeback to the city. The Bengaluru Traffic Police (BTP) have already reinstated towing operations within the Bengaluru Central City Corporation from Sunday (April 5) and will gradually extend it across the city.According to a press release issued by BTP on Monday, the decision was taken in coordination with the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) to ensure seamless movement of traffic and reduce violations related to unauthorised parking.

The police said there will be no break in towing operations to maintain orderly traffic across the city. They advised motorists to strictly follow parking regulations and avoid unauthorised parking to prevent penalties and inconvenience. Meanwhile, GBA Chief Commissioner M Maheshwar Rao on Monday instructed officials to start towing of abandoned vehicles in all the five corporations limits from Tuesday.

Towing should start immediately to remove abandoned vehicles parked on city roads for many months, he said. “Bengaluru North and Central City Corporations have already communicated to the traffic police to remove such



vehicles. The North City Corporation has also given a list of roads with such vehicles. In the remaining corporations, towing should start from tomorrow (Tuesday),” he said.The government suspended towing operations on February 2, 2022, following allegations of harassment by motorists and rude behaviour by traffic police and towing staff. In some instances, motorists engaged in physical fights with the towing staff.

ZPM promises building law reforms, tourism boost ahead of Aizawl civic polls Ruling Zoram People’s Movement

Aizawl, Apr 07: Monday announced a major urban reform agenda ahead of the upcoming Aizawl Municipal Corporation (AMC) elections, promising to remove bureaucratic delay in building construction and a tourism-led push to boost the city’s economy.Polling for the 19-member civic body is scheduled for April 21. Addressing a party function in Aizawl, ZPM leader and Mizoram Tourism Minister Lalngthinglova Hmar said the party would review livestock farming regulations within AMC limits and revisit the long-standing Building Regulation, 2007, if voted to power in the civic body. There are 19 wards under the municipal corporation, six of which are reserved for women. The remaining 13 seats are open to all candidates.

He said the Building Regulation, 2007, andthe Site Development Modification Regulations, 2017, would be amended to address delays in house construction approvals. “Since the lengthy approval process for house construction is one of the biggest challenges faced by the public, building houses will become much easier if a ZPM government is established in the AMC,” Hmar said.

He also said the party would revisit the ban on livestock farming within Aizawl city and work with local councils to identify zones where such activity can be carried out legally and sustainably.Hmar further announced a tourism initiative being jointly pursued by the Tourism Department



and the Urban Development and Poverty Alleviation (UD&PA) Department to transform Aizawl from a transit point into a tourist destination. “We have designed a three-night tourism programme for Aizawl city. Through this, we aim to boost Aizawl’s economy, and we believe we can achieve it,” he said.According to Hmar, the government plans to develop and renovate several tourist sites, including Sakawrhmuittuai, Muthi, Durtlang North, Durtlang, Hangi Lunglen Tlang, Laipuitlang, Hmuifang, Lammual, Ailawng and Reiek.“We have already secured the necessary

fundinfor these projects. By encouraging tourists to stay longer, we increase local circulation of wealth, directly benefiting Aizawl residents, particularly traders and entrepreneurs,” he said.

A total of 68 candidates, including 28 women, are in the fray for the AMC polls. The ZPM, the Mizo National Front (MNF), and the Congress have fielded 19 candidates each, while the BJP has nominated 11 candidates.More than 2.37 lakh electors, including 1.28 lakh women, are eligible to vote. Counting will be held on April 27.

Amit Shah does not deport infiltrators he merely discusses them Kharge in Assam rally

Silchar, Apr 07: Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Monday attacked the BJP, especially Union Home Minister Amit Shah, for raking up the infiltration issue but not deporting the illegal entrants in large numbers despite being in the government for more than 10 years. Addressing an election rally at Borkhola in Cachar district, he also alleged that the BJP has misused the delimitation exercise in Assam in its bid to win elections.“When Amit Shah comes here, he only talks about Bangladeshi infiltrators. But the BJP doesn’t drive these infiltrators out; they nurture them. It only plays politics in their name,” he said. For 10 years, the BJP has been in power at the Centre and in Assam, but it could not

remove the infiltrators, the Congress leader said.He claimed that during the Congress-led UPA government, 88,792 illegal migrants were deported from the country between 2005 and 2013.“But under Narendra Modi’s rule, only 2,566 people were removed between 2014 and 2019. The BJP, Narendra Modi and Amit Shah just make electoral promises; they do nothing in reality,” the Congress chief alleged.Kharge also slammed the BJP for allegedly misusing the delimitation exercise in Assam to win the elections. During the delimitation exercise, Muslims were removed from areas where they had been in the majority, while other people were added, he alleged.“In areas where there were more Dalits and Adivasis, people



from other classes were included,” he claimed.“The BJP government is selling off your lands, forests, water, mines and energy. Therefore, remember that to save the country, the BJP must be removed,” he added.

NDA has built trust among people through good governance: Sonowal

Guwahati, Apr 07: Union Minister for Ports, Shipping and Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal has been at the forefront of the BJP’s Assam election campaign. In an interview with TNIE, he says that he believes the NDA will be re-elected for another term. Excerpts

Do you think the NDA can retain power in Assam?The mood on the ground leans clearly toward the NDA. Across the state, there is visible, spontaneous public support—one that has emanated from people who feel their lives have actually changed. Roads that exist. Services that reach. Schemes that land. Benefits that get credited.The NDA’s core political asset is consistency. Infrastructure has been developed, while welfare schemes are in operation. People and voters remember who delivered and who did not. NDA is not just positioned to win — it is positioned to win decisively

Can you mention three things that may work in the NDA’s favour? Election-time announcements are a part of democratic engagement. Welfare measures aimed at supporting rural households, women and economically weaker sections are extensions of an ongoing governance approach, not a reaction to any specific chal-



lenge.We must remember that welfare schemes like Ujjwala and PM Dhan Dhaanya Krishi Yojana have been designed and implemented for the benefit of people with LPG connections, as well as to improve agricultural productivity.Could “Justice for Zubeen” and demands for ST status influence youth voting?In any election, local issues and sentiments play a role, and it is important for all stakeholders to engage with them sensitively. The culprits behind the tragic demise of Zubeen Garg will be brought to justice through the due course of law. The youth of Assam today are more aspirational and aware. They are evaluating choices based on

both emotional connection and practical outcomes. Ultimately, their decision will reflect a balance of these considerations.

First, good governance and welfare delivery schemes have reached people directly without leakages, which has built trust. Second, sustained peace and stability — Assam has witnessed a significant improvement in law and order, enabling development to take place.Third, infrastructure and connectivity — from roads and bridges to railways and digital connectivity, these have transformed both urban and rural areas. We have proved the Congress model of non-performance to be wrong.

Kharge’s ‘illiterate’ remark shakes up Congress campaign ahead of Gujarat civic polls

Ahmedabad, Apr 07: As Gujarat’s local body elections gather pace, a controversial remark by Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge has triggered a full-blown political storm, pushing campaign narratives off track and igniting a fierce BJP backlash.What began as a routine election build-up has now veered into a high-voltage confrontation, with the Congress finding itself on the defensive and its campaign momentum visibly disrupted.The “illiterate” comment, seen as targeting Gujaratis, has triggered outrage, providing an edge to the BJP.

Sensing it, the BJP swiftly escalated the issue, converting outrage into a central campaign plank. The reaction was not scattered; it was coordinated, sharp, amplifying the contro-

versy across political platforms and public discourse.Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel stated, “The statement made regarding the people of Gujarat is extremely objectionable and unfortunate. Such comments insult 6 crore Gujaratis and wound the pride of a land shaped by icons like Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.” With that, the BJP reframed the controversy as a part of a larger narrative of alleged Congress disconnect and frustration. Joining the offensive, Gujarat BJP President Jagdish Vishwakarma intensified the rhetoric, declaring, “Kharge’s remark is not just an insult to Gujaratis, it is an attack on the dignity of the entire State. Gujaratis are known for their hard work and enterprise, contributing significantly to national growth.”

CM assesses condition of mother injured in bomb attack

Imphal, Apr 07: Chief Minister Y Khemchand today morning rushed to Raj Polyclinic to assess the condition of the injured mother who lost her two children in last night’s brutal attack at Tronglaobi Awang Leikai, Moirang. The Chief Minister directed the hospital to provide the highest standard of medical care and all necessary support to the injured mother. In a social media post, Chief Minister Khemchand said, “This morning, I rushed to Raj Polyclinic to assess the condition of the injured



mother who lost her two children in last night’s brutal attack at Tronglaobi Awang Leikai, Moirang. I have directed that she be provided the highest standard of medical care and all

necessary support”. “This barbaric act is an outright assault on humanity and a direct attempt to derail the hard-earned peace in Manipur. I condemn it in the strongest possi-

ble terms. Let there be no doubt, those responsible will be identified, hunted down, and dealt with firmly under the law. Such acts of terror will not be tolerated under any circumstances,” the Chief Minister said. “My government stands resolute in protecting every citizen and will take all necessary measures to ensure that peace, order, and stability are not compromised. I urge the people to remain united and resolute against those who seek to disturb our collective harmony,” the Chief Minister said.

Yumnam Khemchand Singh Leads Top Security Meeting

Imphal, Apr 07: Chief Minister Y. Khemchand Singh chaired a high-level security meeting at the State Secretariat today to review the prevailing law and order situation in the state, hours after the tragic bomb attack that killed two young Meitei children in Tronglaobi Awang Leikai, Bishnupur district. The Chief Minister reiterated the government’s firm commitment to restore peace and normalcy remains our top priority assured that necessary measures and operational arrangements have been put in place to ensure public safety and maintain order. The meeting focused on strengthening security deploy-

ments in vulnerable areas, especially along sensitive hill-valley interfaces, and addressing the recent spike in violence. Security forces have been directed to maintain strict vigil and respond swiftly to any attempts to disturb public peace. This comes amid widespread outrage over last night’s incident in which a 5-year-old boy and his 5–6-month-old sister lost their lives when a projectile struck their home, seriously injuring their mother. The Chief Minister had earlier visited the injured mother at the hospital, assured all possible medical support, and warned that those responsible for the attack would be identified and



dealt with firmly under the law. The government has appealed for calm and urged all sections

of society to cooperate with security forces in restoring normalcy.

Recovery of arms and ammunition continues

Imphal, Apr 07: With search operations continuing in different parts of the State, security forces recovered arms and ammunition from the general area of Chakpikarong-Mombi-Joupi junction road near Mombi under Molcham-PS, Chandel district on Monday. The recovered weapons include one AK47 along with two magazines, six single barrel rifles, three Improvised mortars (pompi), one

grenade with detonator, 35 rounds of 7.62 mm calibers, and three Baofeng Radio sets with three chargers. On the same day, security forces also recovered weapons from Kaikao area under Tamenglong-PS, Tamenglong district. The seized arms are one country made 9mm Carbine along with magazine, two country made 9mm pistols along with magazine, two country made 12 bore Sin-

gle Barrel guns, two country made Lathod gun, one country made Muzzle loaded gun, and four 9 mm live rounds. Security forces also recovered arms and ammunition from the general area of Maohing under Kangpokpi-PS, Kangpokpi district. They recovered 12 Bolt Action single barrel guns, one AK 47 rifle along with magazine, one .303 rifle along with magazine, one local made pistol along

with magazine, nine live rounds ammunition of different calibers, one local made Canon (Pumpi), four local made bolt action rifles, four local made bolt action single barrels, and four Baofeng wireless sets along with two chargers. Meanwhile, security forces launched operation in Thoyee Tangkhul area as well as in Zalenbung and Shangkai area under Litan-PS, Ukhrul district. During

the operation, twenty three bunkers were destroyed and twenty five empty cases were recovered. Security forces continued to conduct search operations and area domination in the fringe and vulnerable areas across districts, resulting in recovery of arms, ammunition and explosives. A total of 114 Nakas/Check points were installed in different districts, both in the hills and the valley.

Mizoram Government Assures Residents Of Sufficient LPG Stocks Despite The Ongoing Tensions Within West Asia

Aizawl, Apr 07: The Mizoram government on Monday assured residents that the state has sufficient LPG supplies, emphasizing that measures are in place to prevent any cooking gas shortages. The Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Department said it is closely monitoring the supply chain to mitigate potential disruptions caused by ongoing tensions in West Asia. Citizens were urged to remain calm and refrain from panic buying, with officials stating there is no immediate cause for concern. According to department data, Mizoram currently has a total of 39,988 domestic LPG cylinders—13,801 held by distributors and 26,187 in transit. For commercial use, 824 cylinders are available, with 512 at distributors and 312 in transit.



ance to its citizens regarding the stability of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) and Petroleum, Oil, and Lubricants (POL) supplies. This proactive communication comes amid escalating geopolitical tensions in West Asia—specifically involving the closure of the Strait of Hor-

muz—which have triggered global energy concerns and localized fears of a fuel crisis. On April 6 and 7, 2026, the state’s Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Department released detailed inventory data to debunk rumors of an impending shortage and to discourage

“panic buying,” which often leads to artificial scarcity and black marketing. According to the latest official figures released by the Mizoram government, the state’s cooking gas and fuel supply chain remains robust. The administration highlighted that nearly 40,000 domestic

cylinders are currently accounted for in the state’s logistics network.

The Chief Secretary of Mizoram, Khili Ram Meena, has directed all Deputy Commissioners across the state’s districts to maintain a high state of vigilance. The government’s strategy to navigate the West Asia crisis involves three main pillars: The administration has observed instances of panic buying driven by social media rumors. In response, officials have emphasized that the supply lines from Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) are functioning normally. The government has urged the public to trust only official bulletins from the Directorate of Information & Public Relations (DIPR). In a recent enforcement action in Lunglei, police successfully seized 2,000 litres of fuel that was allegedly being prepared for illegal transport across the border, showcasing the state’s zero-tolerance policy toward supply manipulation.

KOHUR decries detention of individuals under NSA

Imphal, Apr 07: The Kuki Organisation for Human Rights Trust (KOHUR) has criticised the Government of Manipur over the detention of two individuals under the National Security Act (NSA), alleging that the move undermines a recent bail order of the Gauhati High Court. In a statement, the organisation expressed concern over the detention of Philip Khaikhohal Khongsai, former president of the Moreh Youth Club, and Hemkholal Mate, chief (Haosa) of K. Molsang village, under the NSA, 1980. KOHUR said that a Division Bench of the Gauhati High Court, comprising Justices Pranjal Das and Arun Dev Choudhury, had granted bail to the two individuals on March 25, in connection with criminal appeal cases. According to the organisation, the court had observed procedural lapses during their arrest, including failure to inform them of the grounds of arrest and non-com-

pliance with provisions under the Code of Criminal Procedure.

It stated that the court found violations of constitutional safeguards related to personal liberty. The group further alleged that a preventive detention order was issued on April 4 by the District Magistrate of Tengenoupal under the NSA, shortly after the bail order, raising concerns about the timing and intent of the action. KOHUR also placed the development in the context of the ongoing ethnic tensions in Manipur, alleging that members of the Kuki-Zo community have faced targeted actions since violence broke out in May 2023. The organisation has called for revocation of the detention order, release of the individuals, and an independent inquiry into the matter. It has also sought the intervention of the National Human Rights Commission, the Supreme Court of India, and the Union government.

Indian Army Holds Medical Camp at Pengree on World Health Day

Tinsukia, Apr 07: On the occasion of World Health Day, the Red Shield Gunners of the Indian Army, under the aegis of Spear Corps, organised a comprehensive Medical Camp at Pengree, Tinsukia, in coordination with the Red Cross Society, AANS and Pengree Tea Estate. The initiative aimed at promoting health awareness and providing essential medical support to the local community.

The camp witnessed wide public participation and included health check-ups, diagnostic services including cancer screening, and awareness sessions on preventive healthcare. Special focus was laid on women and child health, with distribution of sanitary pads, newborn care kits for new



mothers and essential medicines for pregnant women.

The initiative served as a meaningful outreach effort, reinforcing the importance of accessible healthcare and community wellbeing. The active involvement of multiple stakeholders ensured effective delivery

of medical services and awareness at the grassroots level. The programme reaffirmed the Indian Army’s continued commitment towards community welfare, health awareness and service to the nation, strengthening bonds with local communities.

