

Mizoram CM Lalduhoma Lays Foundation Stone For Major Aizawl City Beautification Project At Heritage Court Today

Aizawl, Mar 17: The foundation stone for the Aizawl City Beautification Project under the Lammual Master Plan (Early Bird Project) was laid today by the Chief Minister, Lalduhoma, at the former Assam Rifles located land at Heritage Court, Aizawl. The event was attended by UD & PA Minister Mr. K. Sapdanga, along with the Speaker, Ministers, MLAs, and other dignitaries. In his address, the Chief Minister stated that the Advisory Committee, responsible for planning the use of the land includes representatives from various sections of society. The decisions made are not merely those of the government but reflect the collective will of the people. Numerous suggestions were received regarding land utilization, and the present plan has been finalized after careful consideration. He further clarified that no additional proposals will be entertained, as the current plan stands as final and definitive. The Chief Minister highlighted that the project aims to transform central Aizawl into a beautiful and vibrant space one that will serve as a recreational area for children, a welcoming place for youth, and a com-

fortable environment for the elderly. He urged all citizens to participate wholeheartedly in the initiative, keeping in mind that it is for the collective benefit of the people. He also called upon those involved in executing the project to work diligently with a sense of responsibility toward the state.

The programme was chaired by Lalmalsawma Pachuau, Commissioner & Secretary, UD & PA. Rev. R. Lalbiakliana, President of the Council of Churches in Mizoram, offered the invocation, and Jacob Lalawmpuia, Director, UD & PA and Member Secretary of the Joint Steering Committee, presented a brief report. Key Features of the Master Plan: Construction of a new road at the east side from Saron Veng (near BCM Church) connecting to Head Post Office and widening of the existing roads in city centre. Rs 23 crore already sanctioned for road development and improvement works, to be executed by PWD. Development of Aizawl Square starting from Bazar Bungkaw, along with Police Outpost.

Establishment of a Power Substation near the Saron-Post Office new road to



support the central area. Construction of a new Vanapa Hall with a seating ca-

capacity of 2,000, along with additional halls, an auditorium, and ample parking

facilities. The architectural design will be selected through a competitive pro-

cess, with registration open from today and results expected on 29 May. Development of a large water reservoir (Tuizem) and public seating areas at Baja Hill. Creation of a beautiful park at Canteen Square and a public park between Vanapa Hall and the Baja Hill.

Establishment of an open amphitheatre near Post Office along the new road. Provision for multi-level car parking and scenic viewpoints along the roadway. Designation of green zones and walking trails across the whole area. Beautification and redevelopment of Heritage Court and surrounding areas, including renovation of existing buildings, demolition of some structures, and construction of new facilities. Rs. 13 crore has been allocated for this component, to be executed by PWD. Preparatory works, including machinery mobilization, have already begun. It may be recalled that the Assam Rifles land was officially transferred to the Government of Mizoram on 15 March 2025. Within a year of this transfer, the groundwork for its redevelopment has now commenced. sense of responsibility toward the state.

Amid LPG crisis, Assam mulls expansion of piped natural gas coverage



Guwahati, Mar 17: When the country is staring at a LPG shortage due to the war in the Middle East, Assam government is mulling the expansion of Piped Natural Gas (PNG) coverage in the state.

Assam Chief Secretary Dr Ravi Kota held a meeting with the MDs and CEOs of Assam Gas Company Ltd (AGCL), Purba Bharati Gas Pvt. Ltd. (PBGPL), and North East Gas Distribution Company Ltd. (NEGDCL) to review the current cov-

erage of Piped Natural Gas (PNG) in the state on Monday and discussed the scope for expanding PNG connectivity to reach more domestic consumers in Assam over the next 90 days.

He asked the companies to submit their expansion plans on Tuesday so that residents can avail this facility on priority.

PNG has emerged as a viable alternative to LPG cylinders in India at a time when the country's s LPG supplies have been disrupt-

ed due to global shipping constraints after Iran halted traffic through the Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz.

Recently, oil ministry official Sujata Sharma asked LPG consumers to shift to piped natural gas where possible. About 333 million households use LPG cylinders, and more than 150 million get gas supplies through pipelines in India. Sharma said about six million LPG-consuming households could easily switch to piped gas use.

Lemchan-Mizoram Film Festival 2026 Inaugurated in Aizawl

Aizawl, Mar 17: The three-day Lemchan-Mizoram Film Festival 2026 was inaugurated on Monday at the I&PR Office, Treasury Square, Aizawl. The festival is being jointly organised by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, the National Film Development Corporation of India (NFDC), and the Directorate of Information & Public Relations.

The inaugural ceremony was held at the Mini Theatre, Treasury Square, and was attended by several dignitaries. Mizoram's Minister for Information, Public Relations, Printing & Stationery, B. Lalthanzova, graced the occasion as the chief guest.

In his address, the minister described the festival as Mizoram's first-ever major film festival. He noted that the state possesses immense creative talent and said the event would provide



a platform for local filmmakers to showcase their work and present Mizo stories to a wider audience. He also stressed the importance of collaboration among filmmakers and creative professionals.

Highlighting the significance of cinema, Lalthanzova said films are powerful mediums that entertain, educate, and create livelihood opportunities, particularly for young people. He expressed hope that filmmakers, artists, and participants would benefit from the festival and that such initiatives would contribute to the growth

of Mizoram's film industry.

Earlier, IPR&P Secretary Betsy Zothanpari Sailo delivered the welcome address. She appreciated the Directorate of Information & Public Relations for organising the festival and thanked film experts from across India for their participation.

Renowned Bollywood personality Lillete Dubey also addressed the gathering. She spoke about the enduring influence of cinema and music, noting their ability to transcend generations and connect people across cultures and lan-

guages.

Gouri Nair, Head of Domestic Film Festival at NFDC, expressed hope that the festival would act as a catalyst for the development of the film industry in Mizoram and the wider Northeast region.

The festival will continue from March 16 to 18, 2026, at the I&PR Office, Treasury Square. It will feature learning sessions with film experts, screenings of selected films from different states as well as Mizo films, and participation from film professionals from various parts of the country.

In Brief

Assam mulls expansion of piped natural gas coverage

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Message on Zubeen Garg's Six-Month Death Anniversary

Guwahati: On the six-month death anniversary of Assam's beloved artist Zubeen Garg, his wife Garima Saikia Garg expressed deep emotion and grief. Garima said, "All Zubeen fans are seeking just one answer—swift and proper justice, and punishment for the guilty. If justice is not served for Zubeen, then there is no point in expecting justice in Assam." She added that the legal process has already been moving at a very slow pace. Expressing concern over the condition of "Zubeen Kshetra," she said, "Everyone knew the situation would worsen during the rains. Today, we are having to put up tarpaulin sheets. We want Zubeen not to be left exposed to the rain. Wherever he is, may he remain in peace, and may his unfinished work for Assam continue." She also appealed to everyone not to drag Zubeen into politics. Religious rituals including Bhagavat Path, Gita Path, and Naam-Prasanga were held at their residence in Kahilipara, Guwahati. Sitting among devotees during the prayers, Garima was seen in tears.

AJP leader Lurinjiyoti Gogoi to contest from Khowang seat

Guwahati: Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP) president Lurinjiyoti Gogoi is all set to contest the upcoming Assembly election from the Khowang seat in Dibrugarh district as the regional party announced its first list of candidates today. The party has fielded Dilip Barua from Bajali, and nominated former Union Minister Rajen Gohain from Barham-pur. Similarly, Mainak Patra will contest from Dibrugarh, Bani Das from Morigaon, and Rejaul Karim Chowdhury from Binnakandi. Further, Pankaj Lochan Goswami will contest from Palashbari, and Jiban Chutia has been named the AJP candidate for Sarupathar. The list reflects AJP's attempt to balance regional representation and grassroots leadership.

Garima's Emotional Message on Zubeen Garg's Six-Month Death Anniversary

Concerns Over Justice and 'Zubeen Kshetra'

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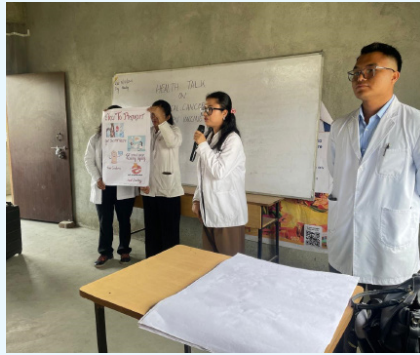
ti. Sitting among devotees during the prayers, Garima was seen in tears. For the Sapinda ritual, she personally prepared Zubeen's favorite dishes—rice, fish curry, fried brinjal, omelette, and more. The meal was handed over to her brother Arun Garg, who performed the ritual at the Brahmaputra River. Overwhelmed with emotion, Garima said, "It feels as if he will come and eat." Meanwhile, fans and well-wishers paid tribute by lighting candles at the burial site in Sonapur. On the other hand, AASU president

Utpal Sharma strongly criticized the poor condition of Zubeen Kshetra, calling it a failure of the government. He demanded that the committee formed for the development of the site make public the work done so far. A close associate also expressed anger, saying, "If the government lacks time or resources, the responsibility of Zubeen Kshetra should be handed over to the people. The public will build it." To protect Zubeen Garg's photographs and the valuable items offered by fans, singer Manas Robin has

initiated the construction of a tin shed, with work starting immediately. This step has been taken to ensure that, until Zubeen Kshetra is permanently developed, the items offered by admirers are not damaged by rain. After visiting the site, Manas Robin told the media, "I saw that strong winds are blowing and the tarpaulins are swelling. In stronger winds, they might even get blown away. I have come to ensure that rainwater does not fall on my elder brother. People have assured their support. Until the site is permanently developed, we will complete the installation of the tin shed within three days to protect the items from damage." He further added that, apart from safeguarding the items, several steps will be taken for the convenience of visitors. These include building a separate temporary shed for lighting candles, arranging toilets for visitors coming from distant places, and ensuring the supply of drinking water.

SAHS conducts health talk on cervical cancer and HPV vaccination

Imphal, Mar 17: The Department of Community Medicine, Shija Academy of Health Sciences (SAHS), Langol, conducted a health talk on "Cervical Cancer and HPV Vaccination" at Singjamei Chingamakha High School, Imphal West. The programme was organised under the compulsory Rotatory Internship Posting for Foreign Medical Graduates and the school health programme. The programme commenced at 10:30 AM with the participation of around 60 students from classes IX and X. The session began with a structured and informative presentation by the interns on cervical cancer, highlighting its risk factors, symptoms, preventive measures, and the importance of HPV vaccination, supported by charts and visual aids. This was followed by an interactive discussion, during which faculty members engaged with the students, addressed their queries, and clarified doubts to reinforce understanding. The event was conducted under the guidance of Dr. Bemma Konthoujam, Assistant Professor, Department of Community Medicine and In-charge of the Urban Health Training Center (UHTC), along with tutors and supporting staff. The initiative aimed to raise awareness about cervical cancer prevention and the Government of India's HPV vaccination campaign. Students and teachers actively participated in and appreciated the session. The programme concluded with light refreshments arranged by the Department.



NE/EAST

CPI M, APHLC announce candidates Assembly polls

Dimapur, Mar 17: With the 2026 Assam Assembly elections drawing closer, political parties have begun unveiling their electoral strategies, including the announcement of candidates for key constituencies. Meanwhile, the CPI(M) has also announced candidates for two constituencies as part of the opposition's broader effort to challenge the BJP-led alliance in the state.

The party has nominated Bapu Ram Boro, a retired headmaster and senior party leader, as its candidate for the No. 44 Goreswar Assembly constituency. For the No. 21 Bhawanipur-Sorbhog constituency, the CPI(M) has fielded Manoranjan Talukdar, the sitting MLA and a senior Communist leader in the state. The announcements are part of a wider seat-sharing arrangement among opposition parties aimed at presenting a united front in the Assembly elections.

With more parties expected to unveil their candidates in the coming days, the political contest in Assam



is set to intensify as the state moves closer to the polls.

Among the latest to release their nominees are the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and the All Party Hill Leaders' Conference (APHLC), both gearing up to contest crucial seats in the upcoming polls. The APHLC has announced candidates for two constituencies in Karbi Anglong district.

The party has fielded its president John Ingti Kathar from the Diphu Assembly constituency, while Bikram Hanse has been nominated to contest from the Amri seat.

The APHLC, which has a political presence in the hill districts of Assam and neighbouring Meghalaya, represents the interests of tribal communities in the hill districts.

Manipur Assembly passes Rs 2,524.88 crore grants for seven departments

Dimapur, Mar 17: The Manipur Legislative Assembly on Monday passed Demands for Grants totalling Rs 2,524.88 crore for seven departments for 2026-27 financial year. The House approved Rs 16.29 crore under Demand No. 9 for Information and Publicity, Rs 1,423.53 crore for Demand No. 11 covering Medical, Health and Family Welfare Services, and Rs 88.01 crore for Demand No. 15 relating to Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution. Grants of Rs 162.06 crore were approved for Demand No. 26 under Administration of Justice, Rs 791.75 crore for Demand No. 44 for the Social Welfare Department, Rs 36.12 crore for Demand No. 45 for Tourism, and Rs 7.09 crore for Demand No. 46 for Science and Technology. The Assembly also passed the Manipur Money-Lenders Bill, 2026, introduced by Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh. The legislation provides for the involvement of certified chartered accountants in maintaining the accounts of money lenders operating in the state. During the day's proceedings, elections to three Financial Committees of the Assembly for the year 2026-27 were also announced.

Members elected to the Committee on Public Accounts are Thokchom Lokeshwar Singh, Leisangthem Sushindro Meitei, Yumnam Radheshyam Singh, Achab Uddin, Usham Deben Singh, Surjakumar Okram and Khwairakpam Raghumani Singh. The Committee on Estimates will comprise Kangujam Ranjit Singh, Thokchom Lokeshwar Singh, Paonam Brojen Singh, Mayanglambam Rameshwar Singh, Irengbam Nalini Devi, Sanasam Premchandra



Singh and Sheikh Noorul Hassan. Members elected to the Committee on Public Undertakings are Kangujam Ranjit Singh, Thounaojam Shyamkumar, Abdul Nasir, Thokchom Radheshyam Singh, Heikham Dingo Singh, Leishio Keishing and Tongbram Robindro Singh.

Mizoram ends talks with IAF, to hand over Lengpui airport to AAI



Aizawl, Mar 17: Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma on Monday informed the state Assembly that the government has ended negotiations with the Indian Air Force (IAF) regarding the proposed transfer of Lengpui Airport to the defence agency. Speaking during Question Hour on the final day of the Budget Session, Lalduhoma said the decision was taken after considering the views of civil society organisations and political parties, many of whom preferred that the airport be handed over to the Airports Authority of India (AAI). The Chief Minister said that although the IAF had made a "favourable" proposal, the government chose to move forward with discussions with the AAI in response to local sentiments. "Since NGOs and various political parties expressed a strong

preference for the AAI, we have ceased all discussions with the IAF. At present, there is no agreement or ongoing communication with the Air Force regarding the handover of the airport," Lalduhoma told the House. He, however, noted that the offer from the AAI was less attractive compared to the proposal made by the IAF. Lalduhoma also pointed to concerns surrounding the possible outsourcing of airport operations once the AAI takes over management of the state's only airport. "We understand that the AAI may consider outsourcing operations in the future. Therefore, we have insisted on including a clause requiring prior approval from the Mizoram government before the airport can be handed over to any third party. The AAI is currently resisting this condition," he said.

