

In Brief

Assam BJP launches digital campaign

Guwahati: The Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha (BJYM), Assam Pradesh, has launched a digital campaign titled “Modir Bondhu” (Modi’s friend) today, with the objective of taking the works and achievements of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to all sections of society. The campaign was formally inaugurated by Assam BJP State President Dilip Saikia at the party’s state headquarters, Vajpayee Bhawan, in Guwahati in the presence of over a thousand youths associated with various digital platforms. BJP ANational Election In-charge Baijayant Jay Panda, Member of Parliament Bansuri Swaraj, and Darshana Jardosh were present at the programme. Under the leadership of BJYM State President Rakesh Das, the “Modir Bondhu” initiative aims to cover all regions of Assam.

Filmfare award posthumously presented to Zubeen Garg

Guwahati: The late Zubeen Garg has been posthumously presented three Filmfare awards for his Assamese film ‘Roi Roi Binale’. “A heartfelt moment for us as we honoured the late Zubeen Garg with three special recognitions - Best Playback Singer (Male), Lifetime Achievement Award and Special Recognition for Roi Roi Binale,” a statement issued by Filmfare said. “Our team personally visited his home to present these honours to his wife, Garima Saikia Garg, who graciously received them on his behalf ahead of Filmfare Awards Assamese 2026. Though he is no longer with us, his music, passion, and legacy remain eternal,” the statement added.

CM chairs meeting of Shirui Festival organising committee

Imphal: Chief Minister Y Khemchand today chaired a meeting of the Organising Committee of the Shirui Festival 2026 at the Secretariat. The Shirui Lily Festival 2026 is an annual 5-day state-level event in Ukhrul district being held to celebrate the blooming of the rare, endangered Shirui Lily flower. Organised by the Manipur Tourism Department, it features cultural performances, rock concerts, traditional, and ecological awareness programs. In a social media post, Chief Minister Khemchand said, “Chaired a meeting of the Organising Committee of the Shirui Festival 2026 today at the Secretariat, attended by Hon’ble MLAs and senior officials. The meeting deliberated in detail on the modalities and comprehensive preparations to ensure the successful conduct of the festival”. “Emphasised that the Shirui Festival must serve as a vibrant platform to strengthen communal harmony and foster deeper integration between the hill and valley districts. Reiterated our Government’s commitment to promoting and preserving our rich indigenous culture and traditions, while showcasing Manipur’s unique heritage to the world,” the Chief Minister said.

Three Amur falcons released with satellite transmitters

Imphal: As part of the ongoing research on tracking of Amur falcon by satellite transmitters tagging by Forest Department Manipur and Wildlife Institute of India on November 8 2025, three Amur falcons namely Ahu, Alang and Apapang were released with satellite transmitters from Chiuluan Roosting site by a team of Scientists from Wildlife Institute of India, Tamenglong Forest Division officials and Chiuluan Village volunteers. These tagged Amurs had reached Africa within a record time of about 9 to 10 days. Since then these birds are enjoying their wintering migration in different countries in Africa. The latest report from Dr. R. Suresh Kumar, Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun said that all the three Amur falcons are still active and doing well. Earlier it was thought Ahu might be having some issues but now he confirmed that it is also having local movements but confined around Somalia only. During the last wintering migration of Chiuluan 2, they start it’s north ward migration to its breeding ground on April 14, 2025. Ahu is still in Somalia, Apapang is in Zimbabwe and Alang is in Botswana as on date.

Mizoram CM Tables 17,470 Crore Budget for 2026–27, Prioritizing Social Infrastructure and Agriculture

Aizawl, Feb 27 : Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma on February 26 presented a Rs 17,469.91 crore budget for the 2026–27 financial year in the state assembly, with a strong emphasis on strengthening social infrastructure, improving connectivity and boosting the agriculture sector. Presenting his third budget since the Zoram People’s Movement (ZPM) assumed power in December 2023, Lalduhoma, who also holds the finance portfolio, said the government remains committed to inclusive growth and livelihood enhancement. Alongside the annual budget, the chief minister also tabled supplementary demands for grants amounting to ₹3,724.25 crore for the current fiscal year.