CPI raises objection to census before NRC

Imphal, Apr 07: The 52nd annual conference of the CPI Heirok Local Council was held at the residence of CPI Heirok leader Ningthoujam Lokendra at Heirok part -II Maning Leikai. The conference was attended by CPI State Secretary A. Nabachandra, Assistant Secretary S. Sorojini Devi, State Executive Member L. Sotinkumar, local leader N. Lokendro, former local secretaries M. Shyamkesho Meitei and Th. Mohon, along with local leader N. Muhindro, who served as presidium members. During the conference, several resolutions were discussed and unanimously adopted. One key resolution is the implementation of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) process before census in Manipur. The conference also resolved that the Heirok Local Council should actively participate in all district and state-level activities related to the issue. Another important resolution addressed the condition of internally displaced persons (IDPs). It urged that IDPs currently staying in relief camps be safely resettled in their respective homes. The government was called upon to take all necessary measures to ensure their return and reha-

bilitation, and it was stressed that NRC-related processes should not be undertaken until resettlement is completed. The organisation’s draft report and resolutions were presented by Local Secretary Kh. Maniyaima. He stated that the local unit is progressing steadily, with two members having received PSC training, and emphasised the need for further strengthening the organisation. He also highlighted efforts to enhance grassroots activities, build stronger mass fronts, and work toward safeguarding Manipur’s unity and integrity. The conference further resolved to urge the government to rename the Heirok–Wangjing road as “Irabot Road” in honour of Jana Neta Hijam Irabot, who had historical ties to the area during his time in Burma (Myanmar). Addressing the gathering, CPI State Executive Member L. Sotinkumar remarked that Manipur is currently facing a serious crisis and emphasised the need for a strong leadership like that of Irabot. He alleged that the ongoing unrest in the state has been instigated by the BJP, citing the role of Kuki MLAs and the handling of the situation. He further criticised the government’s approach, stating that

despite financial support under the Suspension of Operations (SoO) agreement, no effective political solution has been achieved, while many youths remain unemployed. He also questioned the effectiveness of the current leadership, referring to the Chief Minister’s visit to Jiribam, and expressed concern over the prevailing law-and-order situation. Reiterating the historical roots of the Communist movement in Heirok since 1948, he recalled that Hijam Irabot had once organised activities in the area. He expressed confidence that a Communist representative could emerge from Heirok Assembly Constituency in the future, noting that CPI-supported candidates have previously received significant votes. He further stated that, at present, the party does not intend to support candidates from other political parties in the constituency, and efforts will be made to field its own candidates in upcoming elections. The conference was attended by over 150 CPI card holders from Heirok Local Council. Other speakers also shared views on strengthening the organisation and expanding its activities in the region.

MSCW stresses mass awareness on crime against women

Imphal, Apr 07: The Manipur State Commission for Women (MSCW) successfully conducted a one-day awareness programme on “Crime Against Women: Redressal Mechanism” at Mayanglangjing Taning Community Hall, Imphal West. Addressing the gathering, Thumlip Tiningpham Monsang, Chairperson, Manipur State Commission for Women (MSCW), stated that the programme was organised to create awareness among women so that they realise the importance of standing up for themselves and living with dignity. Emphasising that women’s rights are fundamental rights, she noted that every woman has the right to live with dignity and security. She stated that numerous laws have been enacted to empower and protect women; however, many women remain unaware of these legal provisions. She further informed that the Commission, established in 2006, has handled several cases where women lacked awareness of their rights. In this regard, she said, the Commission regularly conducts legal awareness programmes, and the present programme on “Crime Against Women” is part of that initiative. Thumlip Tiningpham Monsang urged all attendees to listen attentively to the technical session and make full use of the programme, so as to enhance their understanding of women’s rights and



legal remedies available to them. Speaking at the programme, W. Phajatombi Devi, Member Secretary, MSCW and Additional Director (IPR), Government of Manipur, expressed her gratitude to the leaders of the four Village Level Federations (VLFs) of Mayanglangjing, namely Leibaklei VLF, Sangai VLF, Mangal VLF and Pandam VLF, for taking the initiative to approach the Commission and sponsor the programme. Emphasising the importance of awareness, she noted that such initiatives play a crucial role in educating communities about crimes against women and the available mechanisms for redressal. Speaking on the role of the MSCW, Phajatombi Devi stated that the Commission functions as part of the National Commission for Women, which serves as the apex body for women’s issues in India. She noted that under the National Commission for Women, each state has instituted its own State Commission for Women.

She further informed that despite Manipur being a relatively small state, the MSCW remains a highly active organisation. She added that the Commission has diligently followed the guidelines and directives issued by the National Commission for Women, and has earned recognition from the apex body for its proactive functioning. Phajatombi Devi further stated that any well-organised and impactful activities conducted by Self Help Groups (SHGs) would be duly recognised by the MSCW. She added that SHGs would also be invited to participate in the Commission’s special programmes, including its Foundation Day celebrations and the observance of International Women’s Day. Speaking on the theme of the programme, “Crime Against Women: Redressal Mechanism,” Phajatombi Devi stated that the Women’s Commission exists to address and combat crimes against women. She emphasised that women must

be aware of their rights, which can be effectively achieved through awareness programmes. She further stressed that such crimes should be addressed through appropriate legal action to ensure justice and protection for women. Nongmaithem Prabeena Devi, District Mission Manager, Haorangsabal CD Block, Imphal West, observed that women who face domestic violence for the first time often tend to ignore it, assuming it will not recur. She cited various instances of domestic violence and noted that such acts have, over time, become normalised in society. She emphasised that such behaviour must be addressed at the very first instance, and that silence should not be encouraged. She further pointed out that such incidents commonly affect married women, who are often advised by elders in the household to remain silent. She stated that many women are unaware of their rights and urged women to be courageous, to speak out against injustice and seek legal recourse to enable them to live with dignity. The programme also featured a technical session on “Crime Against Women: Redressal Mechanism” presented by Thiyam Rajkishore, Advocate. Sk. Sophia, Member, Manipur State Commission for Women, along with members of SHGs and Village Level Federations (VLFs), attended the programme.

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The Importance of Taking Initiative

Taking initiative is the ability to act without being prompted. It reflects confidence, responsibility, and a willingness to contribute actively. In both personal and professional contexts, initiative is a valuable quality. Individuals who take initiative are more likely to identify opportunities and address challenges. They do not wait for instructions but actively seek ways to improve situations. In education, students who take initiative engage more deeply with learning. They explore subjects beyond requirements and develop independent thinking skills. In professional environments, initiative contributes to innovation and efficiency. Employees who take proactive steps add value to organisations and demonstrate leadership potential. Taking initiative also builds confidence. Each proactive action reinforces the belief in one’s abilities and encourages further effort. However, initiative should be balanced with responsibility. Actions must be thoughtful and aligned with goals. Families and educational institutions can nurture initiative by encouraging independence and recognising proactive behaviour. A society that values initiative becomes more dynamic and forward-thinking. By encouraging individuals to take action, communities can drive progress and create opportunities for growth.

GDP growth slows to 3% as industrial output shrinks

The economy expanded 3.03 percent in the October-December quarter, down from 3.53 percent a year earlier, with industrial growth slipping to just 1.27 percent from 5.78 percent in the same period last year. It was the slowest second-quarter expansion since FY21, when growth fell to 1.28 percent during the Covid-19 disruption. Earlier in the fiscal year, the revised growth figure for the first quarter stood at 4.96 percent, compared with 3.91 percent in the corresponding quarter of FY25, showing that the slowdown has gathered pace as the year progressed. At current prices, the size of the economy reached Tk 15,17,615 crore in the October-December quarter of FY26, up from Tk 13,90,147 crore in the same period a year earlier. Zahid Hussain, former lead economist at the World Bank’s Dhaka office, said weak exports, energy constraints and political uncertainty weighed on production. Besides, reciprocal tariffs imposed by the Trump administration affected global trade flows, hurting export-oriented manufacturing. According to the economist, domestic disruptions like frequent street protests and demonstrations further dented output, especially in energy-intensive sectors such as ceramics. “Manufacturing investment and production are usually slow in periods of political uncertainty,” Hussain added. In the October-December quarter, agriculture grew 3.68 percent, up from 1.90 percent in the corresponding quarter a year earlier. Favourable weather supported Aman rice production this year, compared to last year when flooding in parts of Noakhali region disrupted output, he said. The services sector expanded 4.45 percent, compared with 3.48 percent in the same quarter of the previous fiscal year. Although higher year-on-year, Hussain said that growth in the service sector usually remains above 5 percent. According to the economist, poor law and order conditions weighed on service activities. Mustafa K Mujeri, executive director of the Institute for Inclusive Finance and Development (InM) and former chief economist of the Bangladesh Bank, said growth has remained weak since the economic fallout from the Russia-Ukraine war. He said the slowdown deepened in the latest quarter as both public and private spending tightened ahead of national elections in February. Usually, the government scales back annual development programme (ADP) spending before elections, while private investors adopt a wait-and-see approach, he said. Remittance earnings rose about 20 percent year-on-year to \$8.67 billion in the second quarter, according to Bangladesh Bank data. However, economists said the inflows have yet to translate into stronger overall growth. Mujeri said the current quarter shows little sign of a strong rebound, citing the ongoing war in the Middle East and the risk of higher fuel prices disrupting production across sectors. Multilateral lenders, however, expect some recovery over the full fiscal year. The World Bank has projected the economy will expand by 4.6 percent in this fiscal year ending June 2026, despite persistent inflation, falling exports and sluggish investment. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) expects growth to reach 4.9 percent in FY2025-26.



How can Bangladesh increase its solar capacity quickly



After the United States and Israel attacked Iran, Tehran hit back by restricting ship traffic through the strategically vital Strait of Hormuz and striking energy installations in US-allied Middle Eastern states. Global supplies of both oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) have fallen. The current shortfall is more than twice the combined supply deficits of the 1970s oil crisis. Iran’s attacks on Qatar’s LNG plants destroyed 17 percent of Qatar’s LNG capacity. Qatar then declared force majeure and walked away from its long-term supply obligations. It is no longer bound to sell LNG to many countries at previously agreed lower prices. Bangladesh now has to buy LNG at much higher spot market rates. The government of Bangladesh, on average, gives Tk 60 billion (6,000 crore) in LNG subsidies each year. In 2024–25, it budgeted Tk 60 billion, but extra cargo imports pushed the actual need up to Tk 89 billion (8,900 crore). For 2025–26, Tk 60 billion was again projected for gas subsidies, yet this figure is now expected to rise severalfold. To keep buying fuel, Bangladesh will have to borrow, and it has already begun seeking loans from various sources. Managing this mounting pressure on the economy will be extremely difficult in the coming years.

This latest Middle East war has once again exposed how vulnerable Bangladesh becomes when its LNG dependence grows. If that dependence continues, there will be no easy exit. In past crises, “quick fixes” pushed Bangladesh deeper into reliance on foreign power and energy technologies. If the country repeats that pattern now, breaking free of this dependence in future will be even harder. Meanwhile, not only LNG but also coal prices have increased. Some are now saying it was a mistake not to extract Bangladesh’s domestic coal. Yet the question of why gas extraction has not progressed over the past two decades is rarely discussed.

In these twenty years, Bangladesh has made very little headway in drilling new gas wells. The BNP government has said in its 180-day work plan that it will start drilling new wells on a priority basis. All of these steps are needed to address the crisis, but they will take time. What quick solution can Bangladesh pursue now? It can rapidly

advance solar power projects. This includes large land-based solar projects, rooftop solar power, and solar pumps for irrigation. The question is whether solar projects can really be completed so fast. Since 2021, I have been researching why Vietnam was able to connect so much solar power to the grid so quickly. As part of this work, I went to Vietnam and spoke with investors, experts, researchers, and officials. I tried to understand whether such rapid expansion is possible at all, and how Vietnam actually did it.

Vietnam has already set an example. During Covid in 2020, in just one year, it added about 11,000 MW of solar power to the grid, 48 percent of which was rooftop solar. Starting from almost zero in 2018, by the end of 2020 Vietnam’s solar capacity reached 16,500 MW, about 25 percent of its total capacity. I travelled there at that time to investigate the reasons for this success. I interviewed experts, researchers, and investors.

The key reason was government intervention. Many believe the main driver was the feed-in tariff incentive. A feed-in tariff is a policy that guarantees renewable energy producers, for a specified period of time, a fixed price per unit of electricity they supply to the grid—usually higher than the market price. My own inquiry revealed another factor. If the feed-in tariff had been open-ended, the target would not have been reached so quickly. A fixed time limit was crucial. Only those who could connect solar to the grid within one year—by December 2020—were allowed to sell power at a guaranteed fixed price for 20 years. This incentive not only met the target; it exceeded it and motivated investors on an extraordinary

scale. At that time, the cost of solar power was falling almost every day. The later a project starts, the cheaper each unit of electricity could become. In such a situation, investors usually wait and speculate, hoping costs will drop further. Vietnam broke that pattern. The government offered a fixed price, higher than production cost, but only for a limited time. This guaranteed that any solar power fed into the grid during that window would be bought at that rate. That one signal changed everything. Investors rushed in. The “experiment” worked so well that they supplied far more electricity to the grid than the government had planned.

Vietnam had another advantage. Most loans came from local banks. Investors who had just gained experience in solar projects in China and Thailand quickly shifted to Vietnam to grab the opportunity. When banks saw that the government was backing these projects and that profits were likely, they stopped hesitating. Lending increased, and project risk fell sharply. In Bangladesh, the same kind of policy is still treated with doubt. Even two years ago, the idea of rooftop solar with a fixed feed-in tariff sounded unrealistic to many. If anyone suggested paying a higher-than-cost tariff for 15 years, the first question was: why should the government carry such a big financial burden? Yet the reality has been different. LNG-based and coal-based projects have created a much bigger financial burden than such a solar scheme would have. The nuclear project is also getting more expensive every year because of construction delays. If all these costs are added up, the argument against solar incentives looks much

weaker. Simply put, if the government does not act now, it will be very hard to add three to four thousand megawatts of solar power to the grid quickly. There is another obstacle. In Bangladesh, everyone talks about “green finance,” but getting a bank loan for renewable projects is still very difficult. Political and economic uncertainty increases risk. Banks fear they will not get their money back. This mistrust became very clear at a CPD seminar in January. Officials from the Power Development Board (PDB) said that power purchase agreements have left PDB carrying a growing financial load. On the other side, business leaders said they cannot invest without a guaranteed sales contract at a fixed price. If, after finishing a project, they are not sure they can sell electricity at an agreed tariff, their interest in investing simply disappears.

In the past, power purchase agreements existed; in the newly revised framework, purchase guarantees for new projects are absent or unclear. This is exactly where the government must step in. Rooftop solar could be rolled out on government buildings, schools, hospitals, factories, and commercial and administrative offices nationwide. Studies already show the scale of this opportunity: even on the most conservative estimates, Bangladesh can install at least 4,000 MW of rooftop solar, and if only 10 percent of suitable roofs were used, the potential rises to above 10,000 MW. Solar irrigation has begun—3,524 systems have been installed so far, saving 60.7 MW—but here too, the economic and managerial bottlenecks must be identified and targeted incentives offered urgently. Policy signals have been mixed. When the inter-

im government repealed the Quick Enhancement of Electricity and Energy Supply (Special Provisions) Act 2010, it automatically froze 31 renewable power projects with a combined capacity of 2,942 MW that had Letters of Intent under the Sheikh Hasina government. Many developers had already sunk costs into land and financing. After scrapping those LoIs, the Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Ministry called fresh tenders, in several rounds, for 55 solar plants totalling 5,500 MW, this time under the Public Procurement Act 2006 and Rules 2008, in the name of “competitive” procurement. Yet only three packages drew a single bid each, and 13 packages attracted no bids at all. This is not a sign that solar is unviable; it is a sign that, without clear purchase guarantees and credible policy, even willing investors will stay away. A government committee later re-evaluated the earlier solar projects and found that proposed prices had fallen by an average of 24.6 percent. Investors and officials disagree on the reason for the price decline. Business groups say costs dropped because technology improved. Some officials counter that the first round lacked transparency and competition, with irregularities and bias keeping prices artificially high; the re-evaluation, they argue, simply corrected this. In truth, both explanations may be partly right. What matters now is the outcome: solar has become cheaper just as oil, coal and gas have become more expensive, making solar far more competitive. If Bangladesh moves quickly, it can use this window to cut energy import dependence.