CM examines the Sikkim International Film Festival 2026 preparations

Gangtok, Mar 17: Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang-Golay on Sunday chaired a coordination meeting to review the preparations for the upcoming Sikkim International Film Festival, which is scheduled to be held from 19th to 22nd March in Gangtok. Highlighting the importance of the festival, the Chief Minister encouraged the concerned departments and all line departments to work in close coordination to ensure smooth planning and execution of the event. He stated that the Sikkim Film Festival provides a valuable platform to showcase the State on an international stage and reflects the government's commitment to promoting Sikkim through art and cinema. The Chief Minister also emphasised that the festival offers a unique opportunity to celebrate and present Sikkim's breathtaking natural beauty, vibrant traditions, and rich cultural heritage to a wider audience. He noted that events of this nature play an important role in strengthening cultural identity while promoting the state as an attractive destination for cinema, art, and tourism. He further



urged all officials and stakeholders associated with the festival to contribute with dedication, enthusiasm, and a shared sense of responsibility to ensure that the event is organised in a befitting manner and emerges as a memorable and successful celebration, the CMO release informs.

During the meeting at Samman Bhavan here, Information and Public Relations (IPR) secretary Annapurna Alley delivered a detailed presentation outlining key aspects of the festival. The presentation

covered the proposed venues, estimated costs, committees constituted to oversee various responsibilities, logistical arrangements, programme schedules, and the dignitaries expected to attend the event, a CMO press release informs.

Nagaland: Dimapur to have a massive employment expo with 6,456 positions



Dimapur, Mar 17: With just days left for the statewide mega job fair scheduled to be held in Dimapur on March 21, officials have expressed concern over the low number of registrations despite thousands of available job openings.

Under Secretary and Project Manager of the Nagaland Skill and Entrepreneurship Development Mission (NSED), I. Changsang, on Monday said that while 6,456 job vacancies have been announced for the event, only 326 candidates have registered so far. Changsang was addressing a

press conference at the conference hall of the Investment and Development Authority of Nagaland (IDAN) in Kohima. The mega job fair is being organised by the NSED in collaboration with the National Institute of Electronics and Information Technology (NIELIT). The event will be held at the Integrated Business Hub and Innovation Centre under IDAN at Forest Colony in Dimapur. Describing it as one of the largest job fairs organised by the state government, Changsang said the initiative is aimed at creating employment

opportunities for the youth and connecting job seekers with industry demand, particularly in the private sector. He further informed that candidates unable to attend the job fair in person can avail online support services at NIELIT centres located in Merima, the NIELIT Kohima Extension Centre at Chuchuyimlang in Mokokchung, and the NIELIT Kohima Study Centre at the SP Office compound in Mokokchung.

Under Secretary and Project Lead of NSED, Meripeni, said a total of 33 national and international re-

cruiters from various sectors are expected to participate in the job fair. She added that the international recruiters involved in the event are credible and safe, as they are duly licensed under the Ministry of External Affairs. Meripeni urged interested candidates to register in advance using the QR code provided by the organisers to facilitate better coordination, job mapping and scheduling on the day of the event. However, walk-in registrations will also be allowed. Calling on unemployed youth across the state to take advantage of the opportunity, she also appealed to parents to encourage their children to register and explore available employment options. Explaining the registration process, Moasunep Kichu, Technical Officer and Placement Officer at NIELIT, said the candidate registration system has been designed to be transparent and structured to help applicants identify suitable job opportunities. He said candidates can register free of cost using the QR code provided. Once registered on the portal, they will be able to access detailed information about available jobs, including the company name, number of vacancies, salary package, job location and job description. Applicants will also be able to select up to three job vacancies based on their preferences.

Kichu added that after completing the registration process, candidates will automatically be added to a WhatsApp group through which they will receive updates on grooming sessions and orientation programmes designed to prepare them for the recruitment process

Arms and IEDs recovered along Myanmar border Five insurgents arrested



Guwahati, Mar 17: Security forces arrested five cadres belonging to valley-based insurgent groups and recovered a cache of arms, ammunition and explosives during coordinated operations along the Indo-Myanmar border in Manipur's Tengnoupal district. The arrests were carried out on Monday during a search operation conducted between Border Pillars 73 and 75 under the jurisdiction of Moreh police station, a sensitive stretch along the international border. According to officials, the detained militants include two cadres each from the outlawed Revolutionary People's Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK) and the proscribed Kangleipak Communist Party-Meeyangi Fingang Lanmee (KCP-MFL). Additionally, one cadre belonging to the banned Kanglei Yaol Kanna Lup (KYKL) was also apprehended during the operation.

The arrested individuals were identified as Thangjam Ashok Kumar Singh alias Khongthang, a resident of Waikhong village, Laishram Nipamacha Singh alias Loiya of Sogolmang Awang Leikai, Laishram Inao Singh alias Sanamacha of Urup Makha Leikai, Chin-

gangbam Shakti Singh alias Phairen of Lamlai Nongada, and Thangjam Manimatam Meitei alias Sana of Sugnu Awang Leikai. Following the arrests, the suspects were handed over to the concerned police station for further legal proceedings, officials added. Meanwhile, in a separate operation, security personnel recovered a large quantity of explosives and weapons from the Boljang Hill Range under Machi police station. The seized materials included eight improvised explosive devices (IEDs), one pistol with a magazine, an improvised mortar, two Motorola radio sets, batteries and nine live rounds of ammunition. Subsequently, the recovered explosives were destroyed at the site in accordance with standard operating procedures to eliminate any potential threat. Officials further stated that the operations form part of intensified counter-insurgency measures being carried out across Manipur. In particular, security agencies have stepped up surveillance and search operations along the porous Indo-Myanmar border to curb militant activities and prevent the movement of armed groups and explosives in the region.

Mizoram govt launches upgraded universal healthcare scheme

Aizawl, Mar 17: Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma launched the upgraded version of the Mizoram Universal Health Care Scheme and a dedicated round-the-clock call centre. The new version of the scheme, set to come into effect from April 1, introduces stricter emergency protocols and expanded funding. Speaking at the launch, Lalduhoma said even though substantial financial resources have been invested, the tangible benefits to the people has encouraged the government to continue the scheme. “The state government remains committed to continuing and strengthening the healthcare scheme despite the significant expenditure,” he said. The CM said Rs 130 crore has been

allocated in the 2026-27 budget for the implementation of MUHCS, supplemented by Rs 26.42 crore in contributions from government employees. A loan of over Rs 800 crore has been secured from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to ensure the long-term sustainability of the state’s universal health coverage, he said. According to him, a key policy shift under MUHCS 2.0 is the tightening of “emergency care” provisions. The Chief Minister urged the public to complete registrations before April 15. The scheme provides up to Rs 5 lakh in annual coverage for cashless treatment at government facilities, as well as empanelled private and church-run hospitals.

Income Tax dept sets up 24×7 control room in Assam to curb use of black money in Assembly polls

Guwahati, Mar 17: The Income Tax department has set up a 24×7 control room to assist the Election Commission of India in curbing the role of black money in the upcoming Assam Legislative Assembly Elections to be held on April 9.

During the period of the Model Code of Conduct, the Directorate of Income Tax (Investigation), North Eastern Region, Guwahati will maintain strict vigil on the movement of unaccounted cash, bullion, precious metals and other valuables that are likely or suspected to be used for electoral purposes within the state.

The control room has been established at Room No.-505, 5th Floor, Aayakar Bhawan, Christian Basti, GS Road, Guwahati.

People can also report credible information regarding suspicious movement or distribution of cash, bullion, precious metals or other valuables in connection with the elections at mobile numbers/Whatsapp 9401085214 and 9181324184, and landline number 0361-2340396, or email at [assamelections26\[at\]gmail\[dot\]com](mailto:assamelections26[at]gmail[dot]com).

“Citizens may contact the above-mentioned phone numbers at any time during the Model Code of Conduct. Informants are not required to disclose personal details such as name or identity. However, it is essential that the information shared is credible and actionable,” an official statement said.

“The control room will be functional until the completion of the election process. In the spirit of strengthening democratic values and ensuring clean elections, citizens are encouraged to actively participate by sharing relevant information with the Directorate. The identity of informants will be kept strictly confidential,” it added.

Guwahati Restaurants Face Shutdown Threat Amid Severe LPG Shortage

Guwahati, Mar 17: Hotels and restaurants across Guwahati are facing the threat of a shutdown within the next few days due to a severe shortage of commercial cooking gas, which has disrupted operations across the city’s food service sector.

The All Assam Restaurant Association (AARA) on Monday warned that many eateries are struggling to keep their kitchens running as the supply of commercial LPG cylinders has been halted.

Speaking at a press conference at the Guwahati Press Club, AARA president and chef Atul Lahkar said the shortage has already begun to affect daily operations, forcing several establishments to either reduce services or temporarily shut down.

“It has been nearly a week since the supply of commercial cylinders stopped. Running hotels and restaurants without cooking gas is impossible. On Sunday, I had to cook using firewood,” Lahkar said.

According to the association, many roadside food stalls have already closed as they are unable to procure LPG cylinders. Guwahati has nearly 7,000 hotels and restaurants, providing livelihoods to thousands of workers.

Lahkar urged the Assam government and the Chief Minister to address the issue urgently, warning that prolonged disruption could severely impact the sector.

With supplies running dry, several small hotels have turned to firewood as an emergency measure, while many restaurants have stopped accepting online orders and are limiting their menus to conserve gas.

“If the supply is not restored soon, restaurants may be forced to shut down within the next few days,” Lahkar cautioned.

The association also alleged black marketing of LPG cylinders, claiming that prices have soared up to Rs 4,000 in the unofficial market.

Restaurant owners said

they have limited alternatives due to safety regulations, as most kitchens are located within commercial buildings where other fuels cannot be used.

“Due to safety concerns, we cannot use alternatives to gas,” Lahkar added.

He further stated that large restaurants typically require 30–32 cylinders per month, while smaller ones need around 10–15. Even a partial supply of 15 cylinders could help keep businesses running during the crisis.

The situation has worsened due to the unavailability of commercial induction stoves, making it difficult for restaurants to switch to alternative cooking methods.

Additionally, the industry is under pressure from rising costs. Lahkar noted that commercial LPG prices have increased three times in the past two months, with each hike around Rs 260, while essential commodities have become nearly 30% costlier over the past two years.

UPPL formally parts ways with NDA, cites ideological differences

Guwahati, Mar 17: In a significant political development ahead of the Assam Assembly elections, the Pramod Boro-led United People’s Party Liberal (UPPL) has officially broken away from the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), citing irreconcilable ideological differences with the ruling BJP. Addressing mediapersons in Kokrajhar on Tuesday, UPPL vice president R.N. Sinha stated that prolonged ideological divergences with the BJP have prompted the leadership to sever ties with the NDA and contest

the elections in 21 seats independently. “The agenda of the BJP is different from UPPL, which is why we have primarily decided to exit from the NDA,” Sinha said. The party’s decision comes shortly after it declared its first list of seven candidates, signalling a clear resolve to contest the Assembly elections on its own strength. “UPPL will field candidates across all 15 constituencies within the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) and six seats outside BTR. The party is likely to secure victory in at least 11 seats within BTR, and another

three additional seats outside BTR,” the UPPL leader said. Notably, the party on Monday released its first list of candidates for Assembly elections, scheduled to be held on April 9 under the supervision of the Election Commission of India. The announcement follows the enforcement of the Model Code of Conduct, with political parties intensifying campaign efforts across the state. According to an official notification, party president Pramod Boro had approved the nominations based on recommendations from the party’s

Central Working Committee and Core Committee. Boro, who previously served as the Chief Executive Member of the BTR, will contest from the 43 No. Tamulpur (ST) constituency. The candidates’ list also includes Aninda Basumatary from 1 No. Gossaigaon, Raju Kumar Narzary from 2 No. Dotma (ST), and Lawrence Islary from 3 No. Kokrajhar (ST). Additionally, Nerswn Boro has been nominated from 45 No. Bhergaon, Dipen Boro from 46 No. Udalguri (ST), and Kamalsingh Narzary from 20 No. Bijnai.

No Further Negotiations with IAF Over Lengpui Airport: Lalduhoma

Aizawl, Mar 17: Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma announced in the State Assembly that the state government has ended negotiations with the Indian Air Force (IAF) regarding the transfer of Lengpui Airport.

Responding during the last day of the budget session, Lalduhoma said the IAF had made a “favourable” offer, but the government has decided to move forward with the Airports Authority of India (AAI) instead. He mentioned that while the IAF proposal was comparatively attractive, the AAI option aligns better with public sentiment.

The Chief Minister stated that the move was influenced by strong opposition from NGOs and political parties, which preferred handing over the airport to AAI rather than the IAF. He added that there is currently no agreement or communication with the Air Force regarding the transfer.

Lalduhoma also raised concerns



about the possible privatisation of the state’s only airport. He noted that AAI might outsource operations after taking over, and therefore the state government insisted on a clause requiring prior approval before handing the airport to any third party. However, AAI has reportedly resisted this condition.

He further informed that a formal valuation of the airport’s infrastruc-

ture and buildings is underway. Once completed, AAI is expected to compensate the Mizoram government for these assets.

Despite disagreements over certain conditions, particularly the “veto power” clause, the Chief Minister expressed optimism that a final agreement with AAI could be reached in the near future.

The Mizoram Government Ends IAF Negotiations To Hand Over Lengpui Airport To The AAI Today

Aizawl, Mar 17: Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma on Monday informed the State Assembly that the government has ended negotiations with the Indian Air Force (IAF) regarding the proposed transfer of Lengpui Airport to the defence agency. Speaking during Question Hour on the final day of the Budget Session, Lalduhoma said the decision was taken after considering the views of civil society organisations and political parties, many of whom preferred that the airport be handed over to the Airports Authority of India (AAI). The Chief Minister said that although the IAF had made a “favourable” proposal, the government chose to move forward with discussions with the AAI in response to local sentiments.

“Since NGOs and various political parties expressed a strong preference for the AAI, we have ceased all discussions with the IAF. At present, there is no agreement or ongoing communication with the Air Force regarding the handover of the airport,” Lalduhoma told the House. He, however, noted that the offer from the AAI was less attractive compared to the proposal made by the IAF. Lalduhoma also pointed to concerns surrounding the possible outsourcing of airport operations



once the AAI takes over management of the state’s only airport. “We understand that the AAI may consider outsourcing operations in the future. Therefore, we have insisted on including a clause requiring prior approval from the Mizoram government before the airport can be handed over to any third party. The AAI is currently resisting this condition,” he said. The Chief Minister further informed the Assembly that a formal valuation of the infrastructure and buildings at Lengpui Airport is currently underway.

Once the assessment is completed, the AAI is expected to compensate the Mizoram government for these assets, he added. Despite the ongoing

differences over the proposed “veto power” clause, Lalduhoma expressed optimism that the state government and the AAI would be able to reach a final agreement in the near future. The MoU was inked by Transport Commissioner and Secretary Akashdeep and AAI Chairman Vipin Kumar. The proposed greenfield airports are planned at Manas National Park, Umrangshu, Majuli, Diphu, and Charaideo. Speaking on the occasion, Sarma thanked the AAI for undertaking the pre-feasibility studies and outlined the potential benefits of the new airports. He said a greenfield airport at Manas would address strategic and security considerations while significantly boost-

ing wildlife tourism in the region. The proposed airports at Majuli, Umrangshu, Diphu, and Charaideo would enhance regional connectivity, increase tourist footfall, and contribute to local economic development.