Lalduhoma said the government will continue implementing its flagship “Bana Kaih” (hand-holding) scheme aimed at improving the livelihoods of farmers across the state. An allocation of ₹350 crore has been made for



the scheme in the upcoming fiscal, of which ₹150 crore has been earmarked

for the procurement of designated key crops to ensure assured income for cultivators. Providing an overview of the state’s finances, the chief minister said total revenue receipts for 2026–27 are projected at ₹17,469.91 crore, including ₹8,608.08 crore expected from central tax devolution. The total expenditure for the fiscal has been estimated at ₹17,076.92 crore. The budget, according to Lalduhoma, seeks to balance fiscal discipline with development priorities, while continuing targeted interventions in agriculture, connectivity and social sectors to support long-term economic growth in Mizoram. Mizoram Agriculture Minister PC Vanlalruata on February 25 informed the Assembly that work is underway to implement the Centre’s flagship crop insurance scheme in the state, with substantial premium support to be provided by the government. Speaking during the session, the minister said.

British Museum’s Richard Blurton Delivers Lecture on Vrindavani Vastra and Assam’s Cultural Heritage at Gauhati University



Guwahati, Feb 27: Internationally renowned archaeologist and former Head of the South and Southeast Asia Department at the British Museum, Mr. Richard Blurton, participated in an important interactive session with faculty members and students at Gauhati University. Dr. Ballepu Kalyan Chakravarthy, Additional Chief Secretary of the Government of Assam, was also present at the event. The discussion focused on Assam’s civilizational heritage.

Mr. Blurton placed Assam’s artistic and devotional traditions within a broader international context, delivering a lecture centered particularly on the historically and culturally significant Vrindavani Vastra. Describing it as “more than a work of art,” he stated that it represents a cultural imagination shaped by faith, society, and storytelling, and emphasized the need for continuous research and preservation.

The session featured in-depth discussions on textile traditions, sacred heritage, and artistic creation. Teachers, researchers, and students shared their views on the importance of positioning Assam’s heritage within the global academic landscape.

Vice-Chancellor Professor Nani Gopal Mahanta remarked that Vrindavani Vastra is a profound symbol of Assam’s spiritual consciousness and craftsmanship. Referring to the eternal legacy of Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardev, he stated that Gauhati University remains committed not only to rigorous academic research but also to preserving the region’s cultural foundations.

The Vice-Chancellor also highlighted the philosophical depth of institutions like the Namghar, describing them as symbols of both form and formlessness. He further noted that traditions such as Ankiya Bhaona beautifully reflect the integration of devotion and art within the Bhakti movement.

Academic Registrar Professor Rajiv Sandikai, Controller of Examinations Professor Kandarpa Kumar Sharma, and other distinguished guests were also present at the event. By hosting a global scholar like Richard Blurton, Gauhati University has further strengthened its position as a leading center for heritage research and cultural studies in Northeast India.

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Election In-charge Baijayant Jay Panda, Member of Parliament Bansuri Swaraj, and Darshana Jardosh were present at the programme.

Under the leadership of BJYM State President Rakesh Das, the “Modir Bondhu” initiative aims to cover all regions of Assam. Through this programme, lakhs of digitally connected youths will extensively promote on social media the developmental works undertaken by both the Central and State Governments, with the goal of informing and engaging the general public.

AR conducts series of security meets with CSOs

Imphal, Feb 27: Assam Rifles organised a series of security meets with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) of the Maring Naga community at Shaibol, RRC and COB Machi in Tengnoupal District. The interactions, attended by Village Chiefs, CSO representatives and senior officials along with over 250 troops, were convened in light of prevailing security dynamics to strengthen coordination and reinforce civil-military cooperation. The forums provided a structured platform for constructive dialogue on local security, public safety and developmental priorities within the Area of Responsibility. Deliberations centred on preparedness during contingencies, enhancing grassroots coordination and preventing the spread of misinformation.

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“Our team personally visited his home to present these honours to his wife, Garima Saikia Garg, who graciously received them on his behalf ahead of Filmfare Awards Assamese 2026. Though he is no longer with us, his music, passion, and legacy remain eternal,” the statement added.