Most solar panels will still come from China, and for many projects, land acquisition, due diligence and price revisions are already done. What is missing is targeted government incentives and clear purchase guarantees for new projects. At the same time, Dhaka’s long-standing rooftop solar requirement has spawned a different problem: a syndicate has exploited public ignorance, installing cheap, low-quality panels to comply with the requirements, cashing in while systems lie under-maintained or non-functional. In many buildings, panels are installed but not connected through net metering, so the power is never fed

into the grid. The result is wasted investment, wasted capacity—and a public justifiably sceptical about solar, precisely when we need it most. Pakistan offers a final, telling example. Like Bangladesh, it became heavily dependent on coal and LNG and failed to advance its own gas fields. LNG and coal imports, high capacity charges and a falling rupee pushed electricity prices through the roof. Yet as Pakistan scaled up solar, much of that burden fell. One estimate suggests that during the current Middle East turmoil, Pakistan saved nearly 12 billion USD in LNG and oil import costs thanks to its solar expansion. India and Sri Lanka, too, have sharply increased their reliance on renewables.

These are not fairy tales; they are recent, concrete experiences. Rapid solar expansion is possible. But it demands clear incentives, removal of bureaucratic and financial obstacles, public confidence, doorstep services, and lower costs through scrapping taxes on solar equipment. And solar has a structural advantage: there is no capacity charge. The state only pays for the electricity actually delivered to the grid. An additional advantage is that the government does not have to ensure energy supply to get these power plants running. During times of crisis or price rise, the government can remain free of stress. In the coming months, some special interest groups will try to use this crisis to revive coal extraction in Bangladesh.

If we again increase our dependence on coal and LNG, we will once more fall behind the rest of South Asia on renewables. The rational response in a dollar crisis is the opposite: lean into solar and save foreign exchange. That also means planning a coal phase-out, not a coal revival.

The coal plants that were built over the last decade have already locked us in far enough. If we now open the door to domestic coal mining to “feed” them, we will give these plants a permanent alibi to keep running and shut down any serious transition to solar. Bangladesh still has a choice: double down on the fuels that made this crisis—or treat the crisis as the moment to change course. Rapid expansion of solar is the key solution, both to save dollars and decrease geopolitical risk originating from high import dependence.

Quinoa brings promise to Thakurgaon but leaves farmers in limbo

Ruhul Amin invested about Tk 40,000 to cultivate quinoa on one bigha of land leased at Charol village in Thakurgaon’s Baliadangi upazila. At harvest, he produced eight maunds. But when it came time to sell, there were no buyers he could turn to. With no alternative market and little information on where else to go, he was forced to sell his produce at Tk 5,000 per maund to a local trader. “I had no other buyers,” he said.

His experience reflects a broader uncertainty surrounding the first-ever cultivation of quinoa in Baliadangi. Quinoa, a grain native to South America, is widely regarded as a “superfood” due to its high nutritional value. It is rich in plant-based protein containing all nine essential amino acids, along with iron, magnesium, vitamin E, potassium and dietary fibre. The crop is typically sown in mid-November and harvested by mid-March.

Its growing global demand has recently drawn interest from Bangladeshi farmers as a potential alternative crop. However, farmers say the market has not developed as expected. In Patilavasa and

nearby areas, a small group of farmers cultivated quinoa on an experimental basis this season after being encouraged by seed supplier Saiful Islam of Bogura and local trader Dabirul Islam. At the initial stage, farmers said they were told the crop could fetch between Tk 1,000 and Tk 1,500 per kilogram in international markets, meaning Tk 40,000 to Tk 60,000 per maund.

The crop performed well in the field. Most growers have already completed harvesting, reporting yields of eight to 10 maunds per bigha. After the harvest, several growers alleged that the same traders who promoted the crop showed little interest in buying it, often citing quality concerns. With no organised market and limited access to alternative buyers, many were left with little bargaining power. Some farmers, including Ruhul Amin, said they sold their produce to Dabirul at Tk 4,500 to Tk 5,000 per maund, while others are yet to find buyers. Nazrul Islam, a seed farmer who cultivated quinoa on one bigha out of curiosity, said he remains uncertain about marketing



the crop, as there is no assurance that buyers will purchase it despite initial interest.

Several farmers said they would have made a profit even at Tk 500 per kilogram, and now feel they were misled. Traders, however, attributed the situation to processing and quality issues. Dabirul said farmers were unable to properly prepare the grain for market. He noted that quinoa requires processing — similar to milling paddy into rice — at a specialised husking mill in Nil-

phamari, which is not available in nearby areas. He said unprocessed quinoa is being purchased at Tk 4,500 to Tk 5,000 per maund, while processed grain can sell for Tk 7,000 to Tk 8,000 per maund. It is also being marketed through online platforms at Tk 12,000 to Tk 14,000 per maund, a margin he claimed he does not receive. But at one stage during the conversation, he acknowledged that the grain is being marketed online through a page owned by them.

Meanwhile, seed supplier Saiful Islam denied setting any fixed purchase price, saying rates were meant to be finalised through discussions. He added that he had previously sourced quinoa from Chapainawabganj and Rajshahi at Tk 500 to Tk 700 per kilogram for personal use and for diabetic patients, as he is involved in a clinic business. Agricultural experts say quinoa has strong potential in Bangladesh, particularly in the context of climate change, but stress that market development is essential. Upazila Agriculture Officer Gulzar Rahman said the crop can be cultivated and processed using methods similar to mustard at relatively low cost, and its dried plants can also be used as fuel. He noted that the grain is beneficial for diabetic patients due to its nutritional properties. Alamgir Kabir, additional deputy director (crops) of the Department of Agricultural Extension in Thakurgaon, said ensuring a stable market will be crucial for its expansion. “Without a stable market, farmers will not continue cultivation, regardless of the yield,” he said.

ICICI Bank, HDFC Bank, YES Bank: Banking stocks for up to 35% rise, Q4 previews

JM Financial reduced its earnings

New Delhi: Analysts highlight a challenging operating environment for Indian banks amid on-going geopolitical tensions in West Asia. elevated energy prices, supply chain disruptions, and inflationary pressures are expected to strain household cash flows, especially in rural and lower-income segments. Valuations have corrected but remain above trough levels, they suggest.JM Financial projects limited impact on 4QFY26E performance, with loan growth estimated at around 14% year-on-year. Net interest margins (NIMs) are expected to show varied trends, remaining flat or slightly down for large banks while expanding for small and mid-sized banks. Asset quality is anticipated to stay stable overall. Provisional data point to steady loan growth of 13–14 per cent YoY. JM Financial advises focusing on banks with strong liability franchises, capital buffers, and diversified portfolios. Large banks are considered best positioned, while mid-sized and small finance banks offer higher growth with increased risks. Systematix has a ‘buy’ rating on ICICI Bank (Target Price: Rs 1,630), Bank of Baroda (Target Price: Rs 330), Kotak Mahindra Bank (Target Price: Rs 475), Union Bank of India (Target Price: Rs 225), HDFC Bank (Target Price: Rs 960), State Bank of India (Target Price: Rs 1,300), Axis Bank (Target Price: Rs 1,530), Bank of India (Target Price: Rs 175), Bank of Maharashtra (Target Price: Rs 80), Federal Bank (Target Price: Rs 310). It has a ‘hold’ rating on Indian Bank (Target Price: Rs 990) and IndusInd Bank (Target Price: Rs 890).JM Financial has a ‘ buy’ rating on ICICI Bank (Target Price: Rs

1,550), Axis Bank (Target Price: Rs 1,400), State Bank of India (Target Price: Rs 1,210), City Union Bank (Target Price: Rs 280), DCB Bank (Target Price: Rs 200) and Ujjivan Small Finance Bank (Target Price: Rs 66). YES Bank is the only lender with a ‘sell’ rating with a target price of Rs 16 apeice.HDFC Bank (Target Price: Rs 850), Kotak Mahindra Bank (Target Price: Rs 390), Federal Bank (Target Price: Rs 290), Bandhan Bank (Target Price: Rs 160), Bank of Baroda (Target Price: Rs 280), Punjab National Bank (Target Price: Rs 115) and AU Small Finance Bank (Target Price: Rs 950) have an ‘add’ rating from JM Financial. Equitas SFB and IndusInd Bank have a reduce rating with a target price of Rs 56 and Rs 780, respectively.Looking ahead to FY27E, JM Financial notes elevated credit and credit-deposit ratios, along with declining liquidity coverage, indicating increased reliance on higher-cost funding. This is likely to exert pressure on margins. The report also flags potential risks in unsecured retail, microfinance, and SME segments for the coming year. Consequently, JM Financial has revised earnings per share estimates downward for FY27–28E and reduced target price multiples by 3–19 per cent. However, the firm upgraded Kotak Mahindra Bank from reduce to add due to its attractive valuation. Top picks include ICICI Bank, State Bank of India, Axis Bank, City Union Bank, Ujjivan Small Finance Bank, and DCB Bank.Systematix Institutional Equities report highlights a challenging outlook for Indian banks amid geopolitical tensions in West Asia. Rising energy prices,

supply chain issues, and inflation are expected to strain household cash flows, especially in rural and lower-income groups. According to Systematix, 4QFY26E performance impact is limited, with loan growth forecasted at about 14 per cent year-on-year. Net interest margins (NIMs) may remain flat or slightly decline for large banks, while smaller and mid-sized banks could see expansion. Asset quality is expected to stay stable overall. The report emphasises tightening liquidity and risk exposure as factors weighing on the sector’s outlook. Elevated credit and credit-deposit ratios constrain growth and increase dependence on costlier funds. Meanwhile, loan growth is expected to remain healthy, supported by retail, services, and corporate segments, with private and public sector banks maintaining steady momentum.NIM compression is likely to continue but at a moderated pace, with large banks experiencing slight quarter-on-quarter declines. Deposit repricing benefits are gradual, and liability pressures persist. JM Financial expects asset quality to remain stable, though early stress indicators in vulnerable segments should be closely monitored.Looking into FY27E, Systematix points to elevated credit and credit-deposit ratios alongside declining liquidity coverage. This suggests greater reliance on higher-cost funding, which may pressure margins. Risks are noted in unsecured retail, microfinance, and SME segments. Systematix has lowered earnings per share estimates for FY27–28E and cut target price multiples by 3–19 per cent.

Despite this, Motilal Oswal’s top capital and defense bets

New Delhi: At a time when global uncertainty and geopolitical tension are influencing market sentiment, the domestic brokerage house Motilal Oswal, in its latest report, has listed its preferred bets in the capital goods and defence space. The brokerage has also highlighted opportunities in the midcap and small-cap segments, particularly Kirloskar Oil Engines and Kalpataru Projects International. While volatility continues to impact sentiment, the brokerage believes that capital goods and defence remain relatively resilient. This is backed by strong order books and structural demand.So, which stocks are in focus, and what is driving this outlook? Let’s take a look –Motilal Oswal’s large-cap capital goods picks remain strong Motilal Oswal continues to remain positive on large-cap industrial names such as Larsen & Toubro, Cummins India, and Siemens Energy India.As the brokerage noted, “We reiterate our positive stance on L&T/ Cummins India / Siemens Energy India in the large-cap space.”These companies are seen as key beneficiaries of strong order inflows and their presence in high-growth segments such as infrastructure and energy. These companies are seen as well-positioned due to their strong execution capabilities, diversified business models, and consistent order inflows. Their exposure to key areas such as infrastructure, energy, and industrial development gives them better visibility compared to peers.Motilal Oswal’s top defence pick: BEL In the defence space, Bharat Electronics



continues to be the brokerage’s preferred choice. The report clearly said, “Bharat Electronics continues to remain our top pick in the defence sector.”Focus on energy transition and infrastructure A key factor highlighted in the Motilal Oswal report is the continued focus on energy transition and infrastructure development. The brokerage said, “The focus will continue to be on capital goods and defence, with an increasing need to invest in defence, alternative energy sources such as renewables and transmission, and the development of a domestic ecosystem to reduce dependence on other countries.”

UPI payments surge 33 pc to 228.5 billion transactions

Mumbai: Unified Payments Interface (UPI) processed 228.5 billion transactions in 2025, marking a 33 per cent year-on-year increase, while total transaction value touched Rs. 299.74 trillion, a report said on Monday.The report from Worldline said that UPI’s growth was broad-based, with both person-to-person (P2P) and person-to-merchant (P2M) transactions rising, with the latter recording a 34 per cent growth to 143.82 billion transactions. The overall average ticket size for UPI fell 9 per cent to Rs. 1,314, while merchant payments’ average ticket size dropped to Rs. 592, reflecting the digitisation of small-ticket purchases.“Reduction in ticket size signals the migration of previously cash-driven transactions — from street vendors to local services — into the digital economy,” the report said.Merchant

acceptance infrastructure expanded in 2025, with UPI QR codes increasing 15 per cent YoY to 731.38 million.Point-of-sale terminals grew 15 per cent to 11.48 million. Bharat QR deployments eased slightly as the ecosystem consolidated around UPI-led acceptance models, the report said.“India’s digital payments ecosystem is entering a new phase of maturity, where scale is being complemented by structure,” Worldline India Chief Executive Officer Ramesh Narasimhan said.The report revealed a maturing payments landscape where multiple payment rails — UPI, cards, and recurring payment platforms such as Bharat BillPay — are increasingly working in complementary roles to power a fully digital economy.India’s merchant ecosystem is increasingly becoming “QR-first, PoS-as-needed,”

Nomura lists Infosys and Coforge as two of the best IT options as AI moves into the “Execution Phase.”

New Delhi: IT stocks have shown resilience in the recent session after a period of weakness. The upcoming Q4 earnings seasons is also another reason why the tech sector stocks are in focus now. International brokerage house Nomura, in its latest report, has shared it outlook towards on sector ahead of earnings and listed key stocks to watch. They believe a few select companies across large-cap, midcap, and small-cap segments could still stand out. The brokerage house Nomura in its latest report has highlighted its preferred bets across the tech segment. According to the brokerage report, Infosys and Cognizant are its top picks among large-cap stocks, Coforge is preferred in the midcap segment, and eClerx stands out in the small-cap space.It stated, “We upgrade TCS, LTI Mindtree, Mphasis and Birlasoft to Buy (from Neutral); and L&T Tech Service to Neutral (from Reduce).”Q4FY26 results: Nomura predicts uneven growth The brokerage expects the upcoming quarter to deliver mixed results across the sector.It noted, “We expect Q4FY26 results to be a mixed



bag for the India IT services sector with limited negative impact from the ongoing Middle East conflict.”However, growth expectations remain modest, especially for large-cap players. Companies such as Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys, and HCL Technologies are likely to report

low single-digit or even flat revenue growth on a quarter-on-quarter basis in constant currency terms.On the flip side, midcap companies are expected to perform relatively better.Firms such as Coforge and Persistent Systems could see stronger growth, as per Nomura’s report.