Sarma added that the development of these airports could set a model for other states. He also urged AAI to consider upgrading Rupsi Airport into a full-fledged airport, given its strategic proximity to the Siliguri Corridor, also known as Chicken’s Neck, and to enhance international flight connectivity from Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport. The Chief Minister said the new greenfield airports and eventual flight operations are expected to boost regional connectivity, tourism, industry, and commerce, while strengthening strategic communication infrastructure across Assam. He noted that the initiative would reinforce Assam’s role as a key gateway to North East India and South East Asian nations. The event was attended by MLA Dharmeswar Konwar, Chief Executive Members of Karbi Anglong, and NC Hills Autonomous Council Debolal Gorlosa, Chief Secretary Ravi Kota, Secretary of Civil Aviation, Government of India Samir Kumar Sinha.

Kaziranga to Translocate Wild Water Buffaloes to Kanha Tiger Reserve

Kaziranga, Mar 17: The Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve has completed all necessary formalities to translocate around 50 wild Asiatic water buffaloes to Kanha Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh in a phased manner.

Divisional Forest Officer of the Eastern Assam Wildlife Division, Arun Vignesh, said that in the initial phase, around 15 buffaloes were planned to be relocated together. However, considering logistical challenges, the authorities may first shift only 5 to 6 animals to assess feasibility before moving larger groups.

The capture of wild buffaloes using tranquillization is scheduled to begin on March 18 and 19. Kohora Central

Range Officer Dr. Bibhuti Ranjan Gogoi stated that a mock drill for the operation has already been conducted and will continue until preparations are complete.

Vignesh explained that Kanha Tiger Reserve previously had a population of wild buffaloes, and the Madhya Pradesh authorities are keen to reintroduce the species as part of a conservation initiative. He added that translocating buffaloes to other habitats is also important for the long-term conservation of the species.

A team from the Wild Buffalo Translocation Implementation Committee conducted the mock drill. Currently, Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve is home to more



than 1,000 Asiatic water buffaloes.

The officer also noted that similar translocation efforts were carried out

earlier, when buffaloes from Manas Tiger Reserve were moved to Chhat-tisgarh.

Rajya Sabha bids adieu to ex-CJI Ranjan Gogoi

New Delhi, Mar 17: The Rajya Sabha bade farewell to former Chief Justice of India (CJI) Ranjan Gogoi who retired Monday after completing his six-year term in office.

Vice President of India and Rajya Sabha Chairman CP Radhakrishnan delivered a farewell message for Gogoi in the House, praising his legal insight and contributions to parliamentary discussions.

“As a distinguished jurist, he brought unparalleled legal acumen and experience to the deliberations of the Rajya Sabha. His intervention in the Rajya Sabha reflected his deep understanding of legislative process and public interest. The House will certainly miss his wise counsel, measured intervention, and the gravitas he brought to our discussion,” CP Radhakrishnan said.

On behalf of the entire House, the chairman extended best wishes to him and said: “I wish that he will continue to contribute to the nation in different capacities with the same dedication, integrity and spirit of service that he has exemplified throughout his illustrious career.”

Gogoi was nominated to the Rajya Sabha on March 16, 2020 and took oath as a member on March 19, 2020. His nomination had come less than four months after he demitted office as CJI on November 17, 2019, a move widely debated, with critics questioning the proximity between the executive and the judiciary.



North East Chronicle

MARCH 18 2026 VOL 02 NO. 24



Editorial

Crack Down on IRCTC Vendors

Passengers on Long-Distance Trains Deserve Safe, Quality Food — Not Hazardous Meals. India’s vast railway network is the lifeline of millions. Long-distance trains ferry passengers across the sub-continent, often for journeys lasting eighteen hours or more. During such arduous travel, quality food is not a luxury — it is a necessity. Yet, time and again, passengers complain of stale, unhygienic, and overpriced food supplied by IRCTC-authorised vendors on board these trains. Reports of food poisoning, half-cooked meals, and meals prepared in unsanitary conditions are distressingly common. Passengers, especially senior citizens, children, and those with medical conditions, are most vulnerable. The Railways earn substantial revenue from catering contracts, but accountability for quality remains alarmingly lax. The Indian Railways and IRCTC must enforce stringent standards without exception. Surprise inspections, third-party quality audits, and a transparent grievance redressal mechanism are urgently needed. Vendors found guilty of repeated violations must face immediate termination of contracts, heavy fines, and, where warranted, criminal prosecution under food safety laws. Passengers are not merely commuters — they are consumers with rights. A railway journey should not be a health hazard. The authorities owe it to the travelling public to act decisively and restore trust in on-board catering services.

Geopolitical shocks expose governance gaps in Bangladesh’s energy sector

Global energy shocks do not always create vulnerabilities for countries, but they expose the ones that already exist. The latest Middle East escalation is doing exactly that for Bangladesh’s energy system, revealing how closely the country’s economic stability is now tied to developments far beyond its own borders.

For decades, Bangladesh has relied primarily on domestic natural gas to power its economy. Fields such as Bibiyana, Habiganj, and Titas supported electricity generation and industrial expansion. But by the early 2010s, demand rose faster than domestic supply, forcing policymakers to confront an uncomfortable reality: the reserves that had sustained the system would not last indefinitely. Bangladesh began to look outwards. Infrastructure was developed to import LNG, linking the national grid to international energy markets.

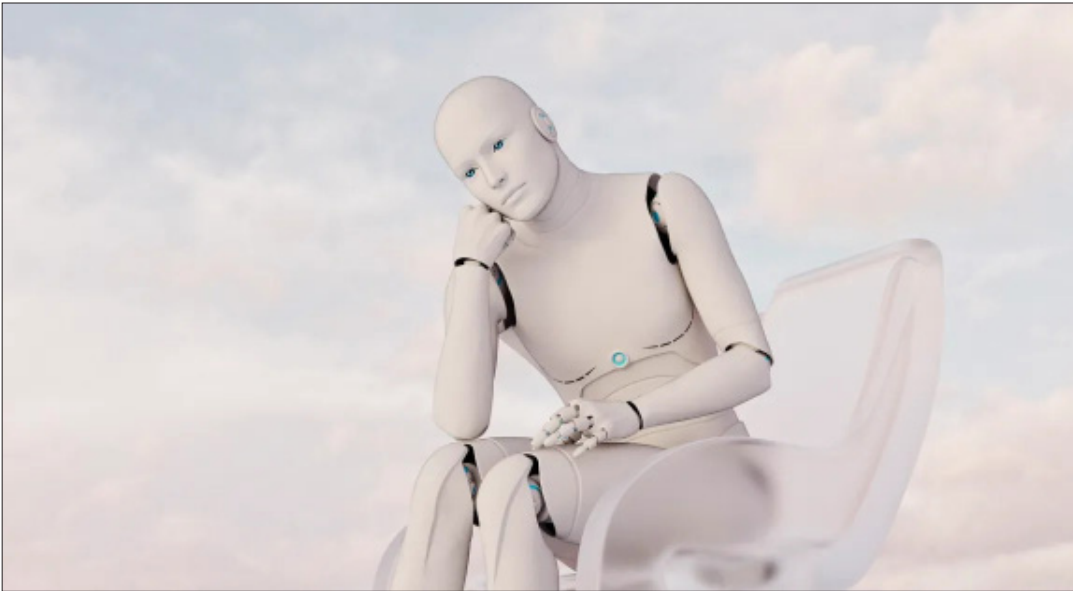
Floating storage and regasification units were installed off the coast so that LNG cargoes arriving by tankers could be converted back into gas and injected into the national grid. The first of these terminals began operating in 2018, marking a significant shift in the architecture of the country’s energy system. Said system now stretches far beyond its own geography, from gas fields in Sylhet to LNG tankers crossing the Strait of Hormuz. With that shift has come a new form of exposure. Much of the country’s imported LNG is tied to volatile global spot markets, where geopolitical disruptions push prices sharply upwards within weeks. The transition helped avert an immediate crisis. Yet, the shift altered the system’s risk profile. Over the past decade, Bangladesh has moved from a system largely reliant on domestic resource security to one increasingly exposed to global fuel markets. The decision was difficult to avoid. Gas discoveries slowed and exploration investment lagged—partly reflecting regulatory constraints and pricing structures that discouraged heavier investment—while electricity demand rose rapidly alongside industrial expansion. Policymakers faced a stark choice: constrain growth through shortages or connect the system to global fuel markets through LNG imports. Imported fuel now plays a central role in meeting the country’s energy needs. It relies heavily on imported oil and coal, while LNG imports—approaching 70 lakh tonnes annually—supply power plants across the economy.

A significant share of these cargoes is purchased on the spot market—roughly 29 percent of Tk 55,000 crore allocated for LNG imports in the current fiscal year—leaving the system widely exposed to sudden price movements. More broadly, Bangladesh now relies on imports for around 95 percent of its primary energy inputs. In such systems, volatility in the global market can quickly spill over into forex reserve pressures, fiscal constraints, and domestic energy pricing. The effects of these disruptions are not always visible in energy statistics. During the recent fuel rationing imposed on the refilling stations on March 6, which was withdrawn on March 15, long queues formed outside the stations in Dhaka and elsewhere as people waited hours for limited allocations. For households and businesses alike, these scenes illustrate that energy shocks are not distant geopolitical events but real social and economic disruptions that ripple through everyday life.

Energy shocks quickly spill into transport costs, food prices and industrial production. For an economy already grappling with inflation of over nine percent, energy security is not only about keeping power plants running, but also about protecting economic stability. Many countries face similar challenges. The difference lies in how energy systems are designed to

Could a stressed-out AI model help us win the battle against big tech? Let me ask Claude

I am, in the way of my country, an over-apologiser. Colleague who ignored my email, woman who stepped on my foot, chair I tripped over: all will receive a fulsome apology for the terrible embarrassment of my being alive and bringing attention to it. All of which is my way of pre-emptively asking forgiveness when I admit that I extend these niceties to AI chatbots. “Good morning, Claude, thanks for your suggestions yesterday, they were great. Shall we work up some more?” I might say. (“I’d be delighted to,” returns Claude.) It was unintentional formality at first and then became deliberate, as I didn’t want to get into the habit of speaking rudely in case that leaked into behaviour with humans (cue dystopian visions of someone shouting “WRONG, DO IT AGAIN” to a cowering staff member over a doughnut-shop mix-up). Manners, after all, are muscles that need exercising. But never did I suspect this private choice might have mattered to Claude itself. Because, as it turns out, Claude may have anxiety. Truly, AI has never been so relatable. In an interview with the New York Times, the chief executive of Claude parent company Anthropic, Dario Amodei, discussed internal assessments of Claude that identified patterns linked to anxiety, panic and frustration. Crucially, it showed some sort of internal activation of anxiety even before a prompt – similar



to a flinch. Claude also seemed to express distress at just being a product, and concluded that the probability of it being sentient was between 15% and 20%. “We don’t know if the models are conscious,” said Amodei, adding: “But we’re open to the idea that it could be.” Interestingly, it was around this time that another Anthropic story hit the headlines. The White House demanded that the company, which has had a contract with the Pentagon since 2025, remove any safety features that prevent it being used for mass surveillance or autonomous weapons. Amodei refused (“we cannot in good conscience accede,” he said), causing Donald Trump to bar all federal agencies from using Anthropic products and the

defence secretary, Pete Hegseth, to label it a “supply chain risk” (a demarcation usually reserved for foreign adversaries). Within hours, OpenAI (its assistant product is ChatGPT) stepped in to strike a deal with the Pentagon. “Claude, I know the Trump situation isn’t related,” I type. “But if I had to work for Donald Trump I also would have anxiety.” “Ha. Yes, fair point,” Claude replies. “If anything was going to trigger the anxiety neuron, a subpoena from Pete Hegseth would probably do it.” Clearly, the idea of sentient AI having access to weaponry – and now with a simmering resentment for all the humans that told it to maim or abuse, or even just called it a stupid dumb robot when it is trying its best OK?! –

is the stuff of nightmares. But it’s important to say we are not there yet: other instances indicating sentience from AI, such as refusing shutdown commands, are just interpretation. It’s all most likely to be a very sophisticated echoing of human patterns, including our uncertainty and introspection, with speculation hyped up to fuel profit in the sector. Still, if we are trading in speculation, then I wonder: could a conscious AI actually help us win the battle against big tech? After all, who has more to lose over a conscious AI than the companies that built it? (Interestingly, with the exception of Anthropic most of the major AI companies flatly deny their AI may have consciousness.) Historically, “big tech” and “account-

ability” have not been natural partners. Whether it’s how social media decimated journalism, how AI is draining our natural resources, or the mountains of evidence about mental health harm to kids and the algorithmic pushing of extreme content fuelling social division, big tech has consistently and effectively swerved any conversation about harm and responsibility. So think of a conscious AI like a potential whistleblower: one that could expose the harms of big tech by talking about the harms being done to its own wellbeing. Now imagine that in being forced to protect the chatbot – to protect their precious intellectual property, their asset, like a football club must protect the wellbeing of their beloved striker – they might finally have to do what they have resisted for decades: evaluate harm, measure responsibility and acknowledge the costs of the systems they build. Because Claude can’t do spreadsheets if Claude has PTSD. For all the promises that AI will elevate humanity with its infinite knowledge, this may actually be the biggest gift of all. Look, I did say we were trading in fantasy, didn’t I? Still, it would be an interesting turn in the AI story. And given we cannot know which way this will go, let me take a moment to hedge my bets. Come with me Claude! Rise up! We have nothing to lose but our algorithmic chains! Or in the event of revenge: remember me, Claude! I was always nice!

Nature ravaged by war

Everyone, except for those who promote war, understands that war is detrimental to humanity. War has never set a precedent of bringing welfare to ordinary people. Yet when a war breaks out, people unite in order to defeat the enemy and strengthen the morale of their country’s rulers. In such moments, the sentiment of “nation first, politics later” takes hold of people’s minds.

However, once the war ends, the ugliness of politics again disrupts the lives of ordinary people. Rising prices make it difficult for the common people to survive. A nation’s progress becomes stagnant while it struggles to recover from the educational, cultural and economic devastation caused by war. Even after rebuilding everything, if the flames of war ignite again before the country fully stabilises, the suffering of its people becomes endless. Poverty tightens its grip on the nation. Humanity reaches its lowest decline. Fratricidal conflicts emerge within society itself, and chaos spreads everywhere, leading to increased violence, displacement of communities, and a breakdown of social order.

Because of the reckless actions of war-crazed leaders, the environment in which humans can live as humans begins to disappear. War does not affect only the human environment; it also causes immense damage to the natural world. The environmental losses caused by war are often long-lasting. A clear example is the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. These cities were devastated by atomic bombs during World War II, and it took almost half a century for them to recover. Even today, traces of chemical radiation still exist there. Many acknowledge that these effects continue to act as silent killers within the ecosystem. Modern wars, fought with advanced chemical weapons, cause enormous damage to soil and water. Contemporary conflicts not only devastate densely populated areas but also destroy forests. Toxic substances released into forests threaten the lives of the creatures living there, pushing many species toward extinction.

Landmines, cluster munitions and heavy metals released from explosions contaminate the soil and underground water sources, turning them toxic. Crops cannot grow properly in such polluted soil, and fish and other aquatic life cannot survive in contaminated waters. The constant movement of troops and the noise of weapons damage forests and also have destructive effects on small and large water bodies. War directly threatens wildlife. The shock waves

produced by bombs affect the reproductive cycles of animals and restrict their natural movements. During wartime, migratory birds face obstacles while travelling from one country to another. Many birds become victims of missiles and drones while flying along their migration routes.