Expedite CBI probe into attack on MLA Valte: Zomi Council

Imphal, Feb 27: The Zomi Council, an apex tribal body based in Churachandpur district has urged the Centre to expedite the ongoing CBI investigation into the alleged attack on BJP MLA Vungzagin Valte, who passed away at a hospital in Gurugram on February 21 following a prolonged illness. In a memorandum addressed to Union Home Minister Amit Shah and submitted through the district administration, the Zomi Council expressed strong dissatisfaction over what it described as the Centre’s failure to ensure justice for Valte, the legislator from the Thanlon Assembly constituency. Valte was allegedly assaulted by a mob at Nagamapal in Imphal in May 2023 during the initial outbreak of ethnic violence in the state. The council said the

prolonged delay in the probe has caused deep anguish among the people and raised serious concerns over accountability. Referring to Article 355 of the Constitution, the Zomi Council said the Centre is constitutionally bound to protect states against internal disturbances and ensure governance in accordance with constitutional provisions.

It demanded a time-bound and impartial probe by the Central Bureau of Investigation to bring all those involved in the attack to justice. The council also called upon the Centre to initiate a structured and time-bound dialogue to address the political aspirations of the Zo tribes. It sought concrete constitutional and administrative measures to ensure genuine political autonomy and long-term security for the community.

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HC issues notice to CM Himanta Biswa Sarma over ‘hate speeches’

Guwahati, Feb 27: The Gauhati High Court on Thursday issued a notice to Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma in response to multiple petitions seeking action against him for alleged hate speeches targeting the Muslim community. A Division Bench, comprising Chief Justice Ashutosh Kumar and Justice Arun Dev Choudhury, heard arguments and directed notices to be served to Sarma as well as the Central and Assam governments. The next hearing is scheduled for April. Senior Advocate CU Singh, representing some petitioners, alleged that Sarma has engaged in targeted statements against Miya Muslims in Assam. Singh pointed to remarks where Sarma reportedly suggested restricting voting rights for this group and referenced plans to manipulate voter lists.

The court observed that the statements cited by petitioners appeared to show a potential “fissiparous tendency”, though the bench said it would examine all submissions before drawing conclusions. The peti-



tions stemmed from multiple incidents, including a January 27 speech in which Sarma allegedly claimed that several lakh Miya voters would be removed from electoral rolls. On February 7, a video circulated by the BJP’s Assam unit reportedly depicted Sarma aiming at animated images representing Muslim men, accompanied by phrases such as “Point blank shot” and “No Mercy.” The Congress party, Assamese scholar Hiren Gohain, the Communist Party of India

(Marxist), and others filed petitions in the High Court after the Supreme Court directed them to approach the state court first. Senior Advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi argued that Sarma’s repeated statements reflected a habitual pattern of incitement and were inconsistent with his duties as the head of the state. He highlighted that even after the controversial video was removed, it had already reached over a million viewers.

Singhvi and Singh also referred to statements allegedly made by Sarma linking disasters or electoral outcomes to members of the Muslim community, arguing these comments could fuel unrest. Senior Advocate Meenakshi Arora also represented the petitioners, stressing that the Chief Minister’s statements appeared to follow a consistent pattern against a specific community. Arora pointed out instances where Sarma reportedly discouraged students from attending institutions founded by people from minority communities, linking such choices to floods or other issues in the state. The petitioners argued that such remarks violate constitutional principles, including the secular mandate and equality provisions enshrined in the preamble, and could threaten law and order.

The High Court has now formally issued notices to Sarma and the concerned government authorities, and the matter will be considered further in the coming months.

Nagaland forest department calls for intensive conservation models at FBMP workshop

Guwahati, Feb 27: The Nagaland Forest Department stressed the need for focused and intensive conservation of forests at the annual review-cum-planning workshop of the Forest and Biodiversity Management in the Himalaya (Nagaland) Project (FBMP) at the forest office complex in Kohima on Thursday.

The two-day workshop, co-financed by the Federal Republic of Germany through KfW, is aimed at reviewing progress and charting the roadmap for the next phase of implementation. FBMP is part of the Government of Germany’s financial cooperation with India, signed in 2016, focusing on the sustainable and effective management of forests and biodiversity in Nagaland. Addressing the inaugural programme of the workshop, Vedpal Singh, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests & Head of Forest Force, Nagaland, emphasised the need to institutionalise all interventions

under the project to ensure sustainability beyond individuals. He stressed that review meetings must result in measurable and implementable decisions. He also cautioned against spreading resources too thinly and suggested intensive interventions in selected locations to create demonstrative and replicable models. He advocated intensive engagement with communities, prioritisation of ecologically sensitive areas, and focused interventions rather than thin dispersal of resources. Highlighting the importance of visible and relatable issues, Singh called for strengthening components such as human-wildlife conflict mitigation to enhance public engagement and institutional support. Underlining that conservation must become a people’s movement, he called for the involvement of schools, churches, and community institutions in spreading awareness and protecting biodiversity.