Two large-cap stocks that have the ideal

Mumbai: When we think about largecaps, we usually consider the financial health of the companies to be better than that of other mid and smallcap companies.However, that might not always be the case!When we tried to find largecap stocks with a perfect Piotroski score of 9, a financial metric that indicates the financial health of any company, we just found two of them.And surprisingly, both are from the same sector – the pharmaceutical sector.During 2025, this sector had a domestic market size of around USD 60 billion, which is projected to reach a whopping USD 130 billion by 2030. The Indian pharmaceutical industry is already the 3rd largest in the world by volume and 11th by value. During FY25, the annual turnover of the industry stood at ₹4.72 lakh crore, and exports stood at USD 30.5 billion. During 2025, Sun Pharma acquired Checkpoint Therapeutics Inc., which is the only and first-ever US FDA-approved Anti-PD-L1 antibody for cutaneous squamous cell carcinoma.In the first half of FY26, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in this sector surged to ₹13,193 crore, and with the Bio-pharma Shakti proposal in the Union Budget 2026-2027, India’s pharma sector is poised to become one of the biggest global pharmaceutical manufacturing hubs. The above numbers perhaps indicate the reasons behind the two largecap stocks with the perfect Piotroski score being from this sector only. Let’s explore both stocks.#1 Sun Pharmaceutical Industries Limited: The Largest Company of All

Sun Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd. is the largest pharmaceutical company in the country with a market capitalisation of over 4 lakh crore (as of 2 April 2026). It has a global presence in over a hundred countries, and it is the 13th largest pharma brand in the US generic medicine market as well.The company offers generic medicines, branded generics, innovative medicines, and APIs. There are 40 manufacturing facilities with different manufacturing capabilities, which include ointments, liquid medicines, tablets, injectables, capsules, and more. It is not just the global presence that sets Sun Pharma apart, but its research and development capabilities, which make it truly global.Diversified Revenue BaseDuring Q3FY26, Sun Pharma generated a gross sale of around ₹15,469 crore. US formulations contributed to 28% of this sale value, that is around ₹4,250 crore, which is a 6.2% YoY increase from the ₹4,030 crore generated in Q3FY25. The Indian formulation market contributed to 32% of the sales during the quarter, which is around ₹4,999 crore, up 16.2% from the corresponding quarter last fiscal.Emerging Markets constituted 19% of the gross sales, which amounts to around ₹2,999 crore, which is a whopping 28.3% rise from ₹2,338 crore of Q3FY25.The rest of the world made another 17% while the APIs and others made the remaining 4% of the gross sales. Though APIs witnessed a drop in sales by 4.7% during the quarter, sales from the rest of the world surged by a massive 20.8%.

India's alternative AUM is anticipated to reach \$276 billion by 2030

New Delhi: India’s alternative investment industry is set for strong expansion, with total assets under management (AUM) expected to grow to around \$276 billion by 2030 from \$152 billion in December 2025, a new report said on Tuesday.The CareEdge Ratings report highlighted that this momentum is likely to continue, driven by rising domestic wealth, improving financial awareness and a supportive regulatory environment. The report noted that India is on track to become the world’s third-largest economy by 2028, making it an attractive destination for both domestic and global investors. Between 2025 and 2030, the alternatives industry is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 11 to 14 per cent, outpacing mature markets. A key driver of this growth is the rising number of high-net-worth individuals (HNIs) in the country. India’s affluent population is expected to more than double between 2022 and 2027, leading to higher demand for sophisticated investment products such as Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs)These investors are increas-

ingly looking for diversified and higher-yielding options beyond traditional investments like mutual funds and fixed deposits.Domestic investors are also playing a bigger role in the alternatives ecosystem. Their share in total investments has risen steadily to over 66 per cent as of December 2025, while foreign investors, though declining in share, continue to increase their investments in absolute terms.The report further pointed out a growing preference for private credit within alternative investments.Investors are favouring private credit due to its relatively stable returns, predictable cash flows and lower sensitivity to market volatility.At the same time, demand for flexible financing from mid-sized companies and tighter bank lending norms have created more opportunities in this segment.With regulatory support from market watchdog SEBI and favourable government policies, the alternatives investment space in India is becoming more transparent and structured.As a result, industry players are well positioned to benefit from the next phase of growth, making alternatives an increasingly important part of India’s financial landscape.

Tech layoffs 2026: Over 71,000 jobs gone as companies double down on AI

Mumbai: A wave of job cuts across global technology companies has pushed total layoffs past 71,447 roles in the first three months of 2026, reflecting a deep structural shift as firms double down on artificial intelligence (AI) while tightening costs.More than 80 companies have reduced headcount so far this year, as executives rethink workforce strategies amid rising investments in AI infrastructure and growing pressure to improve margins.The most significant cuts came from Oracle, which laid off around 30,000 employees globally, including roughly 12,000 in India, as part of a broader plan

to cut expenses by up to \$1 billion. In communication sent to affected employees, the company said it had “made the decision to eliminate your role as part of a broader organisational change”, adding that the notification date would mark the employee’s final working day. The layoffs coincided with Oracle naming Hilary Maxson as its new Chief Financial Officer. Company filings show she will receive a base salary of \$950,000, along with a performance-linked bonus target of \$2.5 million. Earlier in the year, Amazon.com Inc. announced plans to cut about 16,000 jobs across its cloud, retail and advertising divi-

sions. It also eliminated around 100 additional roles within its robotics unit.Enterprise software firm Atlassian Corp. said on March 12 it would reduce its workforce by about 10%, impacting roughly 1,600 employees, as it reorganises to prioritise AI and enterprise growth. Similarly, fintech firm Block Inc., founded by Jack Dorsey, said it would cut about 4,000 roles as it leans further into AI-led productivity improvements. The layoffs have been broad-based across sectors. Meta Platforms cut about 1,500 roles in January, while semiconductor

equipment maker ASML reduced around 1,700 jobs.Closer to home, Flipkart Inteeet asked around 300 employees to exit as part of its annual performance review cycle. Bengaluru-based home interiors unicorn. Livspace laid off around 1,000 employees, accounting for nearly 12% of its total workforce, as the company attempts to transition into an “AI-native” organisation. More than 80 companies have reduced headcount so far this year, as executives rethink workforce strategies amid rising investments in AI infrastructure and growing pressure to improve margins.

President of Iran is charged with “threatening possible war crimes” after



Iran: After threatening to destroy Iran’s power facilities and bridges in an obscene social media post on Sunday, Donald Trump has come under heavy fire.“Open the Fuckin’ Strait, you crazy bastards, or you’ll be living in Hell,” the US president said to Iran. On Monday, he told US media that talks were underway and hinted that there was a “good chance” of a deal to end the five-week conflict. Capitol Hill expressed disapproval of Trump’s post. “The president of the United States is ranting like an unhinged madman on social media,” stated senior Senate Democrat Chuck Schumer. He is alienating allies and making threats of potential war

crimes. He is like this, but we are not like this. Our nation is deserving of much better. Trump threatens “hell” if Iran doesn’t reopen the Strait of Hormuz by Tuesday.On Sunday, Donald Trump threatened to destroy Iran’s power plants and bridges if Tehran didn’t reopen the Strait of Hormuz by Tuesday night.In response, the speaker of Iran’s parliament warned that “our whole region is going to burn” as a result of the US president’s “reckless moves.” ”Unhinged madman”: US lawmakers respond to Trump’s threats against Iran Following Trump’s warning to Iran, some US senators expressed concern and questioned the president’s men-

tal health.Former Trump supporter turned critic Marjorie Taylor Greene said that anyone claiming to be a Christian in the Trump administration should “beg forgiveness from God” and stop the president’s “madness.” Trump praises the second crew member who was rescued from the crashed fighter jet.

Donald Trump declared that no “single American” had been killed or injured during a mission to save the second crew member of a crashed US fighter jet, calling it “one of the most daring search-and-rescue operations in US history.”After the warplane crashed in southwest Iran, a two-day search was concluded when US commandos rescued the second crew member of the F-15E fighter jet from an Iranian mountain. Officials appear to tone down vaccine criticism before midtermsUS health officials appear to be shying away from voicing negative views of vaccines in public as November’s midterm elections loom and key polling indicates anti-vaccine views are a liability. US former soft power czar on Trump’s damageTrump’s venal persona and his war on Iran will do untold damage to the US’s ability to make a positive difference in the world, writes Richard Stengel in the Guardian’s featured essay this week.

76 “age-disputed” youngsters have been detained in the UK under the one-in, one-out program

London: According to research, over 70 children from different crisis zones whose ages were challenged by the Home Office have been detained in UK detention facilities in anticipation of being forcibly removed to France under the government’s “one in, one out” policy.Each small boat arrival may be forcibly returned to France under the one-in, one-out plan in exchange for another individual who hasn’t attempted the journey being lawfully transported to the UK. However, holding unaccompanied minors as asylum seekers in adult detention facilities is illegal. 76 so-called age-disputed youngsters have been detained, according to data collected by the Humans for Rights Network since deportation under the program started in September of last year.“Many of these children are survivors of torture and trafficking and are experiencing acute declines in their mental health as a result of what is often months of detention in the UK,” stated Maddie Harris of Humans for Rights Network. “These children are additionally prejudiced from accessing the care and support they are entitled to as children as well as adequate, social worker-led local authority age assessments. No child should be detained, with those who remain in detention immediately released to allow them to recover and to ensure they are able to access age assessments conducted in the community where required.” Age assessments for young asylum seekers are a controversial area. Freedom of information requests to local authority children’s services have found that many children initially assessed to be adults by Home Office on arrival in the UK were later



determined to be children after age assessment by social workers. One child removed under “one in, one out” to France as an adult was later determined to be a child by social workers.Twenty-six of the 76 have now been released from detention and are in the care of children’s social services where they are being assessed or have already been deemed children. Eleven others have been released into adult accommodation pending age assessments, and another 13 have been removed to France.

The nationalities of this group take in a range of conflict zones including a large numbers of Eritreans, Sudanese and Afghans. It is believed that about 400 individuals who entered the UK in tiny boats were forced returned as a result of the “one in, one out” policy. In return, a comparable number of asylum seekers have been lawfully transported to the UK who have not tried to cross the Channel in tiny

boats. In order to look into the returns program, the independent chief inspector of borders and immigration is requesting proof.As recently as March 25, a high court decision stopped the program’s relocation of two age-disputed children to France.One of the age-disputed youngsters was represented by Duncan Lewis attorney Elizabeth Cole, who applauded the removal’s cancellation. “The Home Office’s contention that claimed a child’s age need not be determined as a matter of fact prior to their removal is highly concerning, and clearly warrants proper consideration by the court,” she said. “This is particularly so as children are an extremely vulnerable group. We hope this decision will encourage the Home Office to think twice before trying to remove any disputed children to France, in order to alleviate the distress and harm which will inevitably ensue by result.” Some of the asylum seekers removed on a flight the day after the

hearing claim that they are suffering injuries as a result of use of force by guards during the removal. They claim injuries include loosened front teeth, scratched arms, swollen hands and a foot injury requiring a surgical boot to be worn. Home Office sources said that where people refuse to comply or physically resist, they regrettably may have to use reasonable and proportionate force to ensure safety and that they leave the UK or comply with reasonable instructions while detained.

A Home Office spokesperson said:“This government is bearing down on small boat crossings.We have stopped over 42,000 illegal migrants attempting to cross the channel since the election. We have removed or deported almost 60,000 people who were here illegally.“But we are going further to remove the incentives that draw illegal migrants to this country and increase removals and deportations of those with no right to be here.”

Starmer criticizes the Greens, claiming that voting for Labour competitors jeopardizes the rights of new workers

London: Keir Starmer has used a series of new workers rights that come into force on Monday to attack the Green party, saying a vote for Labour’s rivals puts such progress on sick pay, parental leave and zero-hours contracts at risk. The prime minister also disparaged “vested interests” that had cautioned against what he called the largest expansion of workers’ rights in a generation. However, Starmer stated that having “a serious, credible economic strategy” set Labour apart from others, indicating how he sees the challenge posed by the populism of Nigel Farage’s Reform UK and Zack Polanski’s Greens in the lead-up to local elections in May. In a piece for the Guardian, he stated, “No other

party offers both the economic credibility and the political will to do this.”“Voting for any other party jeopardizes that progress, whether through decisions that would cause us to regress or strategies that just don’t meet the demands of governing.”One of the main demands of Labour MPs and child poverty activists is the easing of the two-child benefit cap, which will take effect on Monday. One of his government’s finest moments, according to Starmer, was the relocation.A 2.3% increase in the universal credit standard allowance and a 4.8% increase in the state pension to £241.30 per week are two further measures that will take effect on Monday. Statutory sick pay is now a right from the moment

of illness under the Employment Rights Act of 2025. On their first day of work, employees will also be eligible for unpaid parental leave and paternity leave. As it prepares to face challenges from Reform on the right and the Greens on the left in the English council and mayoral elections on May 7, Labour is keen to promote the measures as noteworthy successes.

Wales and Scotland also hold elections for their national parliaments. While Labour has been concerned about Reform since the general election, it has also increasingly been turning its sights on the Green party since the latter won the previously safe Labour stronghold of Gorton and Denton.

The administration struggles to restart the White House ballroom project



Washington: In an emergency move to overturn the decision, the Trump administration claimed that a judge’s order to halt building on the White House ballroom presents security dangers.The US district judge Richard Leon’s ruling, according to the emergency motion, has left the White House “open and exposed” and is “threatening grave national-security harms to the White House, the President and his family, and the President’s staff.”Leon decided on Tuesday to halt construction on the White House ballroom while a case is being heard by the courts. The plaintiffs in the complaint contend that Congress must approve the \$400 million project on

the site of the recently demolished East Wing in order for it to move forward. Trump officials claim that stopping the \$400 million White House ballroom renovation poses a national security danger. “Time is of the essence!” the administration’s attorneys said in the move, noting materials that will be put to create a “heavily fortified” facility. According to the file, bomb shelters, military stations, and a medical center are all part of the ballroom building. Trump’s promises to transform Washington include the ballroom. The second day of the search and rescue operations for the second crew member of the downed F-15E fighter jet has begun. The F-15E

Strike Eagle became the first US aircraft to be shot down over Iran during the five-week conflict, and a pilot was saved on Friday. However, the second member of the two-person crew is still missing.Retired Air Force Brig. Gen. Houston Cantwell told the Associated Press that the US military had not had a jet shot down by enemy fire in almost 20 years, since a warplane was shot down during the 2003 invasion of Iraq. A federal judge stops the White House’s attempt to gather racial applicant data from universities.The Trump administration’s attempts to gather evidence that universities aren’t taking race into account when admitting students were put on hold

by a federal judge on Friday.The interim injunction was granted by a US district judge in Boston after a group of 17 Democratic state attorneys general filed a case earlier this month. Only public universities in the states of the plaintiffs will be covered.The federal judge stated that although the demand was made to institutions in a “rushed and chaotic” way, the federal government probably has the right to gather the data. How will US prices stand as war in Iran surges on?As consumers watch the price of gasoline and airline tickets rise, experts say that the war in Iran will continue to drive up prices across the economy.“The good old days are gone,” said Christopher Tang, a professor at the UCLA Anderson School of Management who studies global supply chain management. “Right now we see the gasoline prices going up, but that is only part of the story. Everything will be more expensive.”The price of oil has risen steadily since the war began at the end of February, with crude oil prices surging past \$110 per barrel, this week. Fuel prices have risen in part because Iran controls access to the strait of Hormuz, a narrow passageway between the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman where about 20% of the world’s oil travels through.

Use charts to monitor fuel prices, service station outages, and shipments in Australia

Australia: Oil shipments have been canceled, fuel prices have increased, and hundreds of service stations throughout Australia have run empty.As Iran continues to close the Strait of Hormuz, Australia is facing a petroleum shortage. The federal government has implemented a national fuel security plan, lowered fuel excise prices, and freed fuel reserves. Although we are aware that there have been price rises and outages, it can be challenging to obtain a whole picture of the situation, in part because there are thousands of separate companies and many governments engaged. We have compiled the most recent information on oil tanker deliveries, outages, and prices. Looking at the averages for petrol and diesel across Australia, we can see how much prices have risen since the US and Israel’s war on Iran began in late February. There can be a huge variation in price and availability, even across a relatively small area. Fuel outages aren’t static – stations can run out and regain stock as governments and companies race to fill gaps in supply chains and release more fuel. The map below shows the number of fuel outages across Australia, day by day. You can hover over the stations for a macro view, and click through the dates where data is available. Since we began collecting data on 27 March, you can see a spike in outages in New South Wales and Victoria on 30 and 31 March.

The next chart shows the total number of stations out of at least one kind of fuel on each day. This is an estimate and



may be an undercount given the different timescales that each state reports data. At least six fuel shipments to Australia have already been cancelled or deferred, and experts say there will probably be more delays or cancellations.