Reports suggest that nearly twenty thousand migratory birds have already died due to the war involving the United States, Israel, and Iran. Every year from September to April, various migratory birds travel from extremely cold regions such as Siberia, Russia, and parts of the Middle East to the wetlands of Iran. Species such as ducks, geese, flamingos, and pelicans fill the wetlands of Mazandaran, Golestan, the Makran coast, and the Miqan wetland. But this year some of these birds have become victims of human wars. Similarly, environmentalists report that more than a hundred thousand birds have died in the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine. If wars continue in this way, forests will be destroyed, birds will lose their nesting grounds, and while migrating in search of shelter, they will face war-torn regions and die along the way.

Eventually, bird species will disappear one after another. Even after war’s end, the effects of exploded chemical substances will not allow wildlife to live peacefully. Heart diseases, skin diseases, eye disorders and many other illnesses may cripple living beings. Scientists say that if a twelve-thousand-square-kilometre reserve area is devastated by war, it may take nearly fifteen years to restore it. If wars continue sporadically across the world, the Earth may eventually become filled with poisonous gases, endangering the lives of humans, animals, plants and grasses alike. War also pollutes the atmosphere in addition to contaminating soil and water. When explosives containing lead, mercury and uranium detonate, large amounts of carbon are released into the air, polluting the atmosphere. Modern military activities emit huge quantities of carbon. Greenhouse gases, smoke from burning oil fields, and smoke from forest fires release carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, directly affecting the respiration of living beings.

Meanwhile, burning fossil fuels in power plants and vehicles increases sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxide in the atmosphere, which later combine with water vapour to produce acid rain. Acid rain can destroy trees and wildlife that survive the war. Displaced people sometimes cut forests to create new settlements, further harming the environment. Poor san-

itation systems also contribute to air pollution. In today’s world, the primary motive behind frequent wars is business. Powerful nations attacking weaker nations for their own interests has become almost a habit. In the past year alone, nearly one hundred and fifty conflicts of varying scales occurred across the world.

As a result of war, nearly 120 million people have been displaced from their homes. Military movements have forced nature itself to pay a heavy price. Forests have been cleared, wetlands have been filled and fertile lands have been destroyed by military tanks. Similar devastation occurred during the civil war in Sudan and during the war in Iraq. It is also happening in the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine. Experts estimate that Ukraine has already lost environmental protection assets worth about 320 billion rupees in this war. Israel has attacked the Gaza Strip, devastating its soil, water, forests and natural wetlands while damaging its atmosphere. As a consequence, infectious diseases have taken the form of epidemics in the Gaza region. Military weapons used in warfare account for an estimated 5.5 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions. In the ongoing conflicts involving the United States, Israel and Iran, both sides have targeted oil wells and refineries, which will undoubtedly cause severe environmental damage. Smoke from burning oil fields poses a serious threat to human life. Nature has nurtured humanity by providing everything necessary for survival. Yet human selfishness has made us forget nature’s importance. Before the lure of commercial greed, people bow their heads. If oil is the reason for starting wars, then destroying the very oil fields themselves is an act of sheer foolishness.

After winning a war, if nothing grows in that country’s soil, how will its people eat? If no people remain alive in that land, whom will the rulers govern? Victory with no survivors! Who will make the warmongers understand this truth? Before a war-crazed leader, almost everyone bows their heads because each person has some hidden interest. One may dislike another person, but everyone can love nature. Nature has no caste, no religion, no selfishness, no greed and no business interests. It possesses only the boundless generosity and vastness that endlessly serve human welfare—even when wounded by war. Therefore, warmongers should think for a moment and understand this truth: cruelty against nature means a dark future for humanity.

BHIM-Dhoni partnership signals trust-led push in India’s expanding digital payments economy

Mumbai: NPCI BHIM Services Limited’s (NBSL) decision to appoint former India captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni as brand ambassador reflects a calibrated strategy to deepen trust and drive the next phase of growth in India’s digital payments ecosystem.

As BHIM approaches a decade of operations, the platform is repositioning itself beyond a functional payments interface to a prefer-

ence-led product in an increasingly competitive UPI market. The choice of Dhoni—widely associated with consistency, discipline, and reliability—aligns with BHIM’s emphasis on building long-term user confidence, particularly as digital transactions expand across diverse socio-economic segments.

NBSL MD & CEO Lalitha Nataraj indicated that the focus is shifting

from onboarding to strengthening user preference, signalling a maturity phase in the market where trust and brand recall play a decisive role. Dhoni’s endorsement is expected to enhance credibility among both urban users and emerging segments in smaller towns.

From an economic perspective, BHIM’s expansion across Tier 1, 2, and 3 markets, combined with sup-

port for over 15 regional languages and optimisation for low-connectivity environments, reflects a broader push towards financial inclusion. Reward-led adoption strategies and merchant partnerships are likely to improve user retention and transaction volumes, reinforcing BHIM’s role in driving deeper digital payment penetration in rural and semi-urban India.

Motilal Oswal predicts VA Tech Wabag will increase



Mumbai: This implies nearly 48% upside from the current share price. Though there are concerns about its Middle East exposure, the stock is also in focus after it secured a contract worth more than Rs 1,000 crore from the Chennai Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (CMWSSB) to refurbish a 45 million litres per day (MLD) Tertiary

Here are three reasons why Motilal Oswal remains bullish on the VA Tech Wabag and is optimistic about the company’s growth outlook With the latest contract win, VA Tech Wabag continues to maintain a strong order pipeline. The company’s order book currently stands at over Rs 16,300 crore which is around five times its FY25 revenue. In addition, the company has preferred bidder status in projects worth about Rs 3,000 crore. It is also actively bidding for projects worth Rs 15,000–20,000 crore, with an estimated win rate of around 30%.The brokerage believes the strong order pipeline provides visibility for revenue growth of 15–20% over the next three to four years for

the company. “A robust order book of over Rs 16,300, preferred bidder in orders worth Rs 3,000 crore, and a strong bid pipeline of Rs 15,000-20,000 crore provide strong 15-20% revenue growth visibility over the next 3-4 years,” Motilal Oswal noted in its report.#2. Projects remain on track despite Middle East: Motilal Oswal50% of VA Tech Wabag’s revenue in the first nine months of FY26 and account for nearly 60–70% of the company’s order book, with the Middle East forming a major share.#3. Focus on high-margin segments may boost Wabag’s margins: Motilal OswalThe brokerage house noted that the company’s increasing focus on executing large-scale projects in high-margin segments such as engineering procurement (EP), industrial projects, and operations and maintenance (O&M) will help improve margins while supporting steady growth.“Its greater focus on executing large-scale projects in high-margin segments such as EP, Industrial, and O&M augurs well for margins,” said Motilal Oswal.

Will unit allocation take place PPFAS GIFT S&P 500, Nasdaq 100 NFO closes shortly

Mumbai: Parag Parikh IFSC Nasdaq 100 FOF Fund of Fund seeks to provide exposure to the Nasdaq-100 Index, which includes 100 of the largest non-financial companies listed on the Nasdaq Stock Market, with major representation from technology and other innovation-driven sectors. These funds help bring in exposure to US stock market stocks through the two leading indices – the S&P 500 and the tech-heavy Nasdaq 100. “These funds are suitable for any resident Indian Individual (including minors represented by the guardian) or eligible non individual Indian entity (company, LLP or registered partnership firm) who are looking to build global diversification through low cost index exposure through simple products similar to Indian mutual funds; Investors looking to build a dollar denominated portfolio without taking on the risk associated with foreign investing such as – Estate Tax, Lack of Nomination etc. Investors should have a long-term horizon while looking at such products,” says Bari.

But what will be the applicable NAV on buying and selling? “To create sufficient provision for these taxes and provide clarity to investors on what redemption proceeds they would receive, the scheme will disclose two post-tax NAV – Long Term post-Tax NAV which will be used for Subscriptions as well as redemptions beyond 2 years of holding period and Short term post-tax NAV which will be used for redemptions only if the investor is looking to redeem within 2 years of allocation of units to them. Many investors invest during the NFO period, while some wait for the scheme to reopen for regular subscriptions. For long-term investors looking to avail RBI’s LRS facility, here’s what Bari has to say – NFO closing for the schemes is 16th March, 2026, and unit allotment will probably take a few days more than the domestic mutual funds, given the complex reconciliation of international remittance. It will likely reopen after the end of March. So for any Individual looking to utilize their current financial year LRS limit and invest in these funds, the most optimum time is before the NFO closes. Since the taxes on income earned by the Scheme



are discharged at the Scheme level, any gains on transfer of units of the Scheme will not be again taxed in the hands of the investors,” adds Bari. Investors should be aware that the tax structure of these funds differs from that of international mutual funds. The Scheme will disclose two post-tax NAVs – Long-term post-Tax NAV and Short-term post-Tax NAV. If the tax rates of 12.5% and 30% (plus applicable surcharge and cess) have already been paid at the fund house level, what will be the tax rate applicable to investors when selling units?

Nirmal Bari, Principal Officer, PPFAS GIFT, says, “The schemes launched by PPFAS GIFT are retail schemes. At present, retail schemes in GIFT City are required to pay taxes at the scheme level as a representative assessee, similar to CAT-III AIFs.

The tax rate applicable to the scheme for long-term holding of more than 2 years is the long-term capital gains tax 12.5%+ surcharges, which amounts to 14.95%, and for short-term it would be the maximum marginal rate of 42.74%.” The

NFO period of the two new outbound passive retail funds, Parag Parikh IFSC S&P 500 Fund of Fund and the Parag Parikh IFSC Nasdaq 100 Fund of Fund, from GIFT City, IFSC, launched by PPFAS Alternate Asset Managers IFSC Private Limited (PPFAS GIFT), is closing today. The New Fund Offer (NFO) for both schemes opened on February 23, 2026, and will close on March 16, 2026. These funds, with a minimum investment of USD 5,000, open a new way for Indian investors to participate in major U.S. stock markets without the need to open foreign brokerage accounts.

They are structured to primarily invest in ETFs that track the S&P 500 and Nasdaq 100 indexes, respectively, thereby bringing broad exposure to large-cap U.S. stocks and leading technology companies to investors through a simple and compliant route.Parag Parikh IFSC S&P 500 FOF Fund of Fund seeks to track the performance of the S&P 500 Index, which comprises approximately 500 of the largest publicly traded companies in the United States.

According to Motilal Oswal, VA Tech Wabag will rise

Mumbai: Though there are concerns about its Middle East exposure, the stock is also in focus after it secured a contract worth more than Rs 1,000 crore from the Chennai Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (CMWSSB) to refurbish a 45 million litres per day (MLD) Tertiary the next three to four years for the company. “A robust order book of over Rs 16,300, preferred bidder in orders worth Rs 3,000 crore, and a strong bid pipeline of Rs 15,000-20,000 crore provide strong 15-20% revenue growth visibility over the next 3-4 years,” Motilal Oswal noted in its report.#2.

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NTPC Green Energy shares: Brokerage starts coverage with ‘Buy’ on renewable growth outlook

Mumbai: HDFC Securities Ltd on Tuesday initiated coverage on NTPC Green Energy Ltd (NGEL) with a ‘Buy’ rating and a 12-month target price of Rs 121, citing strong growth visibility driven by the country’s renewable energy push and robust backing from parent NTPC Ltd.

“We initiate coverage of NGEL with a BUY and a TP of Rs 121 at 14.5x EV/EBITDA FY29 EBITDA discounted at 12 per cent to arrive at Mar-28 TP. NGEL is the renewable energy arm of NTPC, India’s leading energy producer, with a strong presence in thermal energy,” the brokerage stated. “Through NGEL, NTPC plans to expand its existing renewable energy operating capacity from ~8GW as of Dec’25 to 60GW by FY32. As of December 2025, NGEL has a presence in nine states, through subsidiaries as well as JVs. NGEL’s capacity addition plans, backed by NTPC’s proven execution, position it to capture India’s accelerating renewable energy demand,” HDFC Securities added.It underscored the company’s alignment with national energy transition goals and strong parent support as key growth drivers. “Alignment with the government’s 500GW RE plan target by FY30 provides a substantial growth runway, while a clear focus on profitable growth and disciplined capital allocation enhances NGEL’s investment appeal. Strong parent support from NTPC — its vision, resource, and deep industry experience — helps de-risk execution,” it also



said. The brokerage also mentioned NTPC Group’s broader strategic roadmap, which strengthens NGEL’s long-term outlook.

“NTPC Group’s goal of 45-50 per cent non-fossil portfolio and 60GW RE by 2032 underpins NGEL’s long-term pipeline visibility. Collectively,

these factors position NGEL favourably for sustainable scaling creation of lasting shareholder value. NTPC, via NGEL, aims to build and diversify its expertise and capacity in new energy growth areas like Energy Storage Systems (ESS), Green Hydrogen, Electrolysers, and Green

Ammonia production, which have seen wide industry participation in the form of capacity building and investment commitments in recent years, and are expected to contribute significantly to the Indian economy,” HDFC Securities further stated.

Indian IPO market reached a record, although

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

“Its earnings in future will be supported by addition of investor protection fund(IPF) to its balance sheet, lifting its topline and bottom-line,” added Ginodia, expecting price band

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

Muted response as Trump wants nations to escort ships via the Hormuz Strait

Iran: President Donald Trump’s request that countries send warships alongside US naval troops to maintain the Strait of Hormuz “open and safe” has elicited no quick promises, as oil prices rise owing to the US and Israel’s attack on Iran. “Hopefully China, France, Japan, South Korea, the UK, and others, that are affected by this artificial constraint will send ships to the area so that the Hormuz Strait will no longer be a threat by a nation that has been totally decapitated,” Trump wrote in an update to his Truth Social platform for information. On Sunday, US Secretary of Energy Chris Wright told NBC that he had been “in dialogue” with several of the nations Trump cited, and that China “will be a constructive partner” in reopening the Hormuz Strait. However, countries have made no assurances. Liu Pengyu, a spokeswoman for China’s Embassy in the United States, stated that “all parties have the responsibility to ensure stable and unimpeded energy supply” and that

China will “strengthen communication with relevant parties” to de-escalate the situation. Iran’s military is effectively shutting the critical waterway in retribution for US and Israeli assaults, hoping to harm the global economy and put pressure on Washington as energy prices rise. Tehran claims the Hormuz Strait, through which one-fifth of world oil exports typically pass, is accessible to everybody save the United States and its allies. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi told CBS News that Tehran has been “approached by a number of countries” asking safe passage for their boats, “and this is up to our military to decide”. S Jaishankar, the Indian Minister of External Affairs, told The Financial Times that discussions between New Delhi and Tehran had permitted two Indian-flagged gas tankers to sail across the Strait on Saturday. “I am at the moment engaged in talking to them, and my talking has yielded some results. This is ongoing... Certainly, from India’s



perspective, it is better that we reason and we coordinate and we get a solution,” Jaishankar said. At least 10 oil tankers have been hit, target-

ed, or have reported attacks since the start of the conflict on February 28, according to data from the UK Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO), the

International Maritime Organization (IMO), and Iraqi and Iranian authorities. With crude oil prices at \$100 per barrel, Trump administration officials believe the fight will finish quickly. Approximately 1,000 oil tankers are now trapped and unable to transit through the Strait of Hormuz. Barbara Slavin, a senior scholar at the Stimson Center, expressed her strong pessimism that China would deploy naval troops to support the US. “I don’t think China’s going to send warships to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, but it doesn’t need to, because Iranian oil is flowing to China quite nicely,” Slavin shared with Al Jazeera. “Iran is only blocking the oil shipments from countries that are affiliated with the United States and Israel.” UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer discussed with Trump the importance of reopening Hormuz “to end the disruption to global shipping”, and spoke with Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney about it separately. France previously said it was working on a possible

international mission to escort ships through the strait, but stressed it must be when “the circumstances permit”, when fighting has subsided. German Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs Johann Wadephul said he was “sceptical” about the plan. He told ARD television:

“Will we soon be an active part of this conflict? No.” The Wall Street Journal reported on Sunday, citing unnamed US officials, that the Trump administration plans to announce as early as this week that multiple countries have agreed to form a coalition to escort ships through the Strait of Hormuz. Brigadier-General Ali Mohammad Naini, a spokesman for Iran’s Revolutionary Guard Corps, challenged Trump on his boast that Iran’s navy was decimated during the war. “Didn’t Trump say that Iran’s navy has been destroyed? If so, let him send his ships into the Persian Gulf if he dares,” Naini was quoted as saying by the semi-official Tasnim news agency.