for future generations. Y. Kikhetto Sema, Principal Secretary, Environment, Forest and Climate Change and Chairman, Nagaland State Biodiversity Board, in his address, stated that the project presents a significant opportunity for the state. He observed that Nagaland, though financially constrained, is rich in biodiversity and must leverage such grant-based projects effectively. Sema pointed out that with most forest lands under community ownership, grassroots awareness and participation are essential for meaningful conservation outcomes. He expressed concern over the decline in forest cover in recent years and underscored the need to address root causes, including unsustainable practices. He advocated intensive engagement with communities, prioritisation of ecologically sensitive areas, and focused interventions rather than thin dispersal of resources.

Through policy initiatives, the government is attempting to lower unemployment: Sangma

Guwahati, Feb 27: Sustained interventions and schemes are “already yielding results”, Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad Sangma said in the assembly on Thursday, even as he rejected the opposition claims that government employment programmes had failed.

Replying to a query raised by opposition Trinamool Congress (TMC) legislator, Dr. Mizanur Kazi during the Question Hour in the assembly, Sangma said that the government has been proactively working to reduce unemployment through policy decisions and other interventions such as skilling, entrepreneurship support, including leveraging flow of investments in the state. However, Kazi said that despite these interventions of the government, the unemployment rate is increasing in the state, while asking the Chief Minister if it was the failure of the policy initiatives of the government to curb the unemployment problem. The Chief Minister, however, countered Kazi, and said, “To jump to a conclusion that policy is a failure would not be correct. If you look at surveys, they differ — 6.0 in 2022-23 and 6.2 in 2023-24 in the periodic labour force survey, and 3.1 in CMIE’s estimate. These are based on sample size and so the numbers vary.” Moreover, Sangma also informed the assembly that 3.66 lakh jobs had been generated in recent years. “Maybe we have not yet fully fulfilled the goal, but it is a process and we are on the right track,” he said. Noting that Meghalaya’s population is very much a young population compared to the other states



in the country, the Chief Minister said, “We have 50 per cent of our population which is below the age of 20. So, these kinds of multiple challenges are there. I am not giving an excuse, but realising these challenges, we have realised the need to create more job avenues through different missions.” Meanwhile, Sangma informed that the government had sanctioned Rs 140 crore to 22,500 producer groups, benefiting 2.1 lakh people under the FOCUS scheme, while FOCUS+ had reached another 1.5 lakh

beneficiaries. “Farmers have benefited. A lot of them have given testimonies that because of the money they got, their production has improved. We will ensure more impact in the future,” he added. Sangma said the CM-Elevate, a flagship umbrella programme covering entrepreneurship, tourism, sports, wellness and other sectors. “Within 20 days, we received 22,000 applications — so many that we had to close the portal temporarily. People can apply through the Meghalaya One portal,” he said.

Cop held as recruiter of militant group

Guwahati, Feb 27: A constable driver of Manipur police department was arrested on the charge of acting as cadre recruiter of an armed group.

Manipur police, in its daily law and order update, said that security forces arrested the constable driver for alleged involvement in recruitment of cadres for a banned militant outfit. Kongkham Sanajaoba Singh alias Ibomcha (43) of Utlou Chanura in Bishnupur district, was arrested from his locality on Tuesday, it said. “Despite serving in the Manipur police department, the arrestee was involved in recruitment of cadres for KCP (MFL) as an active cadre of the banned organization,” the police said. The arrest came amid the ongoing operations in the fringe and vulnerable areas across districts and crackdown on extortion activities. At least three cadres and extortionists belonging to different banned armed groups were arrested in the ongoing operations, the police said. It said that the security forces arrested an active cadre of RPF/PLA identified as Chingakham Rocky Singh alias Sanathoi alias Ipumba (38) of Andro Torongthel from Ingourok Makha Leikai area under Nongpok Sekmai police station of Thoubal district



on Wednesday. A mobile phone along with a SIM card was seized from him, the police added. Two PREPAK active cadres who the police termed them as extortionists were also arrested in another operation in Imphal West district on the same day. They were identified as Nahakpam Sibananda Singh alias Amuthoi (32) and Deviya Mongjam (29). The police alleged Deviya Mongjam to be the associate of the former who assisted him in the transaction of the extortion money. She was arrested from her residence at Kwakeithel Nganapithong.