The next chart shows the total number of “port calls” – or stops – at Australian ports by tankers with shipments of fuel and crude oil, which is refined to make fuel. The data indicates a minor decrease in the number of tankers in February and March when compared to the previous six years, but it does not differentiate between imports and exports.Tankers passing through the Strait of Hormuz during the first few weeks of March completely collapsed, according to the same dataset. Approximately one-third

of fertilizers and one-fifth of the world’s oil were transported via the strait prior to the conflict.The federal government lowered the minimum stock levels that petroleum businesses must maintain for emergencies at the beginning of March. A monthly snapshot of fuel reserves in relation to the new minimums and how long this would last at typical consumption rates is shown in the following chart. Showing stocks of fuel compared to minimum requirements and how many days this would last at normal consumption rates. This data is released weekly. Latest data as of 31 March 2026. As of the beginning of April, Australia’s fuel reserves – measured in the number of days they would last – had actually increased since prewar levels.

Campaigners claim that the 1996 cap on compensation for crime victims is insufficient

London: Campaigners have stated that the limit of £500,000 is insufficient to plan for a lifetime and that a 30-year freeze on compensation for victims of crime should be overturned.The Criminal disabilities Compensation Authority (CICA) established the highest rate in April 1996 for victims of crime in England, Scotland, and Wales who have sustained serious, life-altering disabilities, such as brain damage or paralysis.Since their disabilities frequently prevent them from working, the money is paid to support both their care and long-term future. According to recent data, the maximum amount would have more than doubled to £1,015,000 if it had increased in accordance with inflation.Lawyers and others impacted have expressed worries that the funds may run out, depriving them of essential assistance and lowering their overall standard of living.In November 2021, Craig Lewis-Williams, 50, of North Wales, was attacked while walking home and suffered brain injury. It caused him to have memory issues and be unable to swallow or move.Later, while undergoing treatment, he suffered a stroke that left his left side paralyzed. As a result, he is now tube-fed and receives six daily visits from carers.

His attacker, Adam Chamberlin, from Llay, was given a jail sentence of more than a year after pleading guilty to

grievous bodily harm (GBH).Lewis-Williams, who was a warehouse manager before the assault, received the maximum payout from CICA on appeal. However, his wife, Anna, fears it will not go far enough.She said: “Things are going to need replacing like his wheelchair and the van, they’re big things to pay out for, which are not what the layman needs.“It’s not going to last. He’s just turned 50 and the expected life age of a male is 75 to 80, it’s another 25 to 30 years.

“You’ve got your car, you’ve got your family, prices are a lot higher than they were 30 years ago, we’ve got the cost of living crisis and what’s going on in Iran, the money has to last longer.”Nichola, from north-west England, has the same fears about her adopted teenage daughter Lou.The secondary school pupil has learning difficulties caused by brain damage from her biological mother taking drugs when she was pregnant and giving drugs to her after she was born.While Nichola says Lou has “defied the odds” and attends a mainstream school, she suffers with mental processing difficulties, mood disorders and behavioural conditions. “The assessments are that she will struggle with maintaining a job long-term, probably, with the disciplines and the interpersonal relationships that are involved in it,” Nichola said.

Medicines watchdog to investigate UK peptide clinics over health claims

The medicines regulator is investigating whether UK clinics are breaking the law by making claims about the benefits of unregulated, experimental peptide therapies, the Guardian can reveal. Interest in experimental peptides has boomed in recent years. The substances are delivered by injection and are touted by sellers, influencers and even some medics as aiding everything from anti-ageing to recovery from injury. There is little scientific evidence to support such health and wellness claims in humans. Where studies have been carried out, most are in animals or cells. The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has said clinics are not permitted to make medicinal claims for the peptide treatments offered by their service. An MHRA spokesperson said: “If clinics offering peptide injections make medicinal claims for those treatments, the products will be considered medicines and subject to regulation under the Human Medicines Regulations 2012.

“The MHRA will take action against clinics which are identified as breaching the legal requirements.” However, a Guardian investigation has found a number of clinics operating in the UK offering a variety of unregulated, experimental peptides and making a host of claims about their benefits on their websites. The website of one of the top Google search results for peptide clinics in the UK states Cortexin is “used for neuroprotection and cognitive enhancement”, that BPC-157 “aids in tissue repair and recovery from injuries” and Thymosin Alpha “boosts immune function”. The MHRA confirmed such websites were making medicinal claims for the peptide treatments being offered and this was not permitted. After the Guardian approached the clinic for comment, it deleted the claims from its site. Another of the top clinics from Google search results says on its website that peptides are lacking large clinical trials, and stresses that human evidence is limited, yet advertises seven named peptides and gives a “results duration” and price for each, despite labelling them as “research only”.



The clinic said its peptides cost £350 a month for a single peptide and £450 a month for two, with the therapy provided in either a vial with a disposable syringe or, for an extra fee, in pre-loaded injection pens. When a Guardian reporter carried out a free consultation with the clinic they were told most research into peptides was pre-clinical and some peptides were still very experimental. The clinician also said there was a lack of randomised multi-centre clinical trials for peptides to provide information about their long-term effects. They said the clinic advised taking four to eight weeks off between two to three month periods of using a peptide to reduce any risks. However, the clinician recommended that the reporter could consider taking two peptides to help with recovery after exercise and fatigue. They said the first, BPC-157, was one of the more commonly used peptides.

“It helps in repair and recovery of cells. So if somebody comes to us saying I want to get fitter, lift heavier, get bigger muscle, I will still recommend BPC-157, even though it doesn’t directly affect any of those things. It’s because it helps your recovery after those workouts,” the clinician said. “This helps provide more blood flow and nutrients to different tissues that need repair ... [and] promotes quicker recovery from whatever physical activity that you’ve done.” The clinician said BPC-157 was not advised for people who smoke or have a family history of cancer as there were concerns the

peptide could increase blood supply to such tissue and help fuel the cancer. The second peptide recommended to the reporter was MOTS-C.

The clinician said: “MOTS-C is something that helps provide more stress resilience and better health to your mitochondria to be able to produce more energy cells ... so the direct net effect for you would be reduced insulin resistance, better energy production in the form of [the energy molecule] ATP, and the net result of that is basically reduce visceral fat.” The MHRA said it was investigating whether the claims made by the clinician were medicinal. The clinic said it had “clearly explained that the peptides discussed are not licensed medicines, and that the current evidence base is largely pre-clinical, with an absence of large-scale randomised controlled trials assessing long-term outcomes”. It said its consultations encouraged “shared decision-making, where individuals are given balanced information on potential mechanisms, theoretical benefits and uncertainties”. A spokesperson said it was “important to acknowledge the current reality: a significant number of individuals in the UK are already accessing peptide products through unregulated channels (including informal online networks such as messaging platforms), where there is little to no clinical oversight, quality assurance, or safety screening”.

Peptides are short chains of amino acids. Some occur naturally in

the body and have particular functions, for example the hormone insulin which helps regulate blood sugar levels. But in recent years there has been a boom in interest in using peptides for therapeutic purposes, from weight loss to anti-ageing and injury recovery. These include approved prescription weight-loss medications based on synthetic peptides that mimic natural hormones, such as semaglutide and tirzepatide, found in weight loss drugs such as Wegovy and Mounjaro respectively. But many other peptides on the market have not undergone the strict regulatory processing that those used in medications have undergone, and remain experimental. The MHRA says a medicinal product includes “any substance or combination of substances presented as having properties of preventing or treating disease in human beings”. Disease includes “any injury, ailment or adverse condition, whether of body or mind”.

A medicinal product can also be “any substance or combination of substances that may be used by or administered to human beings with a view to restoring, correcting or modifying a physiological function by exerting a pharmacological, immunological or metabolic action, or making a medical diagnosis”. Lynda Scammell, the head of borderline products at the MHRA, said: “Peptide products may be sold as cosmetics, supplements and medicines, and depending on their intended purpose, they fall under different regulatory frameworks. “The MHRA determines whether a product is a medicine on a case-by-case basis. This includes consideration of a number of factors including the product’s effect on the body, the way it is used and takes into account all the available evidence and relevant legal precedents. “We disregard claims that products are for ‘research purposes’ if it is clear that such claims are being used as an attempt to avoid medicines regulations. If there is evidence within the promotional material that the products are in fact unauthorised medicines intended for human use, we will take appropriate regulatory action.”

‘Traceability is vital’: labs test thousands of unregulated substances amid peptide craze

People in the UK are sending thousands of unregulated substances that claim to support weight-loss and wellness to laboratories for testing, as experts say the underground market for injectable peptides has exploded. The peptide-testing industry has expanded rapidly alongside demand for these substances, with one lab telling the Guardian that a decade ago, they handled a handful of tests a month sent by customers and vendors around the world to check what was in them. Today, they process around 60,000 samples a year, including roughly 2,000 orders from the UK since 2024. Peptides are short chains of amino acids. These can be found naturally in the body – for example hormones, such as insulin, oxytocin and vasopressin are peptides – but they can also be made synthetically in the laboratory. They include the active ingredients in prescription weight-loss drugs, such as Wegovy, which mimic the natural hormone GLP-1, as well as in experimental compounds pushed online by the booming biohacking and anti-ageing industries. On Telegram and TikTok, users claim the injections can heal injuries, sharpen focus and smooth wrinkles. Unlike medicines such as Wegovy, however, many of these experimental peptides are unapproved by regulators, with experts warning the compounds lack reliable safety data and quality control. Many are sold with labels stating they are “for research purposes only”, even as customers inject them into their bodies. Finnrick, a peptide testing laboratory in Texas, said about a third of the thousands of products it analysed failed basic quality checks, and that proportion had stayed broadly unchanged over the 12 to 14 months it had been gathering data. The failures typically fall into three categories: identity, meaning the substance is not what the label claims; purity, with anything below the 98% threshold considered

substandard; and quantity, where the vial contains either more or less than the stated milligram dose. The result, the lab said, was that buyers were frequently not receiving the compound, or the amount, for which they believed they had paid. Finnrick typically buys peptide products itself for testing, saying it prefers to analyse samples bought through the same channels used by ordinary customers rather than accepting products directly from vendors. In June last year, the lab also began accepting samples submitted by members of

the public. Any products that came directly from vendors were flagged as such on its website. Sometimes these peptides are essentially bootleg versions of approved drugs – such as semaglutide, the active ingredient in Wegovy, or tirzepatide, the active ingredient in the weight-loss jab Mounjaro – but are procured for a fraction of their market price from dealers online. Because they are sold as compounds “for research purposes only”, and in some cases are not formally classified as medicines, vendors are able to exploit a legal grey area with little regulatory oversight. Dr Luke Turnock, a senior lecturer in criminology at the University of Lincoln, said: “There are risks that you don’t necessarily know that what you think you’re buying is in fact the product that it claims [to be], and also you don’t know if it’s over-dosed or underdosed. “And in terms of if you do get the correct thing, the main risks are we do not have that long-term clinical data,” he said. “We don’t know the potential harms you could be doing longer term, such as increased cancer risk [or] damage to organs that you might not even perceive whilst you’re using them.” Peter Magic, a chemist at Janoshik Analytical, a laboratory in the Czech Republic known for testing peptides and performance-enhancing drugs, said the volume of samples arriving for analysis each month had rocketed to 5,000. “Roughly three or four years ago there was an exponential growth in demand, mostly for peptides,” Magic said, attributing the boom to the arrival of highly effective GLP-1 drugs. “Especially with the advent of semaglutide ... we’ve seen an insane explosion with that, then with tirzepatide, and now with retatrutide, which is the most modern one available.” Retatrutide is a weight-loss medication that is being tested in clinical trials and has not yet been approved for use in the UK – meaning it is illegal



the peptide to be sold and supplied. Magic said the UK was in the vanguard of this explosion in testing. While the US and China dominated the market, he noted that the UK tied with Canada for third place, generating roughly 2,000 testing orders since 2024. “I would say the UK is a rather big peptide market,” he said. “It’s a populous country, and the peptide market is closely related to performance-enhancing drugs. Often it’s the same factories, the same vendors and the same distribution channels.” The large profit margins were also drawing dangerous players into the supply chain. “You can buy a vial for about \$15 from China and sell it on for 10 times that,” Magic said.

‘As soon as I left the first session I felt taller’: is reformer pilates as amazing – or awful – as they say

I have noticed something new in my London neighbourhood. Amid the sea of nail salons, vape shops and purveyors of fried chicken, sleek, opaque-fronted premises are popping up everywhere. There are several within 15 minutes of my home. At weekends, you can spot clusters of devotees heading to these mysterious, vaguely aspirational temples of self-care, AKA reformer pilates studios. Many of these devotees conform to an aesthetic popularised on TikTok via hashtags such as #pilatesprincess. There is definitely a uniform: pink athleisure, Rhode phone cases and oversized pastel-coloured Stanley tumblers, jokingly referenced on Instagram as “emotional support” bottles. It is a trend that prompted New York magazine to run an article under the headline “Why Pilates Keeps Pissing People Off”: the workout has become inseparable from a very strict idea of womanhood. Whatever the truth of that, it is certainly not putting people off. Pilates has occupied the top slot around the world for three consecutive years on fitness booking app ClassPass, which reported that bookings in 2025 were up 66% year on year. This represents big business.

Together, the UK pilates and yoga market is worth £1.1bn. Thanks to celebrity endorsements, including from Margot Robbie, Dua Lipa and Bella Hadid, demand for all forms of pilates remains high. However, it is reformer pilates, which requires specialised studio equipment, that is the most popular. Data from applications made

to the business insurance provider Protectivity between 2024 and 2025 revealed that applications from reformer pilates instructors showed the biggest rise across all startups, with applications up 948% year on year. Kate Manfredi is a former fashion buyer who opened a reformer pilates studio in Nottingham last November. “I discovered mat pilates in my local village hall eight years ago,” she says. “It’s performed on the floor using your body weight for resistance.

I liked it, but it was only when I plucked up the courage to go to a reformer studio in 2023 that I got really hooked.” The reference to courage might sound odd to someone who has never ventured inside a reformer studio. Imagine an S&M dungeon crossed with a reject pile of contraptions from Dragons’ Den. Studios are filled with beds with bizarre-looking straps, pulleys and bars. The equipment uses adjustable spring resistance to provide a core workout. It is a nightmare for an uncoordinated person like me, who struggles to follow instructions and also confuses their left and right. After doing mat pilates for years, I did give it a go at my local gym but I couldn’t keep up with what was going on in a packed class. “Reformer looks intimidating, with all the equipment that you have no idea how to use,” says Manfredi. “You think everybody else in the class is going to know what they are doing. Everything on Instagram is about looking perfect, little crop tops and tiny bodies. I wanted to create a welcoming

space for women who feel they have a normal body and average fitness and maybe haven’t exercised for years. I have 100 members and only three are men. I think the appeal for women is you see great results without having to exercise in a space with a load of gym bros.” So what’s driving the boom? A big selling point is the idea that pilates has a quasi-miraculous power to transform your body and posture without the need to break much of a sweat. Its inventor, Joseph Pilates, claimed: “In 10 sessions, you’ll feel the difference; in 20 sessions, you’ll see the difference; and in 30 sessions, you’ll have a whole new body.” It’s that promise of a new body that is driving countless pilates challenges on social media. A German circus performer and boxer, living in the UK during the onset of the first world war, Pilates wasn’t an obvious candidate for a fitness influencer. However, when he was deemed an “enemy alien” and sent to an internment camp on the Isle of Man in 1915, he invented “contrology”, a sequence of repetitive movements across mat and apparatus that allowed people to stay fit in a confined space. He invented a number of contraptions to stretch and strengthen the body, including the Spine Corrector, Ladder Barrel, Wunda Chair and Ped-O-Pul. A possibly apocryphal tale has it that his earliest attempt at the reformer machine was created by attaching springs to the prison’s hospital beds so that patients could tone their muscles even when injured. Pilates targets deep



core muscles to protect the spine, crucial for improving balance, avoiding injury and reducing back pain. Manfredi witnessed her own transformation.