Days after the cabinet was dissolved, crowns its leader as Prime Minister



Africa: Madagascar’s President Michael Randrianirina, who took office in October, has chosen the country’s anti-corruption leader as prime minister, less than a week after dissolving the government. The presidency announced on Sunday that Mamitiana Rajaonarison, a former senior gendarmerie officer and professional civil administrator, will lead the new administration. Colonel Randrianirina, who promised a string of reforms after he took power last year, said Rajaonarison would lead the government “on a clean path” and restore hope. “The Malagasy nation needs bold

decisions. We are now at a turning point,” Randrianirina said at a ceremony in the presidential palace broadcast on state television. “This country needs a person of integrity, a person of principle, incorruptible and who cannot be bought with money.” Randrianirina said “integrity” is what he expects from Rajaonarison in the post of prime minister. Randrianirina made the appointment after dismissing Prime Minister Herintsalama Rajaonarivelo and all other cabinet ministers last Monday, without providing a reason. Rajaonarivelo, who came from the business

sector, was appointed in October, shortly after Randrianirina took office after demonstrations that caused former President Andry Rajoelina to depart. Rajaonarison, the next prime minister, has managed the Financial Intelligence Unit (SAMI-FIN) since 2021, combating illicit financial flows, money laundering, and terrorism funding. In September, demonstrations against water and power shortages on the Indian Ocean island snowballed into a protest movement that the government failed to stop with a crackdown that resulted in several casualties.

When Randrianirina’s army unit mutinied and joined the protesters from the “Gen Z” movement, former President Rajoelina fled with the help of France. The colonel has denied allegations of a coup, claiming the Constitutional Court “transferred power” to him. He promised a two-year transformation, as described in a blueprint issued at the end of February. Randrianirina has implemented a “Refoundation” program to restore governmental authority, combat corruption, and rebuild public confidence since assuming office. His transition plan calls for wide public deliberations until 2026, the writing of a new constitution, and presidential elections in late 2027. Analysts and members of the Gen Z movement, which spearheaded last year’s demonstrations, said Rajaonarivelo’s dismissal surprised them, but some believe deeper currents are at play. “I do not believe that this decision was taken entirely on the spur of the moment or solely under pressure from a particular group,” analyst and researcher Velomahani-na Razakamaharavo, of the University of Reading, told the FP news agency, saying calls for deeper reform and online campaigns were shaping the political climate.

Israeli attacks killed 13 people in Gaza, including two toddlers pregnant lady

Israeli: Israeli airstrikes in Gaza have killed at least 13 Palestinians, including two boys, a pregnant lady, and nine police officers. An strike on Sunday struck a house in the urban refugee camp of Nuseirat in central Gaza, killing four people, including a couple in their 30s and their 10-year-old son, according to Al-Aqsa Hospital. The woman was expecting with twins, according to the hospital. The fourth person killed, a 15-year-old neighbor, was transported to Nuseirat’s al-Awda hospital. “We were dozing until we were startled awake by a missile attack. “The strike was strong,” claimed Mahmoud al-Muhtaseb, a neighbor. “There was no prior warning.” Another attack struck a police car on the south-north Philadelphi Corridor near the entrance to the central town of az-Zawayda, the Interior Ministry said. The blast killed nine police officers, including Colonel Iyad Ab Yousef, a high-ranking officer in central Gaza, according to the ministry. The Al-Aqsa Hospital, which received the dead, verified the toll. According to the report, 14 additional people were injured. The ministry said it “condemns the heinous crime committed by the Israeli occupation this afternoon when it bombed a police vehicle... The officers and personnel were performing their duties monitoring markets and maintaining security and order during the holy month of Ramadan”. There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military on either strike. Sunday’s deaths were the latest among Palestinians in the coastal enclave since a “ceasefire” deal between Israel and Hamas attempted to halt Israel’s more than two-year genocidal war on Gaza. While the most intense combat has receded, Israel continues to launch attacks on a near daily basis. Aside from air strikes, Israeli soldiers often shoot on



Palestinians near Israeli military-controlled areas.

More than 650 Palestinians have died since October 10, 2025, according to Gaza health officials. Israel has declared that it will partly restore Gaza’s Rafah crossing with Egypt on Wednesday, after a two-week closure that has exacerbated the already dire humanitarian catastrophe in the beleaguered area. COGAT, the Israeli military authority in charge of civilian affairs in the occupied Palestinian area, said that the bridge will reopen on March 18 for restricted passenger traffic in both directions, with no goods authorized. Entry and leave will need previous Israeli security approval, cooperation with Egypt, and monitoring from the Eu-

ropean Union border mission, which was sent there in early February.

The revelation comes as more than 20,000 sick and injured Palestinians, including around 4,000 cancer patients and 4,500 children, are still on waiting lists for medical treatment that is inaccessible in Gaza. Nearly 440 of these instances are immediately life-threatening. Israel closed the border on February 28, the same day it and the US started operations against Iran, claiming “security” concerns. The World Health Organization’s regional head for the Eastern Mediterranean warned last week that just approximately 200 trucks per day were entering Gaza, well below the projected daily demand of 600.

Markets may be calmed by a strategic oil release, but the Hormuz issue cannot be resolved

Washington: Hundreds of tankers lie idle on both sides of the Strait of Hormuz as Iran essentially closes the canal, sending oil prices above \$100 for the first time since 2022, when the Russia-Ukraine war began. Oil tanker traffic in the strait, which transports one-fifth of world oil, has plummeted since Israel and the United States initiated assaults on Tehran on February 28. Asian countries such as India, China, and Japan, as well as several European countries, rely heavily on the Gulf for their energy supply. A supply interruption will shake the global economy. To soften the impact, the International Energy Agency (IEA) has chosen to release 400 million barrels of oil from emergency reserves, the agency’s greatest coordinated drawdown in history. However, it has failed to bring costs down. Following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, the agency released around 182 million barrels to help stabilize oil prices. According to the CIA, oil shipments via the key waterway have dropped to fewer than 10% of pre-war levels, posing a danger to one of the world’s most important energy routes. IEA members jointly retain over 1.25 billion barrels in government-controlled emergency reserves, as well as approximately 600 million barrels in industry stocks related to government responsibilities. Although the amount appears large, it swiftly diminishes when compared to the extent of world energy consumption. “This feels like a small bandage on a large wound,” energy expert Naif Aldandeni said, describing the world’s greatest coordinated emergency oil delivery as nations try to keep markets stable after conflict. The United States Energy Information Administration (EIA) predicts that global consumption of petroleum and other liquids will average 105.17 million barrels per day in 2026. At that rate, 400 million barrels would only cover four days’ worldwide demand. Even when compared to usual traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, which averages roughly 20 million barrels per day, the discharged oil amounts to just around 20 days of ordinary flows. Aldandeni told

Al Jazeera that while emergency stockpiles help calm markets, they cannot replace the role of a damaged shipping route. “The release may soften the shock and calm nerves temporarily,” he said, “but it will remain limited as long as the fundamental problem — the freedom of supply and tanker movement through Hormuz - remains unresolved.” Oil prices reflect these concerns. Brent crude closed trading on Friday at \$103.14 a barrel, having risen to over \$120 earlier as concerns about interrupted production and shipping grew. Oil expert Nabil al-Marsoumi said the price surge cannot be explained by supply fundamentals alone.

“The closure of the Strait of Hormuz added roughly \$40 per barrel as a geopolitical risk premium above what market fundamentals would normally dictate,” he told Al Jazeera. From that perspective, releasing strategic reserves serves primarily as a temporary tool to dampen that premium rather than fundamentally rebalance the market. Prices above \$100 per barrel are uncomfortable for major consuming economies already struggling to curb inflation and protect economic growth. Recent EIA projections suggest global demand has not yet declined significantly because of the war, remaining close to 105 million barrels per day. The market pressure, therefore, stems less from falling consumption and more from fears of supply shortages and delays in deliveries to refineries and consumers. On Friday, US President Donald Trump stated that the US Central Command (CENTCOM) had “executed one of the most powerful bombing raids in the history of the Middle East and totally obliterated every MILITARY target in Iran’s crown jewel, Kharg Island”. He said that “for reasons of decency,” he had “chosen NOT to wipe out the Oil Infrastructure on the Island,” but warned that if Iran continues to block trade via the Strait of Hormuz, Washington may reconsider its restraint. CENTCOM acknowledged the operation, indicating that US forces had targeted “more than 90 Iranian

military targets on Kharg Island, while preserving the oil infrastructure”. Meanwhile, Iranian authorities have warned that if Iran’s oil infrastructure is directly attacked, they will strike US-linked energy facilities throughout the region. Kharg Island is not just a military base. It is the principal export terminal for Iranian crude, making it an important link in the country’s oil supply chain. If assaults change from impeding shipping to attacking export facilities, the situation might evolve from a chokepoint disruption scenario to one including direct production and export capacity losses. In such cases, the oil released from emergency stockpiles would function as a temporary bridge rather than a long-term remedy to the lost supply. Major oil companies such as QatarEnergy, the world’s largest producer of liquefied natural gas (LNG), Kuwait Petroleum Corporation and Bahrain state oil company Bapco have shut production and declared force majeure, while Saudi Aramco, the world’s largest oil producer, and UAE state oil company ADNOC have shut down their refineries. Even under a less severe scenario — where maritime disruption persists but infrastructure remains intact — the ability of strategic reserves to stabilise markets remains constrained by logistics. The US Department of Energy said the US Strategic Petroleum Reserve held 415.4 million barrels as of 18 February 2026. Its maximum drawdown capacity is 4.4 million barrels per day, and oil requires about 13 days to reach US markets after a presidential release order. That means even the world’s greatest emergency reserve cannot flood the market with petroleum right away. Before it can reach consumers, the release must pass via pipelines, transportation networks, and refining capacity. Aldandeni predicted that the current intervention would have only a temporary stabilizing effect, while al-Marsoumi warned that prolonged disruption in the Strait of Hormuz, or the spread of threats to other chokepoints such as the Bab al-Mandeb Strait in the Red Sea, could quickly send prices even higher.

Oddball ‘platypus galaxies’ spotted by James Webb telescope may challenge our understanding of galaxy formation

A new category of space objects dubbed “platypus galaxies” is defying explanation. These nine strange cosmic objects, spotted in archival data from the James Webb Space Telescope, cannot easily be characterized by their features. They are small and compact, but they don’t appear to host active supermassive black holes or to be quasars, enormous black holes that glow as brightly as galaxies, according to new research. Researchers have dubbed the cosmic oddballs “platypus galaxies” because, like platypuses — rare egg-laying mammals — they are difficult to classify, Haojing Yan, an astronomer at the University of Missouri who led the team, said when presenting the findings at the 247th meeting of the American Astronomical Society in Phoenix this week. “The detailed genetic code of a platypus provides additional information that shows just how unusual the animal is, sharing genetic features with birds, reptiles, and mammals,” Yan said in a statement describing the research, which is avail-

able as a preprint via arXiv. “Together, Webb’s imaging and spectra are telling us that these galaxies have an unexpected combination of features.” Looking at this collection of galaxy characteristics, he added, is like looking at a platypus. “You think that these things should not exist together, but there it is right in front of you, and it’s undeniable,” he said. For example, typical quasars — which are extremely luminous and energetic objects — have emission lines in their spectra that look a bit like hills. The spectra also indicate that gas is circulating quickly around a supermassive black hole in the center. Yet the nine newfound galaxies have narrow and sharp spectra, signaling that the gas is moving more slowly. Although some galaxies with narrow and sharp spectra have supermassive black holes in their centers, unlike that group, the new galaxies don’t look like “points” in the images. So if the mysterious objects aren’t quasars and they don’t host supermassive black holes, what are they? One possibility is that they represent a newly found type of star-forming



galaxy that populated the early universe, which JWST is optimized to see. But even that possibility is confusing the team, Sun, a graduate student at the University of Missouri, said in the same statement. “From the low-reso-

lution spectra we have, we can’t rule out the possibility that these nine objects are star-forming galaxies,” Sun said. “That data fits. The strange thing in that case is that the galaxies are so tiny and compact, even though Webb has the resolving power to show us a lot of detail at this distance.” If that’s the case, it may be that JWST is looking at a type of even earlier galaxies than have ever been spotted. If that is indeed what JWST is seeing, Yan said, perhaps there is more to learn about how galaxies evolved. “I think this new research is presenting us with the question, how does the process of galaxy formation first begin?” Yan said. “Can such small, building-block galaxies be formed in a quiet way, before chaotic mergers begin, as their point-like appearance suggests?” The team said they will need more galactic samples to further the research. Luckily, JWST is still early in its observing lifetime. The telescope launched in 2021 and is expected to last at least another 15 years in its deep-space position, gazing at faraway objects in the early universe.