Vantage Circle showcases Assamese Gamusa at global



Guwahati, Feb 27: Assam-based employee recognition platform Vantage Circle showcased the state’s cultural heritage at the Brandon Hall Group Excellence Conference held in the United States by presenting traditional Assamese Gamusa and cultural souvenirs to global award winners. The annual Excellence Conference is considered one of the leading global gatherings of senior HR leaders, learning professionals and technology innovators. At this year’s event, Vantage Circle received multiple awards along with its client partners, including Tata Technologies, Tata Chemicals, Amdocs, IBS Software, Wipro, ACG, Visteon and Apollo Tyres Ltd. As part of a cultural exchange initiative, the company presented the traditional Assamese Gamusa along with curated souvenirs to fellow

award recipients. The gesture was aimed at introducing international participants to Assam’s cultural identity and traditions. The Gamusa, a symbol of respect and hospitality in Assam, was shared as a token of appreciation and goodwill. Anjan Pathak, co-founder and CTO of Vantage Circle, said the recognition was a proud moment for the company as it represented Assam on a global platform. He said the Gamusa reflects values such as respect, humility and warmth, and the initiative was intended to give global leaders a glimpse of Assam’s heritage.

The company provides tools for employee recognition, rewards and wellness programmes, and supports organisations across over 100 countries with multilingual and localised solutions.

Tripura cabinet approves Nari Adalat pilot scheme in 10 gram panchayats

Guwahati, Feb 27: The Tripura state council of ministers has approved the implementation of the Centre’s “Nari Adalat” scheme on a pilot basis in 10 gram panchayats of the state and cleared a series of recruitment and welfare proposals, cabinet spokesperson and Transport and Tourism Minister Sushanta Chowdhury said on Thursday. Briefing reporters about the decisions taken at the cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Manik Saha on Wednesday, Chowdhury said the Nari Adalat scheme, launched by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, would be implemented in selected panchayats across eight districts. “A new scheme called Nari Adalat will be launched in the state as a pilot project in 10 panchayats as per the direction of the Centre,” he said. The selected panchayats include Fulbari in North Tripura, Srirampur in Unakoti, West Sonatala in Khowai, Lembucherra in West Tripura, Khedabari in Sepahijala, Tepania in Gomati, Vivekananda Palli in South Tripura, and Singanala, Halahali, and North Halahali in Dhalai district. “A panchayat-level committee with no more than nine members will be constituted. Socially recognized persons will be inducted, and they will have powers to adjudicate matters related to atrocities against women and suggest police action where necessary,” the minister said. “The cabinet further cleared the recruitment of 32 junior drivers in the Health and Family Welfare Department on a fixed pay basis through direct recruitment to be conducted by the Transport Department. Apart from that, a total of 10 revenue inspectors and six assistant survey officers will also be recruited through the Tripura Public Service Commission. All the recruitments will be done in compliance with the existing reservation rosters,” he added.

He added that the bodies would function as arbitration forums at the panchayat level. “The scheme has been introduced to provide a platform for wom-



en who feel hesitant to approach police or other law enforcement agencies,” Saha said. The cabinet also approved guidelines for providing coaching to graduates domiciled in Tripura for national-level competitive examinations conducted by UPSC, SSC, RRB, and IBPS. “Coaching centres will be established at Bir Chandra State Central Library in Agartala, Netaji Subhash Mahavidyalaya in Udaipur, and Government Degree College in Ambassa, with an intake

of 100 aspirants in each centre. Selection will be on merit through a screening test conducted by the Higher Education Department,” he explained, stating that budgetary allocations had been made for these centres in the last budget. According to the minister, the cabinet also approved a proposal to increase daily stipends for SC hostel boarders from Rs 80 to Rs 100. This decision will benefit as many as 712 students across 33 boys’ hostels, 20 girls’ hostels.