“From mat pilates, I started to build core strength and I could see my abdominals for the first time. But it was reformer that changed the shape of my legs and arms and toned everything up. It’s working against the resistance of the equipment that gives you that.” It was the lure of changing her physique that led Megan Macgregor, an early adopter of pilates, to give it a try in 2000. Now a studio owner, teacher and qualified physiotherapist based in Renfrew, Scotland, she used to work in Sydney as an intellectual property lawyer. “I’d noticed celebrities such as Madonna and The Matrix star Carrie-Anne Moss crediting pilates with transforming their bodies. They looked astonishing, and I thought, well, I’d like to

look astonishing too. The studio I went to wasn’t anything flash but it was run by an eminent teacher, Cynthia Lo-chard, a former dancer with New York City Ballet. They had all these strange bits of equipment. As soon as I left the first session I felt taller. I didn’t look different, but I felt different.” Soon, Macgregor was a convert. She started eating more healthily and joined another studio that offered yoga as well as pilates, and ended up attending four classes a day. “I got totally sucked into what I looked like. After a year, I was featured in a glossy magazine showing my transformation.” Perhaps inevitably, she decided to train as a teacher. In 2017, she moved back to her native Scotland and opened her studio, where she teaches pilates and yoga. She is also on the board of the Pilates Teacher Association (PTA). The PTA is on a mission to protect the public from potentially under-qualified teachers

and to preserve the pilates method from being changed out of all recognition. It recently issued a statement voicing concerns about the way reformer pilates is being taught. “A critical distinction must be made between highly qualified comprehensive pilates teachers and those offering limited or misclassified services, such as ... reformer fitness.” Macgregor says: “I think a lot of people go to a reformer studio or to a mat class without being taught the method. They do all the exercises and then get a sore neck. That’s if they’re lucky. If they’re not lucky, they end up putting their back out and come and see me as a physio. I run courses to introduce people to the method.” Macgregor stresses that pilates is really about helping people to move with control and precision. She says it gives people a framework for moving well and often, whether that is in day-to-day exercise, their chosen sport, or rehabilitation.

It is easy to forget, amid the froth of pilates marketing, that one of its most useful applications is in recovery from injury. Angelina Nizzardi is a Bedfordshire-based health coach. She started pilates after a devastating climbing accident in 2020 in Italy. “I was half an hour from base camp and I slipped sideways on some loose gravel. It was a sheer drop to my right so I twisted to stop my body from going over the edge, but in the process lost my footing and fell. A helicopter had to winch me to safety.” Her left leg and foot were shattered in multiple places and after surgery in Rome, she returned to the UK for rehab. She was told that she was unlikely to walk normally again. “I was determined to prove them wrong. A friend offered me a free pass to a reformer studio. I never looked back. It’s been incredible and I can now walk unaided.” Nizzardi credits her recovery purely to pilates. A systematic review, published in 2017, of 23 studies looking at the effectiveness of pilates found that 19 of them had shown it was a beneficial rehabilitation tool. Nizzardi explains how reformer pilates helped her to build strength back into her muscles without weight-bearing exercise. “There had been severe muscle wastage in my calf and thigh. As soon as I started this, the strength started to come back. It was so encouraging. The only thing is it was really expensive, £25 a class. I just managed to afford to do it three times a week. Luckily, our local authority gym installed an affordable reformer studio and then I

was able to go every other day.” Although she still has extreme stiffness in her leg in the morning, after a class the effect is immediate. “I can flex and bend my leg. The classes at my original studio were very small. I think you do need a high level of attention if you’ve got an injury. It might all sound like a fad but it’s been a complete life-saver for me.” Someone else who has seen the rehab benefits of reformer pilates is Carolina Are, an academic and professional pole dancer. “Pole dancing is quite a high-impact activity. My osteopath advised me to start cross-training because I had problems with my knees and my back.

I started integrating pilates into my workouts and it has been a gamechanger. It changed my posture and reduced my lower-back pain. The training of both sides of the body equally and building strength and flexibility has also been really helpful in balancing my body out.” Are attends classes at a studio in Hackney, east London, once a week. She says it took her a few attempts to find the right place. “Some studios are full of people taking selfies, which isn’t a vibe I like. They’re only going there to show off.” She is uniquely qualified to comment on the impact of social media because, by day, she is a fellow at the London School of Economics where her area of research is social media and online harm. “All sorts of people attend my studio – elderly men, pregnant women, people of all backgrounds, gender identities, race and age.

Tabu remembers getting a guitar as a birthday present from Asha Bhosle



Mumbai: While getting ready for the premiere of Bhooth Bangla, Tabu recalled a memorable birthday event on Tuesday when she received a guitar from renowned singer Asha Bhosle. Tabu posted a number of photos of herself with the seasoned singer on social media, describing it as one of the most memorable days of her life. In one of the pictures, Tabu is seen kissing Asha Bhosle’s hand, and in another, the two are seen giving each other a cozy hug.Asha Bhosle is seen in one of the photos clutching the guitar that she gave Tabu for her birthday. The pictures provide

a window into a treasured personal memory and show the actor’s close relationship with the famous singer. In addition, Tabu wrote a lengthy message to go with the article. “Tell me of your most memorable days...Tell me of the moments you will never forget,” the caption said. Tell me what most affects you. Tell me about the things you value most. On my birthday in November, this stunning guitar—Ashaji’s gift to me—came through my door. I love and adore you more than words can express, Ashaji. We experienced love, longing, anguish, and passion through your songs. I will cherish this for the rest of my life and hope to perform your songs for you someday.” The movie is slated to hit theaters on April 16. The last time Akshay Kumar and director Priyadarshan worked together was in Khatta Meetha in 2010.Tabu, Paresh Rawal, Rajpal Yadav, Wamiqa Gabbi, and the late actress Asrani are among the many actors in Bhooth Bangla’s ensemble cast.The film is produced by Akshay Kumar, Shobha Kapoor, and Ektaa R. Kapoor and is presented by Balaji Motion Pictures, a branch of Balaji Telefilms Ltd., in collaboration with Cape of Good Films.

Fans are urged by Rajpal Yadav not to criticize Zakir Khan and Saurabh Dwivedi for the insult

Mumbai: Following his recent participation at the Chetak Screen Awards, actor Rajpal Yadav responded to the social media controversy. Co-host Saurabh Dwivedi made fun of the actor’s recent scandal about the payment of settlement amounts in a cheque-bounce case as he was talking about changes in world currencies. Many social media users were offended by this and criticized the host of the awards presentation. Rajpal clarified his position on the issue in a new video posted on his X account on Tuesday. “Hi everyone. A few days ago, I had the privilege of going to the Chetak Screen Awards. I met a lot of people from the industry there, and the atmosphere was fantastic overall with tons of acts and sketches. I spoke with Saurabh Dwivedi and Zakir Khan about the global economy, conflict, and the perspectives of everyday people during one of



the skits. It was the presentation’s overarching concept. “Sometimes it happens in films too, we design one scene with something in mind, but the meaning does not reach the audience in the same way,” he continued. This is the movies! To me, Saurabh and Zakir are like brothers. I’ve always been regarded by them. I have a close relationship with

them. As storytellers and artists, we are inextricably linked to one another. During the performance, Saurabh even got the audience to applaud. Thank you, Saurabh. Please don’t injure or criticize him. You will harm me if you harm him. I adore Zakir and Saurabh. You are all loved by me. Because of all of you, I am here. I’m grateful. As it

transpired, Saurabh made fun of Rajpal and reminded him of his own responsibilities when he talked about the pandemonium around currency fluctuations during the ceremony. “Rajpal bhai, you will have to return the due amount regardless of how much the dollar and rupee fluctuate,” he said.

While many others on social media disapproved of the host’s callous tone in front of the entire business, Rajpal accepted the remark with a smile. In February of this year, Rajpal was taken to Tihar Jail in relation to a ₹9 crore debt and check bounce case.

But on February 16, the actor was granted interim bail, and he is now returning to fulfilling his obligations at work. Even when the previous interim order was revoked, the Delhi High Court subsequently made it clear that Rajpal would not be placed back under arrest.

The focus of Priyanka Chopra’s pool day was kachi keri and bikinis

Mumbai: Actor Priyanka Chopra is in Hyderabad filming Varanasi, her Telugu debut, alongside SS Rajamouli. The actor shared a glimpse of her Sunday by the pool with her husband Nick Jonas and daughter Malti Marie on Instagram on Monday. There seems to be some fresh raw mango on the menu as well. With the caption, “One of those rare times when a Sunday actually felt like a Sunday.. and other randoms,” Priyanka posted a preview of her Sunday on Instagram. In one photo, the actor was seen relaxing by the pool while wearing a robe and enjoying the sun. Another featured her posing for a photo while wearing a blue bikini.

Fans aren’t the only ones who seem impressed; Ekta Kapoor said, “Such a superstar.” Along with photos of herself relaxing in the pool, Priyanka shared a video of herself enjoying kachi keri, or raw mango, with red chilli powder. Observing the plate of raw mango near the pool, one admirer said, “Not PC with her Desi snacks!” while another asked, “Is that kachi keri?” Malti cuddled up to her grandmother, Madhu Chopra, in one adorable photo, and she assisted her father, Nick, in cooling down while they video-called Priyanka from the United States in another. In another video, which appears to have been shot on set, the words “behave like a man” are scribbled on a whiteboard. Varanasi, which is scheduled for release in Sankranthi 2027, is SS Rajamouli’s next movie following the success of RRR in 2022. His father, V Vijayendra Prasad, co-wrote the action-adventure movie. Mahesh Babu, Priyanka Chopra, Prakash Raj, and Prithviraj Sukumaran are the main actors. The movie is marketed as a “globetrotting adventure” with roots in Indian mythology.Although filming began early in 2025, the movie wasn’t formally announced until November of that same year. At a lavish occasion in Hyderabad, Rajamouli unveiled Mahesh’s first appearance as Rudhra from the movie.

In the movie, Pruthviraj plays Kumbha and Priyanka plays Mandakini. After Jai Gangaajal in 2016, Priyanka makes a spectacular comeback to Indian cinema with this movie. In 2025, Priyanka made a brief appearance in A Very Jonas Christmas Movie and featured in Heads of State. Last year, she served as executive producer of the documentary The Cycle of Love. This year began with her role as a pirate in the film The Bluff, which she also produced.

When Akshay Kumar returned a check for a failed movie, Ekta Kapoor was taken aback

Mumbai: On Monday, the trailer for Priyadarshan’s next movie, Bhooth Bangla, which stars Akshay, was made public. The movie, which opens on cinemas next week, is the filmmaker and actor’s long-awaited reunion. Producer Ekta Kapoor revealed at the trailer’s premiere that she had been waiting years to collaborate with Akshay once more and that he had returned a check for a failed movie.

Although Ekta has been a producer for many years, she claims that in thirty years, she has not seen somebody like Akshay. She stated, “I have wanted to work with Akshay sir for many years now,” when asked why. He’s the sole actor who phoned me up, which is something that many people are unaware of—our first movie didn’t do well. “This is money back for you... you’ve lost money,” he stated as he handed me a check. When the money was presented, Ekta remarked, “I was in shock.” Koi nai karta. Just thirty-one years old, kari nai kari. (No



one does it. In my thirty-one years of work, nobody has done it. And to say it so casually—I declined. Do another movie with me, please. That will make me a lot more money. In reference to Bhooth Bangla, “That film finally happened.” The two had previously collaborated on the 2013 movie Once Upon a Time in Mumbai Dobaara, though Ekta did not specify which movie Akshay returned the check for! Priyadarshan is the director of Bhooth Bangla, while Akshay Kumar, Ekta

Kapoor, and Shobha Kapoor are the producers. Akshay Kumar, Paresh Rawal, Rajpal Yadav, Tabu, and Wamiqa Gabbi are among its stars. Prior to this, Akshay and Priyadarshan collaborated on movies like Hera Pheri (2000), Garam Masala (2005), Bhagam Bhag (2006), Bhool Bhulaiyaa (2007), De Dana Dan (2009), and Khatta Meetha (2010). Aakash Kaushik wrote the tale and Rohan Shankar wrote the dialogue for Bhooth Bangla. The story revolves around a man who inherits a house and discovers that both it and the woodland behind it are haunted. To make matters worse, he chooses to marry in a village where no one else marries due to his fear of Vadhusur, an evil spirit.

However, turmoil breaks out when he tries to marry and own the house at the same time. The horror comedy’s April 10 theatrical release date was rescheduled. With paid previews starting at 9 PM on April 16, it will now debut on screens on April 17.

Aditya Dhar Praises the “Rare” Skills of the Dhurandhar Composer

Mumbai: Headlines are still dominated by Aditya Dhar’s Dhurandhar 2. In addition to its outstanding box office results and stirring performances, the record has created a lot of attention. The Dhurandhar and Dhurandhar 2 songs have dominated music platforms for months by bringing back old Hindi hits, traditional qawwalis, and independent songs while offering the public a varied music album.Aditya Dhar posted a heartfelt statement honoring composer Shashwat Sachdev’s “rare” abilities as the movie wrapped up an amazing 19-day run at the box office. In a lengthy statement, Aditya Dhar revealed that Shashwat finished the BGM in six days and composed nine songs for Dhurandhar Part 1 in nine days. He performed the same trick for the second movie, and the magic



worked again.He wrote “14 songs in 11 days, BGM in 3” for the second section. Aditya Dhar described this amazing accomplishment as a “absolute rarity for any film in the world” and stated that his “dear” Sha displayed extraordinary fortitude. “Here’s to Shashwat Sachdev. Some collaborations go beyond work; they become deeply personal,” he wrote

at the start of the note. For me, Sha has been that. In addition to being Dhurandhar’s music composer, I see him as a younger brother with whom I have experienced chaos, quiet, ideas, and some of the most intense creative moments. When I speak it aloud, everything he did for this movie still doesn’t feel genuine. For Dhurandhar Part 1, nine tracks were

completed in nine days, and the BGM was finished in six days. “Dhurandhar Part 2” showcases an extraordinary creative process, culminating in 14 songs produced in just 11 days, with background music (BGM) crafted in 3.

The albums, released within three months, achieved top global chart status. The production environment transformed the house into an active studio where musicians worked continuously, reflecting a dedicated, collective effort led by Sha. Despite personal challenges, he maintained resilience and focus. The film features significant music influences, including remixes and classic tracks, reinforcing its narrative. Released on March 19, “Dhurandhar 2” became India’s second-highest net grosser.

Janhvi Kapoor Gushes About Shikhar Pahariya, Her Boyfriend



Mumbai: Shikhar Pahariya and Janhvi Kapoor have been dating for some time. They are frequently seen together at events, parties, and family gatherings. The actress recently talked about how she can play like a child around him.Janhvi Kapoor recently stated, “Love allows me to be the best version of myself.” It has provided me with a secure space to express my ideas and have faith in them. That has always been made possible by his presence. “It’s a safe place where I can be a kid around

him and just be a kid,” she said. I enjoy myself more with no one else. Janhvi said, “I won’t say that but I will say this, he is, not just for me, but for her (Kushshi), for dad and everyone in our family, he has been there from the beginning as a friend,” in response to Karan Johar’s question regarding her relationship with Shikhar Pahariya. Not in a way that gave me the impression that he is a pushover or that he is expecting anything. He was simply there in a way that I have not seen many men capable

of being there for another human being—in a very selfless, respectful manner.” Former Home Minister Shishikumar Shinde’s grandson is Shikhar Pahariya. Smruti Shinde, his mother, is an actor. Veer Pahariya, his older brother, debuted in Bollywood with Sky Force, which starred Sara Ali Khan, Nimrat Kaur, and Akshay Kumar.According to reports, Janhvi Kapoor is collaborating with Lakshya and Tiger Shroff on the next action film Lag Jaa Gale, which is produced by Dharma Productions. The three had reportedly started filming the Raj Mehta-directed film in Mumbai last month. Janhvi’s performance in the highly regarded movie Homebound has also recently made headlines. The film, which was directed by Neeraj Ghaywan, is on the shortlist for the 98th Academy Awards’ Best International Feature Film category.