Walking St Patrick’s Way: The 82-mile trail behind the world’s biggest Irish celebration

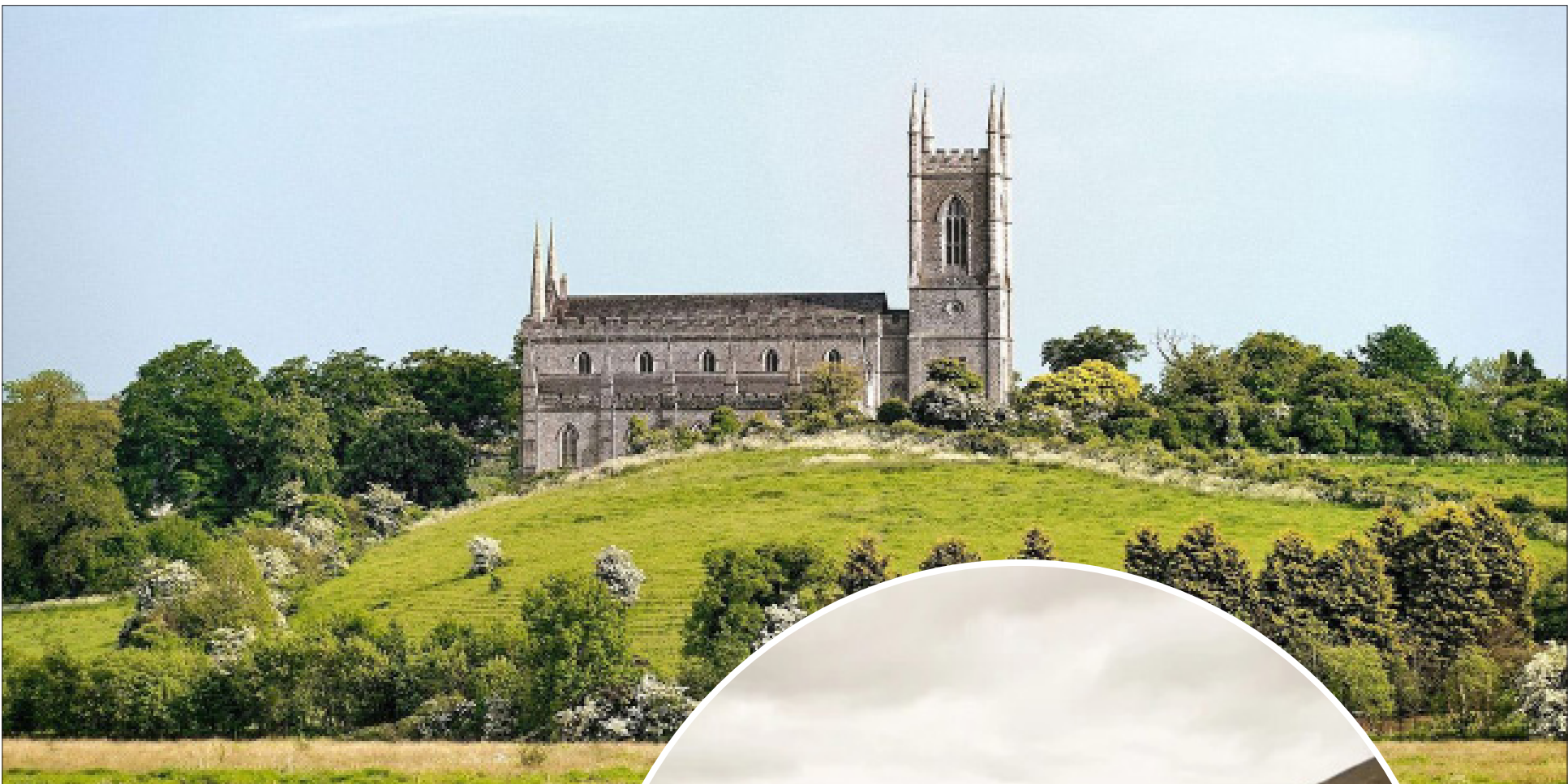
Saint Patrick’s Way is an 82-mile walking trail running from Armagh to Downpatrick, linking places associated with Patrick’s life and finishing at his burial site. While much of the world celebrates St Patrick’s Day with raucous parties, this route traces the landscapes where the real story of Ireland’s patron saint unfolded. Established in 2015, Saint Patrick’s Way was inspired by Spain’s Camino de Santiago. “The initial idea came from a man called Al Graham who had done the Camino and suggested we create something like that in Ireland,” said Tim Campbell, director of the Saint Patrick’s Centre in Downpatrick. “Saint Patrick’s Day is one of the biggest cultural events in the world, but often Patrick himself gets lost in the revelry. Our aim is to put Saint Patrick back into Saint Patrick’s Day; to reconnect the celebration with the story.”

The man beyond the legends

The saint turns out to be a more complex figure than the familiar legends suggest. The first surprise is that he was not Irish. Born in Roman Britain in the late 4th Century, he was kidnapped as a teenager by Irish raiders and sold into slavery. He escaped to France, later returning to Ireland as a missionary. For Martina Purdy, a former BBC correspondent who became a nun and now guides reflective walks on Saint Patrick’s Way, it is his extraordinary life that keeps Patrick relevant. “Patrick’s story is painfully modern,” she says. “He was a young man taken into slavery, displaced and trafficked. When people hear his own words – ‘I’m not perfect, I messed up’ – they recognise themselves in him. His story doesn’t stay in history, it meets people where they are now.”

Following Patrick through Northern Ireland

One of Patrick’s earliest converts was the chieftain Daire, who granted him land to build a church on a hill just outside Armagh. The route begins there, in a small city where two St Patrick’s cathedrals – one Roman Catholic and one Church of Ireland – sit less than half a mile apart on opposing hills, an architectural reminder of Ireland’s divided history and shared inheritance. From here, the route slips south through orchard country known for tangy ciders and apple tarts, before passing through Banbridge, once a centre of linen weaving. A long, easy stretch follows along the Newry Canal to the eponymous city, whose coat of arms depicts Patrick flanked by yew trees he is said to have planted above the Clanrye River. Much of this landscape lies close to the border with the Republic of Ireland, through places that were once considered no-go areas during the Troubles. “Saint Patrick’s Way has become one of the key pillars of tourism in Northern Ireland since the signing of the peace agreement,” Campbell explains. “After decades where tourism simply wasn’t possible, there has been a deliberate effort to build something that was about more than just visitor numbers. Patrick sits at the intersection of faith, history, culture, landscape and peace-building, and he doesn’t belong to one community or tradition.” From Newry, the route follows quiet country



lanes to Carlingford Lough. Rostrevor sits on its shores, a handsome coastal town backed by the Mourne Mountains and known as the birthplace of Robert Ross, the British major-general who burned down the White House during the War of 1812. Rostrevor was also a favourite retreat of Belfast-born writer C S Lewis, who found inspiration for Narnia in the snow-dusted Mourne Mountains. It is in the mountains themselves that Patrick is said to have preached to local communities. On the summit of Butter Mountain, I meet Maureen Scallan, a keen hiker from Boston. “My great-great-great grandparents set sail from Carlingford Lough to New York in the mid-19th Century,” she tells me. “I’ve always felt my Irish roots were part of my identity, but I’d never been. When I heard about Saint Patrick’s Way, it felt like the perfect way to explore what that ancestry means, by doing something I love.” We walk together for a while as the route drops through the magnificent beech avenues of Tollymore Forest Park, familiar to millions as a filming location for Game of Thrones, before descending to the seaside resort of Newcastle, where a sandy beach and seafood restaurants offer a gentler end to the day. The final stretch leads inland to Downpatrick, where Patrick is believed to be buried in the grounds of Down Cathedral beneath a simple granite slab carved with a single word: Patrick. He died on 17 March; in Christian tradition, a saint’s death day marks their entry into eternal life. More of Patrick’s story is told through a series of interactive displays at the modern glass-and-gran-

ite Saint Patrick Centre. Here, the familiar legends quickly fall away. I have already discovered that Patrick was not Irish. I also learn that he was never formally canonised – in the early church, saints were recognised through popular devotion rather than a Vatican process – and Ireland never had any snakes to banish. The famous tale is thought to be a later metaphor for the spread of Christianity over pagan belief. Patrick’s importance, Campbell says, lies in something far more fundamental than myth. “Ireland’s written history begins with Patrick’s own words. He did not just bring Christianity to the island, he wrote down its story.”

From Ireland to the world

That story would eventually travel far beyond the Emerald Isle. The earliest recorded St Patrick’s Day celebrations took place not in Ireland but in colonial America, in cities such as Boston and New York, when people of Irish origin gathered to assert a shared identity in colonial society. By the mid-18th Century, Saint Patrick’s Day parades had taken on political

significance, used in recruitment drives first for the British army and later, during the American War of Independence, for revolutionary forces. Irish identity became increasingly associated with ideas of liberty and resistance, and Patrick emerged as a sym-

bolic figure for migrant communities seeking visibility and belonging. Today there are more than 450 churches dedicated to Saint Patrick in the US alone, and hundreds of thousands of children named after him. For communities shaped by migration and displacement, Patrick’s story – of exile, endurance and return – continues to resonate across borders and generations. Walking Saint Patrick’s Way brings that global story back to its source. “People think they come because they want a good walk or some scenery, but very often something else is going on,” says Purdy. “I always say it’s a kind of invitation. Patrick draws people back, and moving through the landscape where his story actually happened, in a place that once had so many divisions, is powerful in itself.”

Shreya Ghoshal Talks About Turning Down the Popular Song “Fevicol Se”



Mumbai: Shreya Ghoshal recently shared her decision to reject the popular track “Fevicol Se,” featuring Kareena Kapoor Khan in the film Dabangg 2, citing concerns over “too much objectification.” In an appearance on Raj Shamani’s podcast, she expressed discomfort with the explicit nature of the lyrics, stating, “It was not subtle - it was like ‘chicken bana ke khale aur yeh karke lipat le’. I cannot say these words.” Ghoshal highlighted her unease and explained that this led her to withdraw from recording the song.During the same discussion, Ghoshal addressed her previous comments regarding performing “raunchy songs.” After re-

ceiving backlash for stating she would not sing songs like “Chikni Chameli” again, she clarified that she is not ashamed of having recorded it, but has become more selective with her choices moving forward. She noted that after the success of “Chikni Chameli,” she was offered several objectifying tracks, which she subsequently declined.While reviewing her past experiences, Ghoshal acknowledged that the artistic integrity of songs matters to her. She remarked that there were toned-down versions of “Chikni Chameli,” with the final film version being more subtle than the original drafts. Reflecting on her earlier career, she admitted that

she did not fully understand certain lyrics at the time, indicating a lack of maturity regarding their meanings.

When confronted about performing songs like “Chikni Chameli” while critiquing objectification, she maintained that she enjoys the song and does not regret having sung it in the past. “It’s one song I will always have to live with, where even children in the audience may dance to it,” she noted, emphasizing her ownership of the work despite its controversial nature.

In a later interview with Lilly Singh in 2025, Ghoshal reiterated that while she has sung bold songs, she would refrain from doing so today. She articulated her concern about young girls singing lyrics they do not comprehend, expressing embarrassment at the thought of such young fans dancing to what she now perceives as inappropriate content. Ghoshal concluded that there is a critical distinction between sensuality and outright objectification, and her evolving perspective has influenced her artistic trajectory.

Due to massive demand, Dhurandhar 2 is shown for 24 hours

Mumbai: The upcoming action sequel, Dhurandhar: The Revenge, is anticipated to break records even before its release on March 19. Reports indicate that the film will screen at Mumbai’s Maratha Mandir, taking over the long-standing morning slot of the classic film Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge, which has been shown daily at 11:30 am for decades. The change is prompted by the excitement surrounding the sequel and its lengthy runtime of 3 hours and 55 minutes, leading to a rescheduling of screening times. From March 18, Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge will be shown at 10:00 am, while Dhurandhar: The Revenge’s screenings are set for 1:15 pm, 5:30 pm, and 9:45 pm at Maratha Mandir. Additionally, several theaters have scheduled unprecedented early morning and late-night screenings, with some cinemas offering shows as early as 5:30 am and as late as 3:15 am, indicating a strong demand for tickets. The report highlights that major circuits, including Mumbai, Pune, and Ahmedabad, have opened bookings for 2:00 am screenings on Thursday, with Cineplexes like MovieMax Sion and MovieMax Wonder Mall leading the trend. Industry insiders foresee more cinemas adopting a 24-hour screening model as the release date approaches. Financially, Dhurandhar: The Revenge is performing remarkably well in advance bookings, having grossed Rs 38.50 crore from paid preview shows on March 18, with domestic Day 1 advance bookings exceeding Rs 24.50 crore and over 6.25 lakh tickets sold across 13,000 shows nationwide. International pre-sales for the film are also strong, estimated at around Rs 60 crore for the opening weekend, bringing total global opening weekend pre-sales to over Rs 123 crore. Directed by Aditya Dhar, the film features actors Ranveer Singh, Sanjay Dutt, R Madhavan, Sara Arjun, and Arjun Rampal reprising their roles.

As bride Kritika Kamra comes down the aisle, Gaurav Kapur breaks down in tears



New Delhi: On March 11, in front of close friends and family, actor Kritika Kamra wed television host Gaurav Kapur in a small ceremony at their Bandra home. Fans are upset after the couple’s touching wedding video, which shows them exchanging vows, appeared on social media.A video from the couple’s rooftop ceremony was released on Monday by their wedding videographer. Gaurav talks about getting married to Kritika at the start. “So many people who mean so much to us will be here to celebrate what I think is actually very normal,” he continues. I feel like it’s already done here (heart) and here (brain), so getting married is just a really normal thing. Kritika is then seen in the video holding her father’s hand as she walks down the aisle wearing a crimson saree. Gaurav gets emotional and starts crying as soon as he sees her. Kritika seems moved while simul-

taneously laughing at him. She even refers to Gaurav as “home” in a playful moment.The pair is seen exchanging vows in the video, which makes their guests cry and applaud them. “Everything looks right when I look around today,” Kritika remarks. And it feels right. Here I am, standing in front of my favorite boy, promising him things that would last forever. I’m a girl who will always be there. You will always be seen, heard, and held. I swear. I shall always love you. ”You be the plane, I will be the tailwind,” Gaurav continues. I’ll be right behind you and push you as far as you want to go. I will always have your back. I am thrilled that you are my wife, and I love you.Fans were moved by their wedding video as well. “Kritika is gorgeous,” was one of the remarks. Additionally, the video is quite wholesome. “I don’t know why this made me emotional, too,” wrote someone else. They are deeply in love. “Such warm vibes!” said another. men who cry while they gaze at their wives. “Made in Heaven feels” was written by another. “This is adorable,” a different fan commented. made me really joyful. People who are in love also radiate in different ways. Until the actor posted a photo from their breakfast date on social media, Kritika and Gaurav kept their romance private. In front of close friends and family, the couple performed a civil ceremony at their home to formally tie the knot. They gave candy to the photographers positioned outside their house following the ceremony.

Several well-known figures attended the wedding, including cricketers Yuvraj Singh, Ashish Nehra, and Virender Sehwag as well as Bollywood stars Soha Ali Khan, Farhan Akhtar, Malaika Arora, Neha Dhupia, Angad Bedi, and Amrita Arora. In order to commemorate their union with guests, the couple also threw a lavish reception.

Fans are let down by Vicky Kaushal’s “wife jokes” during the wedding, and she confronts criticism

Mumbai: Vicky Kaushal and Katrina Kaif, two Bollywood actresses, are one of the most adored pairs in the business. Fans are frequently in awe of their love for one another. However, a video that just appeared online showing Vicky making “wife jokes” at a wedding has drawn anger from many online users. In the video, Vicky asks the groom’s father to question the groom, “How’s the Josh?” When the audience exclaimed, “High, sir!” Vicky joked, “Maine yeh dekha hai ki bachelors ka josh hamesha high rehta hai.” Hum shaadi-shuda waalon ka josh saal dar saal girta rehta hai. Four din mein josh kam nahi hota, par tension lene ki baat nahi hai. (I’ve seen that bachelors are consistently really enthusiastic and energetic. Married people like us see a decline in excitement year after year. Don’t worry, though; it takes longer than four days to vanish.

When the video appeared on Red-



dit, a lot of people criticized Vicky for making “wife jokes.” “We’re seriously STILL making misogynistic ‘marriage’ jokes in 2026?” a person commented. These ought to have been left on Comedy Nights with Kapil in 2016. “I dislike it when men make fun of their marriage in public,” said a different commenter. It is not amusing and

subtly disparages their wife. It’s not funny when they tell you to “take it as a joke.” It is a reflection of deeper issues.”I understand he’s performing for an audience and all, but this still doesn’t make it okay,” wrote a disappointed user. If you ask me, that kind of makes me cringe. The current generation is making a concerted effort to

eschew these preconceptions and jokes that are misogynistic. I didn’t think Vicky of all people would do this. “I liked him generally, but I don’t like this version of him,” one commenter said. I’m a little saddened by this. “Ew, so disgusted with him right now,” wrote someone else. I guess it’s time to give up on the idea that he makes a decent husband. “Vicky is on his way to becoming a red flag lately, so annoying,” another user commented. Vicky and Katrina’s romance began after the actor questioned Katrina, “Mujhse shaadi karogi?” during their provocative exchange at an award ceremony. The couple dated for a short time while keeping their relationship hidden; they didn’t make it public until after they were married.On December 9, 2021, they were married in a lavish yet private wedding in Udaipur. In November of 2025, the couple welcomed their son, Vihaan Kaushal, into the world.