Guwahati based BitChem wins ‘Sustainable Material Innovation of the Year’ at Build India Infra Awards 2026

Guwahati, Feb 27: BitChem Asphalt Technologies Limited, Guwahati-based venture and a leading company in green and sustainable road construction technologies, has been awarded the prestigious “Sustainable Material Innovation of the Year” at the Build India Infra Awards 2026 for its breakthrough pollution-free and zero-emission road binder – Green Bitumen.

The award recognises BitChem’s pioneering contribution towards enabling pollution-free, energy-efficient construction practices and creating durable roads in India through its successful field deployment in 51 kms project of Road Construction Department, Government of Bihar. Bitchem is a Technology Development Board, Dept of Science & Tech-

nology, Govt of India funded venture and we are thankful to Secretary, TDB Shri Rajesh Pathak for his support to Bitchem.

The award was presented by the Chief Guest for the event – Shri Nitin Gadkari, Hon’ble Union Minister for Road Transport & Highways, Government of India in the presence of Shri Sarbananda Sonowal, Union Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways, Govt of India.

Green Bitumen is an advanced tailor made cold-mix binder technology developed to eliminate the need for conventional hot-mix asphalt operations. The technology significantly reduces fuel consumption, avoids greenhouse gas emissions and creates zero on-site air pollution, while enabling durable and high-performance road assets.

Commenting on the achievement, Mr SK Jain, Chairman BitChem said, “This award is a strong validation of our long-term commitment to build Net Zero and Circular Economy based scalable road construction solutions for India.

Green Bitumen demonstrates that sustainable materials can deliver both environmental benefits and strong field performance. An innovation from North East India, Bitchem contributes to a progressive and Viksit Bharat in line of the Vision of our Hon’ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji .”

BitChem also acknowledges its R&D partner – Dr UC Sahoo, Faculty, Indian Institute of Technology Bhubaneswar, and his team for their invaluable research and technical



collaboration in the development and validation of the Green Bitumen technology.

With growing acceptance by government agencies and successful on-

ground implementation, BitChem’s Green Bitumen is enabling decision makers to adopt sustainable technologies at a scale for Building India – Building Bharat.

Shija Hospitals holds free health camp for AMWJU members

Imphal, Feb 27: A one-day free comprehensive mega health camp was jointly organised by Shija Eye Care Foundation, Shija Hospitals & Research Institute Pvt. Ltd., NPCB & VI, Manipur Chapter, and the All Manipur Working Journalists’ Union on Thursday at Manipur Press Club. The initiative aimed to promote preventive healthcare and facilitate early detection of common medical conditions among members of the media fraternity and their families. Approximately 55 members of the All Manipur Working Journalists’ Union, along with their family members, attended the camp and availed of complimentary consultations and health assessments. Ophthalmic evaluations were conducted by Dr. Dinakumar Yambem and Dr. Chakpram Priyalakshmi, Consultant Ophthalmologists, Shija Eye Care Foundation.

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NF railway GM inspects Mariani-Simaluguri-New Tinsukia section

Guwahati, Feb 27: Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) general manager Chetan Kumar Shrivastava conducted an extensive Annual Safety Inspection of the Tinsukia (TSK) Division, covering the Mariani-Simaluguri-New Tinsukia section spanning 152 kilometres.

The inspection was carried out as part of NFR’s continuous commitment towards strengthening operational safety, infrastructure reliability and up-gradation of passenger amenities across its network.

The NFR general manager commenced the inspection from Mariani where he inspected the Crew Lobby and Running Room to review crew booking procedures, resting facilities and compliance with safety protocols. He also reviewed works under the Automatic Block Signalling System and inspected the newly installed Large Format Display system aimed at improving real-time monitoring and operational control.

A newly installed solar power plant at the station was inaugurated, reinforcing NFR’s commitment to sus-



tainable and green energy initiatives.

At Nakachari, Shrivastava undertook a detailed inspection of the signalling system, including the Relay Room and reviewed the functioning of the Electronic Intrusion Detection System and other associated safety systems. He also inspected Level Crossing Gate No. 102 (Engineering), a non-interlocked gate and emphasised strict adherence to safety protocols at level crossings.

During the halt at Simaluguri, the General Manager conducted a speed trial in the Mariani- Simaluguri section in connection with the proposed enhancement of sectional speed from 100 kmph to 110 kmph, marking a sig-

nificant step towards improving line capacity and reducing transit time.