The romance between Ananya Panday and Lakshya takes a bittersweet turn



New Delhi: The teaser for Chand Mera Dil, which stars Ananya Panday and Lakshya in the key parts, was unveiled today. It appears to be an emotional rollercoaster. The teaser opens with a peek of two young people, Ananya Panday as Chandni and Lakshya as Aarav, who are overcome with love.The trajectory, however, soon reveals a terrible turn of events in which the main protagonists are shown in their most vulnerable and emotional states.Lakshya and Ananya Panday will be sharing a screen for the first time. As a teaser for the movie, their

connection comes across as brand-new and intense. Vivek Soni, who rose to fame with the 2021 film Meenakshi Sundareswarar, is the film’s director. Under the name Dharma Productions, it is being created. Karan called the movie a “unique and passionate” love story in an Instagram post. “We have two chands ready to bring an intense & passionate love story like no other!” he commented, sharing the movie’s initial posters. Hi padta hai, pyaar mein thoda paagal hona. Ananya Panday and Lakshya feature in Chand Mera Dil. Vivek Soni is the director. It will be released in theaters in 2025. The movie will now be released on May 22, 2026, instead of its original 2025 release date. Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera Tu Meri, Panday’s most recent project, was released in 2025 and starred her with Kartik Aaryan.The second season of Call Me Bae, which will be available on Prime Video, will be her next appearance. The Ba***ds of Bollywood, the first series directed by Aryan Khan, featured Lakshya. The actor played Aasmaan Singh in the September 2025 release.

Anushka Sharma and Virat Kohli’s Review of Immersive, Captivating Dhurandhar 2



Mumbai: Power couple Anushka Sharma and Virat Kohli have joined the Dhurandhar 2 fan club. The celebrities posted their evaluations of the Ranveer Singh movie on their individual Instagram Stories on Monday. In response to their sincere messages, director Aditya Dhar also conveyed his appreciation.Anushka said, tagging Aditya Dhar, “What a beautiful film you’ve made! Making a film that is nearly four hours long requires a great deal of conviction. The film maintains your interest throughout because it is captivating, immersive, and expertly made. You are an extremely confident and creative filmmaker. Anushka said, praising Ranveer Singh, her debut co-star, for his “solid” performance: “You seized a once-in-a-lifetime character and delivered a solid, flawless performance.””Madhavan, Rampal, Rakesh Bedi

Sir, and every single amazing performer in the movie—every performance is flawless; the movie wouldn’t be possible without you all. “Many congratulations to all those involved in this,” Anush-

ka continued.”This is truly overwhelming coming from such an exceptional talent like you,” Aditya Dhar said in response to Anushka. Anushka, thank you so much. It simply encourages us to set greater goals, tell tales with integrity, passion, and purpose, and never give up on producing something that genuinely inspires people.” “I saw the movie today, and I can honestly state that I have never witnessed a cinematic experience like this produced in India. I didn’t flinch for over four hours, and it brought out every feeling. Adityadhar confirms that your creations demonstrate your skill and conviction. Bravo to you. You’re a genius. While all of the performers were excellent in their parts, Ranveersingh’s performance in this film was exceptionally outstanding. You’ve reached a new level. “Absolutely WOW,” Kohli posted on Insta-

gram. Aditya Dhar responded, referring to Virat as a “legend”: “Woowww! I can’t believe this is taking place. This truly means a lot, Virat. I’ve been a fan since the days of your Under-19 World Cup. It just seems strange to watch a once-in-a-generation legend display love like way. In our little way, we are inspired by the way you represent the nation each time you go out. With our movies, we will always strive to make India proud. “Jai Hind.” The highest-earning movie in a single language was Dhurandhar, which was released in December of last year. In just 11 days, Dhurandhar 2 exceeded its predecessor’s lifetime haul.Dhurandhar 2 became the second-highest net grosser in India on day 18, surpassing Rs 1,000 crore (net). In sixteen days, All Arjun’s Pushpa 2 accomplished the accomplishment.

Kerala’s chief minister responds to Telangana’s chief minister, denouncing offensive remarks



New Delhi, Apr 07: In an attempt to resolve political disagreements, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan wrote to his Telangana counterpart A Revanth Reddy on Tuesday, expressing disapproval of the latter’s alleged “personally insulting remarks.”Vijayan’s reply was part of an ongoing verbal altercation with Reddy, who had used a passage from a well-known movie

to assert that the Communist chief minister’s tenure was over during an electoral rally in Kerala. This week, Reddy also released a six-page statement criticizing the Kerala chief minister for using “outdated data” and contrasting the state’s accomplishments with Telangana’s.CM Vijayan stated, “In the present reply, which is to a colleague chief minister of a non-BJP government, I want to express strong disagreement on the attitude of making personally insulting remarks to settle political differences.” The chief minister of Kerala declared that the people of the state will evaluate the Congress government’s performance in Telangana and that he had no intention of engaging in a discussion about it. He emphasized that his government has consistently released progress

reports that are accessible to the public and that this kind of activity is not limited to five-year intervals. The Telangana counterpart’s accusation that his administration was selectively appropriating Kerala’s accomplishments and minimizing the efforts of Congress chief ministers like K Karunakaran and Oommen Chandy was refuted by Chief Minister Vijayan. According to Vijayan, the Left Democratic Front (LDF) government of 1987–1991 led the state’s literacy push, whereas the first Communist government elected in 1957 introduced a bill to remove landlord dominance. He continued by enumerating the various plans and initiatives that previous LDF governments introduced and expanded upon in areas like public health and enhancing industrial climate and governance.”You

have expressed a conventional view of industrial stagnation. It has been widely acknowledged that Kerala is making progress in the startup sector, CM Vijayan stated in the letter. Additionally, he denied the Telangana chief minister’s charge that his administration was not criticizing the Bharatiya Janata Party-led (BJP) government at the federal level. According to Vijayan, his government is suing the Center in the Supreme Court by claiming the state’s rights under Article 131.The remarks made by the Communist and Congress chief ministers coincide with a fierce election battle in Kerala, mostly between the Congress-led UDF and the CPM-led LDF. Reddy supported a number of the state’s United Democratic Front (UDF) candidates. Kerala will hold elections on April 9.

Why is there still such strong control over women’s bodies and choices

New Delhi, Apr 07: Even though India has passed legislation and rendered a number of progressive rulings aimed at guaranteeing gender equality, the Supreme Court has offered a sobering reminder that patriarchal influence over women’s life persists, frequently subtly but pervasively.Despite constitutional guarantees and persistent institutional efforts, “patriarchy still permeates the everyday,” according to a bench of justices Sanjay Karol and N Kottiswar Singh. This raises a troubling question for society as a whole: Why does control over women’s bodies, choices, and lives persist so deeply?These remarks were made by the court as it upheld the life sentence of a man found guilty of killing his wife in Rajasthan in 2011 by setting her on fire. It said that the occurrence is a reflection of the persistent threat of violence associated with dowries and has its roots in domestic abuse. The panel placed the case in a larger societal context, pointing out that India still struggles with the discrepancy between actual reality and constitutional ideals more than 70 years after gaining independence.In its ruling on April 4, the court stated, “The Constitution promises equality, non-discrimination on the basis of sex, and the right to life and liberty. However, cases such as these demonstrate that even after so many years, rights... are still elusive for many.”It highlighted a persistent judicial worry that legal reform, no matter how extensive, has not been enough to upend deeply ingrained social systems controlling gender interactions. From the Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961 to safeguards against domestic abuse and harassment at work, the bench charted the course of judicial and legislative actions intended to improve the status of women. It cited a number of significant decisions that broadened women’s rights in a number of areas, from overturning the adultery legislation and instant triple talaq to acknowledging women’s equal rights in the military and inheritance.However, the court pointed out that these initiatives have not yet resulted in actual substantive equality. Empirical evidence indicates that things are not going smoothly despite the various arms of government’s persistent participation. Indeed, it paints a dismal picture, the ruling stated. The court cited statistics to support its concerns about the extent of violence that women still experience. It stated that dowry-related violence still takes over 6,000 lives a year, and that over 448,000 crimes against women were reported in 2023. These statistics are a sign of the “persistence of practices that have long been outlawed.”Domestic abuse accusations continue to rank among the most commonly filed complaints before statutory bodies, underscoring the ongoing vulnerability of women in the home—ironically, the place that is thought to be the safest. It rejected the notion that extreme violence against women is isolated, viewing such acts as symptoms of a systemic issue. In its concluding remarks, the court questioned why, despite various reforms, control over women’s lives persists, suggesting the answer lies with “We, the People of India.”

Two kids were killed when a bomb went off in their Manipur village home



New Delhi, Apr 07: After suspected militants from the Kuki-Zo-dominated hill areas attacked a civilian home in Moirang Tronglaobi hamlet in the Bishnupur district with a bomb, Manipur was rocked by new violence. Two children were slain in the incident, which also caused panic in the area that is prone to unrest. Two children were killed instantaneously when the rocket impacted a residential home in Tronglaobi village, according to local reports. While villagers raced to save those inside, the explosion damaged the house and shocked the neighbors. Tronglaobi village is located in the high hill regions of the Churachandpur district on the Bishnupur district’s periphery. Due to its close proximity to hill positions allegedly manned by armed Kuki gangs, the area has long been seen as hazardous. According to locals, bombs shot from nearby hill slopes have landed inside

the settlement, suggesting that the firing positions are more than three kilometers away.In order to stop the attack from getting worse, security personnel have put the region on high alert and rushed more troops to the critical belt. While keeping an eye on other susceptible communities situated along the hill-valley boundary, authorities are also undertaking surveillance and search operations in neighboring hill areas. Concerns about the state’s safety have grown as a result of another unsettling incident. A seven-year-old girl who had been reported missing from the Akhampat relief camp was discovered dead under mysterious circumstances in a nearby region on the evening of April 6. The child was now residing at the camp with a family that was internally displaced from Moreh. Although officials stated that a post-mortem examination would reveal the precise cause of death, pre-

liminary indications indicate that the kid may have been sexually molested prior to being killed. One suspect has been detained by police for interrogation. According to reports, the person lives in the same aid camp. The twin events—the probable rape and murder of the little girl and the bombing that killed two children—have caused enormous sadness and indignation throughout the state. Leaders in the community and civil society organizations have vehemently denounced the violence and called for prompt justice as well as improved safety for vulnerable citizens, especially displaced families residing in relief camps.Both events are being investigated, according to authorities, and security personnel are still on high alert in key regions. Many outlying settlements’ residents still live in constant terror of more strikes from nearby hill positions.

A family of nine dies in a well after avoiding the main road

Mumbai, Apr 07: Nine family members—six of whom were children—were killed after their car fell down a well in the Nashik region of Maharashtra as a result of their decision to take a shortcut.



Three adults and six kids from the Dargude family traveled to an event hosted by a Dindori coaching center on Friday. Sunil Dargude (32), his wife Reshma (27), daughter Gunwanti (11), Sunil’s sister-in-law Asha (32), her children Sreyash (11), Shravani (11), Sraddha (13), and Srishti (14), and a relative’s child Samridhi (7) were among them. The nine departed for their village, which is roughly ten kilometers distant, after attending the program. Sunil, the driver of the Maruti Suzuki XL6, made the decision to take a shortcut in the evening. This

turned out to be a fatal mistake.The vehicle crashed into a roadside well after colliding with its wall. There was water in the deep well up to 40 feet. Locals hurried to the well and summoned the fire department as soon as they heard the noise. The depth of the hole and the darkness presented significant obstacles to the locals’ attempts to start rescue efforts. To find the car, firefighters utilized lights. The automobile was pulled out of the well using ropes after divers leaped in. However, it was too late. Everybody inside was dead. One of the children’s bodies

was discovered outside the car.Police have filed a case under the laws pertaining to reckless driving and causing death by negligence. One of the victims, Sunil Dargude, has been accused of reckless driving, while Rajendra Raje, the owner of the well, is being sued for negligence. Reports state that although the road along the well was built a few years ago, no action was made to shut it down. The owner of the well and the local authorities were at odds about this.The local government has now taken measures as a result of the tragedy. To make sure that something similar doesn’t happen again, work to plug the well has started. To find out why the authorities allowed a well to stay so close to a road, an investigation has also been started.

India’s World Cup hero, desperate in CSK’s yellow, reverts to annoying old habits

New Delhi: On February 26, as India’s openers took the field to begin the first of their four crucial T20 World Cup matches against Zimbabwe, loud cries of “Sanju, Sanju, Sanju” echoed across the MA Chidambaram Stadium. For the first time in the competition, the object of their unbridled adoration appeared undisturbed by the praise, determined to maximize his inclusion in the starting lineup on his own initiative. Two weeks prior, Sanju Samson had made a guest appearance in India’s second match against Namibia in New Delhi, but only because Abhishek Sharma was hospitalized due to a stomach infection. After India was forced into a structural rejig after losing a left-handed opener to off-spin in the opening over of their innings for three straight games, Samson was now walking out with Abhishek. Samson’s right-handedness became an asset at the top of the order when Ishan Kishan dropped to No. 3, but it wasn’t the reason Chennai supporters were going crazy. They were going to see Samson for the first time at his new “home” in the Indian Premier League following his trade from Rajasthan Royals to Chennai Super Kings during the off-season. There is Mahendra Singh Dhoni for the typical CSK fan, and then there are the others, albeit they are also regarded with respect and admiration. Given that he was born in neighboring Kerala, Samson was unique and practically a son of the land. His fan following spans all of India, so it was not surprising that Chepauk erupted in uncontrollable cheers when Samson went outside to stand watch. The first game did not let me down. He warmed up for his future heroics with a breezy 24 off 15 balls, but there was no spectacular edifice—those would come over the next three innings. More significantly, he scored 48 alongside Abhishek, forming India’s first significant World Cup opening partnership. Chennai was ecstatic and eagerly awaited the start of the 2026 Indian Premier League. The Samson fairytale has not yet come to pass ten days into Season 19. The first taste of Samson magic is still awaited by CSK and its millions of ardent supporters. CSK’s report



card shows three appearances, three losses for the squad, and three failures for Samson. The 31-year-old’s perceived lack of “commitment” has caused disenchantment and barely hidden rage in some quarters, but as everyone knows all too well, these quarters are only one huge knock away from altering their thoughts. Samson will be the first to acknowledge that his time with CSK has not been encouraging thus far. He was dismissed for six against Rajasthan Royals in his maiden knock for the five-time previous champions. There hasn’t been much improvement despite subsequent scores of 7 and 9 against Punjab Kings and Royal Challengers Bengaluru, respectively. Together with captain Ruturaj Gaikwad’s similarly awful run, his bat contribution of 22 runs from 19 balls with two fours and a six has prevented the powerful Power Play pronouncements that are so crucial to success in the 20-over format. Samson’s performance as a wicketkeeper has been inconsistent, with issues even in basic gathers. Following promising World Cup innings, he has reverted to poor form, likely due to the pressure and expectations from CSK fans. His attempts to impress may have hindered his natural playing style. Adjusting his approach, similar to his successful World Cup strategy, could help him regain his form. Transitioning to a new franchise after years with Rajasthan presents its own challenges, but coaching staff express confidence in his potential. Ultimately, it is up to Samson to manage his mindset and reconnect with the rhythm that previously brought him success.