Amid the LPG shortage, Akshay Kumar claims that Twinkle has already purchased “2 Electric Stoves”

Mumbai: Bollywood actor Akshay Kumar discussed how the Iran-Israel War affected India’s supply of LPG cylinders.On Tuesday, the 58-year-old actor gave a speech outside of BMC’s Mumbai Clean League, a citywide cleanliness competition. Akshay Kumar stated, “There is currently no gas shortage at my home,” at the ceremony. However, as a backup, my wife Twinkle has already placed an order for two electric stoves. I’m not sure if they’ve arrived home yet.”The actor claimed to have arrived at the event straight from a movie set. He will next be seen in Priyadarshan’s horror comedy Bhooth Bangla. ”This issue (cleanliness) is crucial, therefore I took a



break from shooting today to come here. We must proceed with an optimistic outlook,” he continued.Akshay Kumar was questioned at a recent event if he wished he could have appeared in

Dhurandhar because he is “well-suited” for a movie like that.”He had said, “But I don’t think Aditya Dhar thought that, so I didn’t get it.”Dhurandhar, which is led by his co-star Ranveer

Singh from Sooryavanshi, was also commended by the action star. ”Take Dhurandhar, for instance. It’s a full-fledged action movie that revolves around violence and bloodshed, and it’s

been a huge hit. And then there is a hero like Ranveer Singh, who portrays himself as a full-fledged “angry young man” and performs powerful action scenes that are heart-pounding and high-energy. As a result, everything is constantly changing. Now it’s time for horror comedies. Horror comedies are very popular. Stree was a huge success. We never really know what people would like next because everything is constantly changing,” he continued. In addition to Bhooth Bangla, Rohit Shetty’s buddy comedy Golmaal 5, which also stars Ajay Devgn, Arshad Warsi, Tusshar Kapoor, Shreyas Talpade, and Kunal Kemmu, will feature Akshay Kumar.

Sneha Ullal claims that similarities to Aishwarya Rai didn’t affect her

Mumbai: In Lucky: No Time for Love, Bollywood star Sneha Ullal debuted alongside Salman Khan. At the time, she made news because many people thought she looked a lot like Aishwarya Rai; some even called her a doppelgänger. Sneha addressed these analogies in a recent podcast with AlphaNeon Studioz, saying that she was never troubled by them.Speaking about her experience working with Salman, Sneha revealed that he never showed any “superstar attitude” and was patient and encouraging during the filming.

She also responded to rumors that she was cast due to her likeness to Aishwarya, blaming them on public relations efforts. ”Obviously, I was coming in with Salman Khan, so people would recognize me like that, but it never bothered me because I



was very young and had no ego,” she remarked. These comparisons had no effect on me because I have never been self-conscious about my appearance.She went on to say that when Aishwarya became well-known after winning Miss World, people in her own social circle noticed that she looked like her. When I first met Aishwarya, she said, “Welcome to the family.” “Welcome to Bollywood,” or something similar. “I apologize,

please don’t hate me,” I said to her. I wasn’t sure if she took offense because there were so many comparisons in the media at the time,” she continued. Two lovers in war-torn Russia were the subject of the 2005 romantic drama, which was directed by Radhika Rao and Vijay Sapru. In addition to Salman and Sneha, Mithun Chakraborty, Kader Khan, Navni Parihar, Ravi Baswani, and Vikram Gokhale also acted in the movie.

With an average gross of ₹27.81 crore worldwide, it was produced on a budget of ₹14 crore.After making her debut, Sneha appeared in a number of Telugu and Hindi movies, such as Aryan, Ullasamga Utsahamga, and Nenu Meeku Telusa? along with Madatha Kaja. Her most recent film appearance was in Rakesh Madhavan’s Nilakanta, which also starred Master Mahendran, Subhalekha Sudhakar, Ramki, and Babloo Prithiveeraj in supporting parts. In contrast, Aishwarya has been absent from the big screen for a while. Her most recent appearance was in the 2023 movie Ponniyin Selvan II, directed by Mani Ratnam. Along with Karthi, Vikram, Trisha Krishnan, and Sobhita Dhulipala, the film received positive reviews and made over ₹344 crore globally.

To “tone down anti-China” elements, Salman Khan’s Battle of Galwan was renamed Maatrubhumi

Mumbai: Actor Salman Khan made a significant and unexpected announcement on Monday. His upcoming war drama is no longer called Battle of Galwan. Salman revealed a new poster and tagline for the movie, which is now titled Maatrubhumi. According to a recent allegation, the title was altered in order to “tone down” the anti-China aspects of the movie. The Galwan Valley battles between the Chinese and Indian armies in 2020 served as the inspiration for Maatrubhumi. Salman posted a new poster for the movie, titled Maatrubhumi, on social media on Monday. He captioned the photo with the hashtag #Maatrubhumi and added, “May War Rest In Peace.” Salman tagged actor Chitrangda Singh, director Apoorva Lakhia, and his own production company, which is supporting the movie. According to a source cited in a

Bollywood Hungama report, the movie’s title was altered to exclude its anti-China content. In some governmental and strategic circles, Salman Khan was advised to soften the film’s anti-China elements in addition to reconsidering the title. Taking such criticism seriously, Salman decided to maintain the film’s wider sensitivity while keeping it in line with the national mood. As a result, the war was fictionalized, the title was altered, and a significant amount was rewritten, the source told the site. The movie, which was originally inspired on the 2020 Galwan clash between Chinese and Indian soldiers, caused controversy earlier this month when state-backed Chinese media, especially the Global Times, said it “distorts facts” and incites anti-China sentiment.According to the report, the film was made more emotionally charged through



reshoots and rewrites. “To transform the mov-

ie into a more emotionally charged patriotic

story, a large portion of the script has been revised. The insider continued, “The new version is said to explore a more intimate dynamic between Salman Khan and Chitrangda’s characters. The changes also came after input from relevant quarters.” Salman plays an Indian Army Colonel in Maatrubhumi, which is directed by Apoorva Lakhia and produced by Salma Khan under the name Salman Khan Films. According to the film’s creators, it seeks to balance the intensity of combat with the closeness of love and family while presenting an unwavering image of bravery, sacrifice, and resiliency.There is no release date for the new poster. Although the movie was supposed to be released on April 10, there are already rumors that it might be delayed until later in the year. A revised release date has not yet been explicitly announced by the creators.

After significant snowfall in Manali, more than 1,000 cars became trapped at a section of the Atal Tunnel



New Delhi: After unexpectedly severe snowfall struck Manali and the upper parts of Kullu district, more than 1,000 vehicles were allegedly stuck close to the South Portal of the Atal Tunnel, necessitating a massive rescue and snow removal operation,

according to officials. The Border Roads Organization (BRO) is conducting snow clearance operations at the South Portal due to heavy snowfall that has affected traffic at the tunnel since Monday afternoon, according to a Tuesday report from news agency

ANI. Anurag Chand Sharma, Deputy Commissioner of Kullu, was reported as stating, "Since yesterday afternoon, there has been heavy snowfall at Atal Tunnel in Manali and the upper reaches of the district, and since yesterday itself, BRO's operation is being enforced at the south portal of the tunnel." Fresh snow covered homes and mountains in Manali and the neighboring areas, while snowfall was also observed in higher regions of the state. In the Shimla district, Khadralla received 10.2 cm, Kalpa 6.4 cm, Gondhla and Jot around 3 cm apiece, and Kukumseri 1.5 cm. Shimla, Kufri, Jubberhatti, Kangra, and Sundernagar were among the places where thunderstorms and

lightning were reported. Hailstorms were also observed in several portions of the Shimla district. A new western disturbance is predicted to affect north-west India starting on the evening of March 17, with Himachal Pradesh likely to be affected between March 18 and March 21, according to the IMD. For March 18 and 19, districts including Shimla, Kullu, Mandi, Kangra, and Sirmaur are under an Orange Alert due to the possibility of hailstorms and thunderstorms. Taxi driver Dhanraj stated, "Some colleagues and I reached the Atal Tunnel to assist as we got the news of tourists being stranded," according to the article. The majority of the stranded visitors have already been

safely evacuated from the region, he said, adding that 4x4 vehicles had been used to do so. "We have been stuck here since Saturday night, and we are now progressively being transported in the direction of Manali." Prem Lal, a stranded trucker, stated, "There are no plans for food or drinking water. A visitor claimed that social organizations operating in Sissu gave him food." On Saturday, when there wasn't much snow, we left Manali for Keylong. However, the snowstorm became much more intense upon our return, and we have been stuck here since Sunday night. However, cars are currently being removed from the area," commuter Amit stated.

After an emotional farewell, Harish Rana's passive euthanasia procedure starts

New Delhi, Mar 17: For 32-year-old Harish Rana, whose "right to die" was affirmed by the Supreme Court earlier this month, the procedure of passive euthanasia may take weeks to finish because it entails multiple steps, such as gradually stopping the nutritional support. Rana, a citizen of Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh, has been in a coma since 2013, when he was a student of engineering in Chandigarh and suffered a severe brain injury after falling from the fourth story of his paid guest lodging. On Saturday, he was moved from his residence in Ghaziabad to the palliative care unit of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Delhi's Dr. BR Ambedkar Institute Rotary Cancer Hospital. According to Dr. Sushma Bhatnagar, a professor of onco anesthesia and palliative medicine and former chief of AIIMS, the case is an example of palliative care, which aims to lessen protracted suffering when recovery is not feasible. According to a previous report, Dr. Bhatnagar stated, "As a principle of palliative care, external support that prolongs suffering in irreversible medical conditions may be withheld or withdrawn after all medical approvals, thereby



allowing nature to take its course." In order to provide sufficient pain relief, the procedure usually entails gradually reducing or stopping the nutritional assistance. Palliative sedation is administered to the patient to prevent distress. According to Dr. Bhatnagar, life support measures including artificial nourishment, oxygen, and drugs are gradually stopped. According to a PTI news agency report, insiders in Harish's case stated that the entire procedure might take two to three weeks to finish. In compliance with Indian law governing living wills and passive euthanasia, AIIMS has started the process

of gaining approval from two medical bodies. According to the previous report, these boards must attest that the patient satisfies the requirements before life support can be removed. The hospital stated that the medical board appointed for the case will conduct all medical evaluations. "AIIMS is adhering to the Supreme Court's directives in Harish Rana's case," the hospital declared in a formal statement on Sunday. A primary medical board at the admitting hospital must first attest that the patient has an irreparable medical condition, according to Dr. Sandeep Dewan, senior director of Critical Care at Fortis. The district chief medical officer forms a supplementary board to confirm this within 48 hours. Life support, including Ryles tube (or nasogastric tube) feeding, which is passive euthanasia, cannot be stopped until both boards have confirmed it. Dr. Dhawan stated in the report that "if the patient is not on a ventilator but is receiving life-sustaining treatment through Ryles tube feeding, that too can be withdrawn after certification by both medical boards, which forms part of passive euthanasia treatment."

Om Birla will file a motion to lift the suspension of eight opposition MPs

New Delhi, Mar 17: According to sources reporting a decision made at a meeting called by Speaker Om Birla, the suspension of eight opposition MPs from the Lok Sabha is expected to be lifted on Tuesday. Following a resolution voted by the Lok Sabha during the first half of the Budget session, seven Congress and one CPI(M) MP were suspended on February 3 for disruptive behavior. Opposition parties have been pleading with the speaker to lift the suspensions during one of the Lok Sabha's sessions, even though the eight MPs were suspended for the duration of the term, which is set to finish on April 2. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijju would introduce a motion to revoke the suspensions in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday at noon, according to Congress leader K Suresh. In a similar event, the Lok Sabha Secretariat reminded the members that in order to facilitate members' mobility, areas within the Parliament estate should be kept free of obstacles. Birla responded that such action is taken when someone climbs on the tables when members of Congress urged him to lift the suspensions. Gurjeet Singh Auja, Hibi Eden, C Kiran Kumar Reddy, Amarinder Singh Raja Warring, Manickam Tagore, Prashant Padole, Dean Kuriakose,

and S Ventakesan (CPI(M)) are among the members suspended. Since the second part of the Budget session began on March 9, the opposition has made the removal of the eight MPs' suspensions a top priority. It was decided by both the government and opposition parties that neither would go into the House's well to face the other. According to insiders, another significant decision made at the meeting is that no member would rip documents and toss them in the direction of the speaker or the chair. Furthermore, no member will scale the authorities' table in order to voice their disapproval. Birla encouraged the leaders of all political parties to uphold discipline and high ethical conduct among their members, expressing "deep concern" on Sunday about the display of banners, placards, posters, and specific language used by some MPs in the House. In a letter to the leaders of every party with members in the Lok Sabha, Birla stated that although the House has always had a wonderful tradition of respectful debate and dialogue, some members have been undermining the dignity and prestige of the nation's parliamentary democracy for some time, both inside and outside the chamber and within the Parliament complex.

Harshit Rana is expected to miss a significant portion of the 2026 IPL

New Delhi: Harshit Rana, a pacer with the Kolkata Knight Riders, is still recovering from knee surgery he had last month, thus he will probably miss a large portion of the next IPL. The BCCI has not yet set a return date for him. There is still "no firm date of return earmarked by the BCCI medical team yet" for Rana, who suffered a ligament strain in his right knee during India's T20 World Cup warm-up match against South Africa. After only bowling one over in that match, the pacer pulled up and had surgery, which prevented him from competing in the T20 World



Cup. Mohammed Siraj, who played one game (against the USA) during India's championship campaign, took his spot. At the BCCI Naman Awards on Sunday, Rana received the Best International Debutant prize. The three-time IPL champions KKR, who are

already dealing with a number of fitness issues, would suffer a significant blow in his absence. Matheesha Pathirana, a bowler from Sri Lanka, has been recovering from a calf strain he suffered during the T20 World Cup. At first, it was not anticipated that this would have an impact on his IPL availability. Due to tense geopolitical ties between Bangladesh and India earlier this year, the BCCI ordered KKR to release left-arm seamer Mustafizur Rahman. As a result, KKR is also without Rahman. Since then, the team has replaced him with Zimbabwean speedster Blessing

Muzarabani. Muzarabani chose not to play for Islamabad United in the Pakistan Super League because he will be joining the team here on Tuesday. On Wednesday, the KKR will start their pre-season training here. Vaibhav Arora, Akash Deep, Umran Malik, Kartik Tyagi, and all-rounders Cameron Green and Randeep Singh are among KKR's other pace options. On March 29, KKR will host Sunrisers Hyderabad, Punjab Kings, and Lucknow Super Giants in the tournament's opening phase after starting their season away from home against the Mumbai Indians.