He also inspected Level Crossing Gate No. ST-115 (Traffic), Point Nos. 31 and 31A at the Mariani end, the Power House, ABSS works and the Railway Health Unit.

The NFR general manager also reviewed the condition of the railway colony and interacted with staff regarding civic amenities.

On the occasion, he inaugurated a newly developed railway playground and newly constructed staff quarters for employee welfare and community infrastructure.

Further inspections included Minor Bridge No. 524 and interaction with the track maintainer of Gang No. 18-DR to assess field level safety practices and track maintenance standards.

At Naharkatiya, the Traction Sub-Station (TSS) was inspected to review the reliability of traction power supply. Important Bridge No. 561 and Switch Expansion Joint were also examined to ensure structural integrity and track safety.

Mizoram Firmly Reiterates 1875 Boundary Stand With Assam, Maintaining Position Amid Ongoing Bilateral Talks

Aizawl, Feb 27: The Mizoram government on February 27 reaffirmed its long-standing position on the interstate boundary dispute with Assam, maintaining that the boundary notified in 1875 remains the only acceptable demarcation between the two neighbouring states. Home Minister K Sapdanga informed the Mizoram Assembly that the state’s stance, supported by a consensus of all political parties and major non-governmental organisations, has remained unchanged since 1958–59, when the state was a district council under Assam. He said Mizoram continues to adhere to the Inner Line of the Lushai Hills district as described in the 1933 notification, asserting that this reflects the historical boundary of the region. Sapdanga said Mizoram’s position has been consistently conveyed through



a series of high-level diplomatic engagements aimed at resolving the decades-old border dispute. He noted that while the views of Mizoram and Assam differ, the Mizoram government has re-

peatedly approached the Centre to seek an amicable solution. He added that Sapdanga had written to his Assam counterpart, clarifying that Mizoram does not accept the resolution passed

by Assam Cabinet ministers on July 8, 2019, as it seeks to alter the status quo. The Home Minister said the Centre is well aware of the prolonged nature of the dispute and the steps taken

by both sides towards a resolution, adding that Mizoram did not issue a separate notice as the matter is already under the Centre’s consideration. According to him, both states have held several rounds of dialogue to resolve the issue peacefully. He further stated that a high-level meeting between representatives of Mizoram and Assam was convened in Aizawl in December 2023, following the swearing-in of a new government in Mizoram, and another meeting was held in Guwahati on April 25 this year to continue technical and administrative negotiations. In an effort to foster goodwill and maintain peaceful relations along the border, both states jointly observed a border cultural festival at Phuldubri in Assam’s Cachar district on November 25 last year, Sapdanga said.

NDA seat sharing arrangement to be finalised by March 10: Himanta

Guwahati, Feb 27: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday said the seat-sharing agreement within the ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA) for the upcoming Assembly elections would be finalised by March 10. The Chief Minister had earlier stated that the seat-sharing arrangement with its allies was a “done deal” and that there was no issue in stitching a pre-poll alliance.

Addressing the media in Guwahati, Sarma said discussions with two alliance partners are still ongoing and are expected to conclude soon.

“Talks with the BPF will be complete within a day or two while discussions with Asom Gana Parishad would be completed by March 9-10. So, we hope everything will be finalised by then and we will be able to announce the alliance by March 10,” the Chief Minister said.

Among the NDA constituents in the state, the BJP, Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), United People’s Party Liberal (UPPL) and Bodoland People’s Front (BPF) have members in the assembly.

Rabha Hasong Joutha Sangram Samiti (RHJSS) and Janashakti Party (JP) are also part of the NDA, but they do not have any MLAs.

The elections for the 126-member assembly are expected to take place in March-April. This will be the first election after the delimitation exercise, done in 2023.