Against the misfiring Gujarat Titans, the Delhi Capitals want runs from the top order



New Delhi: In an attempt to sustain their winning momentum against a struggling Gujarat Titans in the IPL on Wednesday, the Delhi Capitals will be looking for runs from their KL Rahul-led top order. Since coming of age early in the season, 22-year-old Sameer Rizvi has been handling the majority of the Delhi Capitals’ batting load. The team has had nearly flawless games with the ball. The Delhi Capitals will become a stronger team if players like Rahul and company find their rhythm. Rahul’s performance in his first two innings cannot be criticized, and he will eventually establish consistency.With the chance to bat at number three, Nitish

Rana would be under additional strain. Pathum Nissanka gained more confidence to take on the Gujarat Titans pace combo of Kagiso Rabada and Mohammed Siraj in the powerplay after discovering his range in the previous game.Rizvi is on a roll after hitting his third consecutive IPL fifty (one came last season). Although he has always been able to take spinners to the cleaners, he can now switch tactics even when facing fast bowlers. He was more measured in the first part of his batting against the Mumbai Indians before going ballistic to help his team win easily.While skipper Axar Patel has been as successful as ever in the middle overs and powerplay, Mukesh Kumar has been out-

standing with the ball.Along with T Natarajan and Indian wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav, Lungi Ngidi has given the bowling unit more depth.Gujarat Titans, on the other hand, are a team that is struggling in both areas.The Titans have had difficulty shedding their reputation as a top-heavy team. They should have easily pursued 205 against the Rajasthan Royals, but the inexperienced middle order was unable to capitalize on Sai Sudharsan’s start. Rahul Tewatia, Washington Sundar, and Glenn Phillips make up the middle order, and they must perform well under duress. Due to a muscular spasm, captain Shubman Gill was unable to play in the previous game; however, stand-in captain Rashid Khan stated that he should be well for their pivotal match against Delhi Capitals.The Titans also need to improve their bowling skills after losing their first two games. While Prasad Krishna hasn’t been reliable enough, Siraj and Rabada have both been a little pricey.Positively, Rashid has established himself early in the competition, but Ashok Sharma, a 23-year-old pacer, has been their most outstanding bowler. The Mumbai Indians managed just 162 runs in the afternoon game last week, despite the Kotla pitch typically offering plenty of runs. How it acts on what is predicted to be an exceptionally chilly April evening is yet to be seen.

The Mumbai Indians’ intriguing assessment of Rajasthan Royals star Vaibhav Sooryavanshi

New Delhi: The Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026 season match between the Mumbai Indians and Rajasthan Royals is slated to take place in Guwahati on Tuesday. The match between Vaibhav Sooryavanshi and Jasprit Bumrah is one that the cricket world is excited to watch intently, despite the fact that both teams are well-balanced and have a number of superstar players on their rosters. Over the past year, the 15-year-old RR batter’s tremendous batting has completely changed the world. But dealing with Bumrah, the top pacer in the world, is a whole other story. When questioned about how new Sooryavanshi’s threat is, Mumbai Indians coach Paras Mhambrey downplayed it by pointing out that the teenager has been there for more than a year. Therefore, MI shouldn’t be concerned about any unexpected aspects of his batting.First of all, Vaibhav is not new, in my opinion. He is not new; this is his second year,” he stated. However, Mhambrey did not hold back while praising his performances, calling them “praiseworthy” and commensurate with the authority the franchise has granted him.We’ll prepare him the same way we do other players because we know he’s a good player,” he continued. Ravi



Bishnoi, another talented player, will be joining Rajasthan for the match against Mumbai. Mhambrey also downplayed the “mystery” surrounding Bishnoi’s bowling, stating that he doesn’t think the leg-spinner has changed this season.Ravi is no longer a mystery to me. Over the years, people have witnessed his abilities,” Mhambrey remarked. “Every cricket player experiences different stages. A game may or may not go well, he continued. Parag started his tenure as perma-

nent captain on a good note as the Royals defeated the Gujarat Titans away from home and the Chennai Super Kings in Guwahati in their most recent two games. ”The skipper deserves the praise. Siddhartha Lahiri, the performance coach for the Rajasthan Royals, stated, “He is young, and a lot has been written about him.”It begins from the top. On the eve of the Royals’ match against the Mumbai Indians, he remarked, “And keep in mind one thing: a cricket team will always be led by the captain.”

Sensational 2026 Run Propels Vaishnavi Adkar To India's Top Tennis Ranking Spot

New India Number One Leads 2026 Billie Jean King Cup Charge

New Delhi: Vaishnavi Adkar has continued her stunning rise in 2026, emerging as India's new women's singles No.1 after a breakthrough run on the ITF circuit. The 21-year-old from Pune has been one of the biggest success stories in Indian tennis this season, climbing rapidly up the rankings on the back of a string of standout performances. Vaishnavi started the year ranked No. 643, but has now climbed to World No.383 after rising eight places in the latest WTA rankings. In the process, she overtook Sahaja Yamalapalli, who is currently ranked No. 384, to become India's top-ranked women's singles player.

Vaidehi Chaudhari and Shrivalli Bhamidipathy are third and fourth among the Indians respectively. Vaishnavi is currently representing India in the Billie Jean King Cup 2026 Asia/Oceania Group I campaign in New Delhi. Fresh off a sensational rise on the ITF



Circuit, she earned a maiden call-up and headed into the prestigious team event as India's top-ranked women's singles player. The hosts are expected to rely heavily on Vaishnavi and Sahaja Yamalapalli in the singles, while the experienced duo of Ankita Raina and Rutuja Bhosale could take charge of the doubles duties. India's squad for the tournament comprises Vaishnavi Adkar, Sahaja Yamalapalli, Ankita

Raina, Rutuja Bhosale and Zeel Desai, with Zeel coming in after injuries to Shrivalli Bhamidipaty and Vaidehee Chaudhari. Vaishnavi Adkar's stunning rise in 2026 has been driven by back-to-back standout performances in Bengaluru and Kalaburagi. The 21-year-old became the first Indian woman since Sania Mirza in 2009 to reach a W100 final when she finished runner-up in Bengaluru, underlining her growing stature

On the ITF circuit. She then went one better in Kalaburagi, clinching the singles title and pocketing USD 4,860 in prize money.

Seeded third, Vaishnavi beat Ankita Raina 7-6(3), 6-4 in an all-Indian final on March 8 to seal the crown after a composed display. Earlier, she stunned top seed Jasmin Gimbrere, ranked No. 399 in the world, 6-3, 6-2 in the semifinals. Vaishnavi also completed a memorable dou-

ble in Kalaburagi, partnering Ankita to win the doubles title with a dominant 6-2, 6-2 victory over Soha Sadiq and Akanksha Nitture.

Vaishnavi Adkar's ascent to become India's No. 1 singles player was driven by back-to-back standout performances at the ITF Women's Open W100 Bengaluru and the ITF W35 Kalaburagi. In 2024, she also secured her maiden professional singles and doubles titles at the ITF W15 Ahmedabad. In Bengaluru, Vaishnavi Adkar entered as a wildcard ranked World No. 690 and became the first Indian woman since Sania Mirza in 2009 to reach a W100 final, finishing as runner-up. She followed this by winning both the singles and doubles titles in Kalaburagi, where she defeated Ankita Raina in an all-Indian final. These results propelled her from a starting rank of No. 643 at the beginning of 2026 to World No. 383, overtaking Sahaja Yamalapalli for the top national spot.

Kevin Pietersen Claims IPL Sacrifices And ECB Fallout Ended His Successful England



New Delhi: Former England captain Kevin Pietersen revealed that his long-standing dispute with the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) over his participation in the Indian Premier League (IPL) played a decisive role in cutting short his international career. Speaking on a podcast with Ranveer Allahbadia, Pietersen said the stance he took, prioritising franchise cricket at a time when it was frowned upon, came at a personal cost but ultimately helped pave the way for future players to balance international commitments with lucrative T20 leagues.

"I made big sacrifices, I lost my career because of it," said Pietersen when asked if he was responsible for allowing English players to play in the IPL. "100%, it's the only reason why everybody in that establishment went against me."

In 2009, during the second season of the IPL, England allowed its contracted players to participate in franchise cricket for a limited three-week window. The ECB had earlier barred its centrally contracted players from participating in the tournament during the inaugural season. The South Africa-born England batter, in 2009, joined Royal Challengers

Bengaluru, prioritising the league over his national duties. He was already reeling from a fallout with then coach Peter Moores, which eventually extended to the ECB. From here, the complications grew further for Pietersen and his England career. "I was 33 when my England career finished, after 104 Test matches. I should have played 150-160 Tests and scored 12,000-13,000 runs. That's what I should have achieved," he said. Pietersen finished his Test career with 8,181 runs at an average of 47.3, including 35 half-centuries and 23 centuries the 2025 season.

Coventry City Creep Closer To Premier League Promotion After Securing A Stalemate At Hull

London: Coventry City moved a step closer to securing promotion to the Premier League after being held to a 0-0 draw by Hull City in their EFL Championship clash at the MKM Stadium on Easter Monday. Despite an underwhelming display, Coventry extended their advantage at the top of the table and now require just four more points from their remaining five matches to guarantee a return to the top flight for the first time in 25 years. Results elsewhere also favoured the Sky Blues, as promotion rivals dropped points, strengthening their position, as per Sky Sports.

Hull dominated large spells of the contest and came closest to breaking the deadlock early on. John Egan nearly capitalised on a goalkeeping error, but Liam Kitching produced a crucial block to deny him after Carl Rushworth spilled a cross. The hosts, however,



Struggled to convert their superiority into clear-cut chances. The Tigers, currently pushing for promotion themselves, created pressure through Liam Millar and Cody Drameh on the flanks, while Joe Gelhardt fired over from distance.

However, a lack of clinical finishing continued to hamper their efforts. Coventry, led by manager Frank

Lampard, endured a difficult opening phase but gradually settled into the match. They looked threatening on the counter-attack, with Victor Torp forcing a save from Ivor Pandur after getting in behind the Hull defence. The second half followed a similar pattern, with Hull enjoying more possession but failing to carve out decisive opportunities. Head-

ers from Gelhardt and Oli McBurnie lacked the power to trouble Rushworth, while Coventry's Tatsuhiro Sakamoto saw a promising move cut out by Egan. Both sides introduced attacking changes in search of a winner, but neither could find a breakthrough, as the match ended goalless, mirroring the reverse fixture earlier in the season.

KKR Woes Deepen As Pathirana Is Still Awaiting IPL Clearance From Sri Lanka

New Delhi: Kolkata Knight Riders' bowling concerns in the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026 continue to mount, with Matheesha Pathirana still awaiting clearance from Sri Lanka Cricket due to pending fitness tests. The Sri Lankan pacer remains unavailable at a time when KKR are already struggling with multiple injuries in their pace attack. Pathirana is among 15 centrally contracted Sri Lankan players yet to complete mandatory fitness tests, with only 24 out of 45 having cleared them so far. The delay, attributed to injuries and logistical challenges, has directly impacted IPL franchises, with Pathirana's absence particularly hurting KKR's plans.

According to ESPNcricinfo, sources close to the player remain optimistic about his arrival in India by mid-April, although no official timeline has been confirmed. The pacer, who was bought for Rs 18



Crore at the IPL 2026 auction after being released by Chennai Super Kings, is currently building up his workload after Recovering from a calf strain sustained during the T20 World Cup. While there is no confirmed date for his clearance, Pathirana is expected to undergo his fitness test within the next week. If he clears it, he could link up with the KKR

squad by mid-April. The Sri Lankan board has tightened its fitness protocols, making clearance mandatory before issuing No Objection Certificates (NOCs) for overseas leagues. Players must Meet strict benchmarks, including sprint tests, agility drills and endurance metrics, before being deemed fit. Pathirana has reportedly resumed bowling

in the nets, a positive sign for KKR, who are eagerly awaiting his return. However, until he clears the test, his participation in IPL 2026 remains uncertain. In contrast, Wanindu Hasaranga's situation appears more complicated. The all-rounder, signed by Lucknow Super Giants, is yet to request an NOC and is still recovering from high rate.

India's U12 Football Team Makes History At Real Madrid Challenge



Madrid: India's Under 12 football team has emerged as champions at the prestigious Real Madrid Foundation World Challenge, held at the iconic training complex of Real Madrid in Madrid, Spain. Competing against some of the best youth teams from across the globe, the Indian U12 side delivered a composed and commanding performance throughout the tournament.

Facing leading footballing nations, the team combined tactical discipline with attacking flair to secure a decisive 3-0 victory over Brazil in a gripping final, according to a press release. This achieve-

ment gains further significance given the scale and pedigree of the tournament, hosted by a leading European club, and reflects the steady rise of India's grassroots football ecosystem while setting a new benchmark for youth development in the country. The annual tournament, conducted during Easter week, brought together over 80 teams and more than 1,000 young players across U10, U12 and U14 categories, representing regions including Europe, North America, South America and South Asia. Hosted at Real Madrid's famed Sports City, the event offers young athletes a rare opportunity to

compete on the same pitches graced by global stars such as Griezmann, Mbappe and Vinicius Junior.

India's campaign stood out not only for its championship win but also for its overall consistency and competitive excellence. The Indian U14 contingent also progressed to the semi-finals, going down to Italy in a nail-biting five-goal thriller, with Italy scoring the decisive goal late in the second half. Both teams demonstrated depth in talent and resilience against top-tier international opposition, contributing to India's strong overall presence at the tournament.

Jannik Sinner Misses Carlos Alcaraz Rivalry And Hopes For Monte Carlo Tournament Showdown

New Delhi: Jannik Sinner said he has been missing his fierce rivalry with Carlos Alcaraz. The two have faced each other 16 times since 2021, with Alcaraz holding a 10-6 lead in their head-to-head record. However, Sinner and Alcaraz have not met for nearly five months, with their most recent clash coming in the ATP Finals title match last November. Both players are currently competing at the Monte Carlo Masters, which marks the start of the clay-court season for many of the game's top stars. But as the top two players in the world, they can only meet in the final. Sinner also heaped praise on Alcaraz, saying the Spaniard pushes him to work hard for every point. "Yeah, I do miss it. He's a player who pushes me to my limits. But we both know that if we want to face each other, we both have to reach the final and the road to get there is really tough," Sinner said in Monte Carlo.

Sinner also has a chance to reclaim the World No. 1 ranking during the tournament. If he wins the Monte Carlo title, the Italian will be guaranteed a return to the top spot regardless of how Alcaraz fares. A semi-final finish would also be enough for Sinner, provided Alcaraz exits before the quarter-finals. If Sinner reaches the final and Alcaraz fails to do the same, he will move back to No. 1 as well. In all other scenarios,



Alcaraz will retain the top ranking after the tournament. After completing the Sunshine Double with titles at Indian Wells and Miami, Sinner has closed the gap to just 190 points behind the Spaniard in the rankings. The Italian has no points to defend at the Monte Carlo Masters, having missed the tournament last season. Alcaraz, however, will be under pressure as the defending champion, with 1,000 ranking points to protect in Monte Carlo. The tennis world is buzzing as the 2026 clay-court season officially kicks off at the Rolex Monte-Carlo Masters, and the narrative is dominated by one looming question: When will Jannik Sinner and Carlos Alcaraz finally clash? In a candid press conference ahead of his opening match, World No. 2 Jannik Sinner admitted that he deeply misses his rivalry with Alcaraz.

Despite both players dominating the ATP Tour, they have incredibly yet to face one another in the 2026 season. As the tour moves to the red clay of Monaco, Sinner reflected on the intensity that Alcaraz brings to the court. The Italian powerhouse, coming off a historic "Sunshine Double" victory in Indian Wells and Miami, noted that their battles are a vital part of his growth as a player. "Yes, I miss our matches," Sinner told reporters. "He is someone who pushes me to exceed my limits and motivates me to improve every day."

We both know that to face each other here, we need to reach the final, and getting there is never easy." The sentiment is mutual. Alcaraz, the defending Monte-Carlo champion and current World No. 1, expressed a similar desire to challenge Sinner early in the clay swing. For fans,

the wait has been long; the two have combined to win the last 19 tournaments in which they both competed, yet their paths have not crossed since the 2025 ATP Finals. Beyond the personal rivalry, the Monte-Carlo Masters carries massive implications for the PIF ATP Rankings.

The battle for the top spot has reached a fever pitch, with both players remarkably having spent exactly 66 weeks at World No. 1 throughout their careers. The two phenoms arrive in Monaco in very different form. Sinner is arguably the hottest player on the planet, riding a 12-match winning streak and having won 34 consecutive sets at the Masters 1000 level. His transition to clay is the final hurdle in his quest for total dominance. While he has historically been viewed as a hard-court specialist, his improved movement and a previous title in Umag (where he beat Alcaraz in the final) suggest he is now a "certified nightmare" on dirt. Conversely, Alcaraz is looking to reset. After a "speed bump" in Miami and Indian Wells, where he suffered losses to Daniil Medvedev and Sebastian Korda, the Spaniard is eager to get his "socks dirty" again. Clay is Alcaraz's natural habitat, and his 2025 run—where he went 22-1 across the clay swing—remains the gold standard for the field. While the world hopes for a "Sinner-Alcaraz Sunday," the path is treacherous.