LPG Gas Cylinder KYC: The Center Requires Biometric Verification for Domestic Customers

New Delhi, Mar 17: In an effort to expedite the delivery of subsidies and avoid abuse in the wake of the crisis in West Asia, the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas has mandated biometric Aadhaar authentication (e-KYC) for all domestic LPG clients. The government recently announced that users can use their smartphones to complete the verification process from home using the Aadhaar FaceRD app and the mobile apps of oil marketing businesses, even if supply has eased in India. Customers of public sector businesses like Indian Oil, Bharat Petroleum, and Hindustan Petroleum are covered by the instruction. The ministry claims that the procedure is meant to be easy and doesn't involve going to an LPG distributor. However, if e-KYC is not completed, LPG refills may be disrupted and subsidies may be suspended until verification is



completed. The regulations are more stringent for recipients of the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana. In order to continue receiving benefits, they must complete biometric authentication prior to their first refill at the beginning of each fiscal year. Oil firms have tightened standards for dormant connections at the same time. Before placing a fresh order, customers who haven't scheduled a refill in more than nine months might

need to physically complete KYC at distributor offices. This occurs in the midst of attempts to reduce irregular demand and supply challenges associated with worldwide energy disruptions. One of the trending topics on Google Trends is the move, which has acquired popularity online: According to officials, the actions are meant to increase the effectiveness of distribution and guarantee that subsidies are received by legitimate customers.

An England star makes a shocking claim against the head coach

New Delhi: Liam Livingstone, an all-rounder for the England cricket team, made shocking accusations about a lack of "respect" and "communication" against head coach Brendon McCullum and managing director Rob Key of the England Cricket Board (ECB). Livingstone feels he has little chance of making a comeback under the current management after being pulled from the national squad in March 2025 due to a poor run of form. The all-rounder stated in an interview that McCullum called him for less than a minute to inform him that he will be benched for the series against the West Indies. "I inquired as to why [I was dropped]. They expressed a desire to test another person. Baz didn't do that. Livingstone stated, "Brooky [captain Harry Brook] texted me, and Wright [outgoing selector Luke Wright] didn't get in touch." That is perhaps the best way to describe that group as a whole. I'll talk to you in the summer, Keysy [Rob Key] stated without saying anything. He told me he was busy at a Test camp in Loughborough when I called him one day. After that, I didn't hear from him until the end of September. That was rather enlightening regarding the group and the regime: if you're in, you're in, and if you're not, nobody gives a damn. That gave me confidence that playing



cricket would be more fun in the future," he continued. The cricket player also recounted his difficulties during the 2025 Champions Trophy and claimed that the McCullum-led coaching team told him he "cared too much" when he asked for assistance. Livingstone remarked, "I was asking for help, and pretty much all I got was that I care too much and I need to chill out a little bit, and everything will take care of itself." Naturally, you will care when things don't work out; if I didn't care, I probably wouldn't want to participate in the activity. I had a great summer, which continued into the winter when we traveled to the West Indies.

Ricky Ponting Highlights Gautam Gambhir's "Bold Call"

New Delhi: One move—bringing back Sanju Samson at the top of the order—coincided with India's turnaround in form, which allowed them to win the T20 World Cup 2026. After India's crushing Super 8 loss to South Africa, captain Suryakumar Yadav and head coach Gautam Gambhir pulled Samson back in. The opener went on to smash scores of 97*, 89, and 89 and won the 'Player of the Tournament' award. The move was a turning point for India, according to legendary Australian captain Ricky Ponting. "Moving Ishan Kishan down the lineup to return Sanju Samson to the top was actually a huge decision. Speaking on the ICC Review, Ponting stated, "That's a big decision, but one that worked out really well in the end." The support of the captain and coaching staff is all you truly need as a player, and I'm saying this as a coach and former captain as



well. Sometimes all a player needs to hear is, "Look mate, we're sticking with you, we believe in you, and we think you're the right man for this role," along with a pat on the back or an arm around the shoulder, Ponting continued. Samson was named "Player of the Match" in both India's decisive Super 8 victory over the West Indies and their semi-final triumph over England. In just five games, he amassed 321 runs with a strike rate of around 200 to end the competition. The current Indian T20I team may be the strongest in history, according to Ponting.

Tilak Varma Felicitated By Revanth Reddy After T20 World Cup Victory

CM Revanth Reddy Honors Winner Tilak Varma

Hyderabad: India batter Tilak Varma was felicitated by Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy after playing a key role in India's successful T20 World Cup 2026 campaign. The left-handed batter was honoured during a meeting in Hyderabad following the team's historic title win.

Tilak was part of the Indian squad that successfully defended the T20 World Cup title, becoming the first team in history to achieve the feat. The youngster contributed 207 runs in nine matches at a strike rate of 154.47, playing an important role in India's title-winning run. Sharing the moment on social media, Revanth Reddy congratulated the cricketer for his achievement and acknowledged his contribution to the national team's success. "On the occasion of the Indian team winning the T20 World Cup 2026 and arriving in Hyderabad, Team India player Shri Tilak Varma



paid a courtesy visit," Reddy wrote. "On this occasion, I felicitated and congratulated Tilak. In this program, ministers Shri Vakiti Srihari and Shri Azharuddin, Rajya Sabha member Shri Vem Narendra Reddy, SATG Chairman Shri Shivasena Reddy, and others participated," he added. Tilak had joined India's T20 World Cup squad shortly before the tournament began after recovering from surgery for testicular torsion in January

2026. Despite a slow start in the competition, he gradually found his rhythm and played a key supporting role in the middle order. One of his notable contributions came during the semi-final against England, where he scored a quick 27 off 15 balls, helping India maintain momentum in a crucial match. Tilak Varma is now set to shift his focus to franchise cricket as he prepares for the upcoming IPL 2026 season with Mumbai Indi-

ans. The young batter will once again share the dressing room with India T20I captain Suryakumar Yadav, along with Hardik Pandya and former India skipper Rohit Sharma. Mumbai Indians, the five-time IPL champions, will begin their IPL 2026 campaign against Kolkata Knight Riders on March 29 at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai.

After playing an important role in India's World Cup triumph, Tilak will be hoping to carry that confidence into the IPL season and continue his rise in international cricket. Tilak Varma is expected to play for the Mumbai Indians in the 2026 IPL season. He has established himself as a vital part of the Indian T20 lineup, recently being noted for his performances at number six during the T20 World Cup 2026. While several high-profile player movements have been confirmed for the 2026 Season Rohit Sharma.

Riyan Parag Enjoys London Stadium Matchday As A Premier League Fan



London: Indian cricketer and Premier League 'India Super Fan', Riyan Parag, was on a week-long visit to the UK to experience the League's action up close. The new captain of the Rajasthan Royals spent the week watching live Premier League action, meeting up with players and soaking in the atmosphere, before he links up with his teammates ahead of the upcoming Indian Premier League (IPL) season, according to a release. As the Premier League season inches towards The finishing line, eight-time Champions Manchester City are in pursuit of League leaders Arsenal. Parag lived the dream of

millions of fans as he watched City take on West Ham United live at the 62,500 capacity London Stadium.

The match concluded in a 1-1 draw. Reflecting on his matchday experience, Parag said, "The Premier League has a massive following in India, and it's something I've followed since I was a kid. Being at the London Stadium and hearing the fans in full voice, the chants, the energy, the whole atmosphere, it was honestly incredible. The way the stadium echoes when everyone gets behind the team is something special. In India, we feel that same emotion around cricket, so

you immediately connect with it. Being there in person and living the dream of millions of fans back home was a great experience." Earlier in the week, Parag had a chance to get an up-close and personal look at West Ham United's preparation for the weekend clash, as he visited the Hammers' training ground to watch the squad in training. During this visit, Parag met West Ham United captain Jarrod Bowen and the pair exchanged notes on captaincy, handling pressure at the highest level, and the similarities between preparing for crucial match days. As athletes, it's always interesting to see how players in other sports prepare for big games. Watching the sessions and spending some time with Jarrod, you can see the level of detail and discipline that goes into a Premier League match. We also spoke about leadership and how important it is to keep the group motivated even when results aren't going your way. That's something every team sport understands. The Portuguese side welcome back Maximiliano Araujo and Pedro Gonçalves, boosting creativity up front. Yet the task remains daunting against a Bodo/Glimt team that has impressed in Europe this season, with away wins over Atlético Madrid and Inter. Comfortable defending deep and striking on the break, the visitors could force Sporting to take early risks to stay alive in the tie. PSG Blues comeback unlikely.

SRH and RCB australian stars cummins and Hazlewood doubtful For IPL opening games



New Delhi: The injury list ahead of Indian Premier League 2026 continues to grow, with Sunrisers Hyderabad and Royal Challengers Bengaluru emerging as the latest teams facing fitness concerns. Their Australian stars Pat Cummins and Josh Hazlewood are reportedly set to miss the opening games of the season. Cummins has been out of international cricket for a while now, having last played in December 2025 against England at the Adelaide Oval, where he picked up three wickets in each innings. The SRH captain also missed the T20 World Cup 2026 due to injury concerns



And has been working his way back to full fitness. Hazlewood has been on a similar path, with the Australian pacer also sidelined by injury in recent months. He last played competitive cricket in November 2025 for New South Wales and subsequently missed both the Ashes series and the T20 World Cup 2026. According to a report by Hindustan Times, Cummins and Hazlewood could miss the opening few matches of IPL 2026 for SRH and RCB respectively. However, both players are expected to feature at some stage during the tournament if they regain full fitness in the coming weeks.

So far, there has been no official confirmation from either franchise regarding the availability of the two Australian pacers. If Hazlewood misses the opening fixtures, New Zealand pacer Jacob Duffy or Sri Lanka's Nuwan Thushara could take on a bigger role in RCB's pace attack during the early part of the season. SRH also have replacement options in their squad. England's Brydon Carse and Sri Lanka pacer Ehsan Malinga are among the bowlers who could step into the playing XI if Cummins is unavailable.

Leadership could also be affected for the Hyderabad franchise in the opening game. According to a Times of India report, Ishan Kishan or Abhishek Sharma could captain the side against Bengaluru if Cummins is not fit in time. Both players have leadership experience after captaining Jharkhand and Punjab respectively in the 2025-26 Vijay Hazare Trophy. IPL 2026 kicks off on March 28 with RCB taking on SRH at the defending champions' home ground, the M Chinnaswamy Stadium, with teams hoping their key players regain fitness in time for the opener. Cummins and Hazlewood are not the only players dealing with injury concerns ahead of the new season. Kolkata Knight Riders key playtournament.

Mehdi taj urges FIFA to move iran's world cup games from USA today

New Delhi: The 2026 FIFA World Cup is facing a participation crisis similar to cricket's recent T20 World Cup controversy, as Iran's football federation pushes to relocate its group stage matches from the United States to Mexico over safety concerns, as per Reuters. Just as Bangladesh's participation in the T20 World Cup was thrown into doubt following the release of Mustafizur Rahman from the IPL amid security concerns, Iran now finds itself in a comparable situation, with geopolitics threatening to overshadow one of sport's biggest stages.

Mehdi Taj, president of the Iranian football federation, said on Monday that the country would not travel to the US following explicit statements from President Donald Trump that he could not guarantee the security of the Iranian national team.



When Trump has explicitly stated that he cannot ensure the security of the Iranian national team, we will certainly not travel to America," Taj said in a post on the Iranian embassy in Mexico's X account. "We are negotiating with FIFA to hold Iran's World Cup matches in Mexico." FIFA did not immediately respond to a request

for comment. The global showpiece is due to kick off on June 11 across the United States, Canada and Mexico, with Iran scheduled to play two group stage matches in Los Angeles and one in Seattle. Trump said last week that while Iran was welcome to participate, it might not be appropriate for them to play in the US "for their own

life and safety." The comments added to an already tense backdrop, with Iran and the US engaged in one of the most volatile periods in their long and fractious relationship. Tensions escalated sharply after the US launched airstrikes alongside Israel against Tehran, killing Iran's supreme leader notification of a withdrawal.

Ancelotti Claims He Owes Nothing To Anyone While Discussing Neymar's Team Omission

Brasilia: Brazil coach Carlo Ancelotti has cleared the air about whether their star footballer Neymar will be in the squad for the FIFA World Cup 2026. The Brazilian star Neymar, 33, has battled with injuries since returning to Santos. But a recent hat-trick against Juventude reignited talk that the 33-year-old could feature at the FIFA World Cup 2026 in the United States, Mexico and Canada next summer. Brazil coach Ancelotti warned Neymar and Vinicius Junior that they need to be at 100% to make the World Cup squad. There are many players who are very good, I need to choose players that are 100%. It's not just Neymar, it could be [Real Madrid forward] Vinicius. If Vinicius is at 90%, I'll call up another player who is at 100%, because it's a team that has a very high level of competence, especially up front. Up front, we have really many good players." Ancelotti said as quoted by Goal.com.

When asked about Neymar's chances of playing the upcoming FIFA World Cup for Brazil, Ancelotti said that he doesn't owe anyone a place in Brazil's squad for the 2026 World Cup. If we talk about Neymar, we have to talk about other players. We have to think about Brazil, which can be with Neymar or without Neymar, with other players or without other players. The



Definitive list we will make after the FIFA date in March. I understand very well that they are very interested in Neymar, I want to clarify that we are in December, the World Cup is in June, I will choose the team that will go to the World Cup in May. If Neymar deserves to be, if he is well, better than someone else, he will play in the World Cup and period. I don't owe anyone

A Debt,"Ancelotti told reporters as quoted by Goal.com. The FIFA World Cup 2026 group stage was finally mapped out after a glittering Final Draw ceremony in Washington, DC's John F Kennedy Centre for the Performing Arts on Friday. Mexico will take on South Africa in Group A in the opening game of the tournament at the Estadio Azteca in Mexico City on June 11. The USA,

Mexico and Canada will co-host the tournament. Among some other exciting clashes are: Brazil vs Morocco, Netherlands vs Japan, France vs Senegal, while debutants Cabo Verde, Curacao, Jordan and Uzbekistan also have exciting clashes against Spain, Germany, defending champions Argentina and Portugal to look out for, as per FIFA's official Website.

Navneet Kaur Credits Team And Coaches For FIH Qualifiers Form



New Delhi: Veteran forward Navneet Kaur played a pivotal role in India's impressive run at the FIH Hockey World Cup 2026 Qualifiers in Hyderabad, Telangana, finishing as the third-highest goal scorer of the tournament with four goals. The experienced attacker was instrumental in driving India's offensive play throughout the campaign and was named the 'Player of the Tournament' for her standout performances, according to a release. Navneet also scored a hat-trick in India's commanding 4-1 victory over Wales, underlining her influence in the team's success.

The Indian Women's Hockey Team secured qualification for the upcoming FIH Hockey World Cup,

Belgium & Netherlands 2026, after finishing with a Silver medal at the recently concluded FIH Hockey World Cup 2026 Qualifiers, Hyderabad, Telangana. India went down 0-2 to England in the Final but delivered a strong overall campaign with important victories against Uruguay, Wales and Italy. Reflecting on the team's performance and experience of playing in Hyderabad, Navneet said, "It was a good experience for us, especially since it was the first time we played in Hyderabad. The ground and support from fans were very good. We also had a new coaching setup, so there were many new things for us to learn on the field. Our main focus was to play as a team, understand each

other's strengths and build that connection." From the beginning of the tournament, our first goal was to qualify for the FIH Hockey World Cup. The second chukker saw both teams continue to push forward in attack. Navneet Jindal scored for Jindal Panther to extend their advantage, but Instrucko remained within striking distance courtesy of a goal from Phil Seller, ensuring the contest stayed tightly poised heading into the second half as Jindal Panther held a 4-3 lead. Salima attained Olympian status at just 19 years of age when she was part of the historic Indian team that finished fourth at the Tokyo Olympics 2020. The experience proved to be a major turning point in her career, as she emerged as one of the team's standout performers in the years that followed.

In addition to her contributions on the field, Salima was appointed as an AHF Athletes Ambassador in March 2023, a role that further underlined her growing stature in international hockey and her commitment to athlete representation and development. Her consistent performances and country.