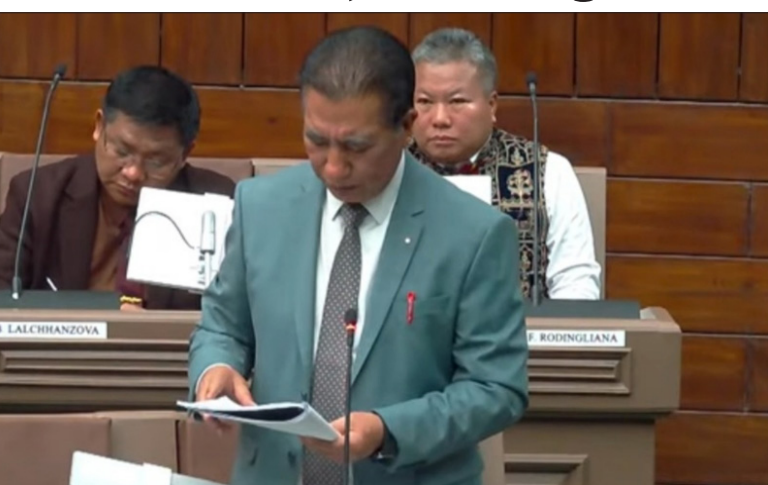
Post delimitation, many seats and their geographical boundaries have been changed, while some non-reserved seats were reserved and vice versa. This has led to complications within the ruling and opposition coalitions.

At present, the BJP has 64 members in the assembly, while AGP has nine, UPPL has seven, and the BPF has three.

Mizoram CM Lalduhoma Presents 17,469 Crore State Budget, Announces No New Taxes, Ensuring Relief for Citizens

Aizawl, Feb 27 : Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma on Thursday presented a Rs 17,469.91 crore budget for the 2026–27 financial year, centering on social infrastructure, agricultural connectivity, and a robust anti-drug campaign.

This is the third budget Lalduhoma, who also holds the Finance portfolio, has presented in the Assembly since the Zoram People’s Movement (ZPM) assumed power in December 2023. He also presented supplementary demands for grants totaling Rs 3,724.25 crore for the current 2025–26 fiscal year. Presenting the state’s budget, Lalduhoma emphasised fiscal discipline and grassroots empowerment. The budget introduces no new taxes while significantly increasing investment in the state’s infrastructure, agriculture, healthcare, and anti-narcotics sectors. The Chief Minister said that his government gave priority to the welfare of local farmers and reallocated Rs 350 crore for the implementation of the state flagship “Bana Kaih” (Hand-



holding) Scheme, out of which Rs 150 crore has been specifically earmarked to procure local crops, aiming to bolster farmer livelihoods and promote inclusive development. Addressing the state’s struggle with substance abuse, Lalduhoma announced a new budget head titled “Anti-Narcotics Activities” under the

Excise Department. The initiative begins with an initial allocation of Rs 40 lakh. The government is committed to combating this menace, and the funds will fuel enforcement, awareness campaigns, and coordinated action.” The state previously launched “Operation Jericho” in September 2025—a joint crackdown involving

the police, the Excise Department, and the Young Mizo Association (YMA). Complementing these efforts, the budget allocates Rs 70 lakh to support rehabilitation centers under the Social Welfare Department.

The state’s total revenue receipts are projected at Rs 17,469.91 crore, including Rs 8,608.08 crore from Central tax devolution. With total expenditure estimated at Rs 17,076.92 crore, the budget shows a surplus of Rs 392.99 crore, which will be used to reduce Public Account liabilities. Capital expenditure is earmarked at Rs 2,982.44 crore, a 12.18% increase over the current year. This accounts for 17.46% of the total 2026–27 expenditure. Revenue expenditure is projected at Rs 14,094.47 crore, a 13.18% hike over the current fiscal, accounting for 82.53% of the upcoming budget. The rise in revenue expenditure is due to an increase in administrative expenses, salary increments, and pensionary charges, according to the Chief Minister.

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Disaster Resilience and Local Governance

Natural disasters test administrative preparedness and institutional coordination. Floods, cyclones, earthquakes, and heatwaves increasingly demand decentralised resilience strategies. Local governments often serve as first responders. Strengthening their capacity enhances immediate relief and long-term recovery. Resource allocation should prioritise decentralised planning. Community engagement improves disaster response efficiency. Awareness campaigns and mock drills enhance preparedness. Infrastructure resilience, including climate-resistant housing and early warning systems, reduces vulnerability. Investment in resilient design prevents recurring damage. Transparent relief distribution ensures equitable recovery. Technology assists in beneficiary identification and monitoring. Inter-agency coordination minimises duplication of efforts. Clear communication channels prevent misinformation during crises. Disaster resilience extends beyond emergency response. Rehabilitation strategies must integrate livelihood restoration and mental health support. Effective local governance transforms vulnerability into preparedness. Institutional resilience safeguards communities against recurring threats. Sustainable disaster management reflects governance foresight and societal solidarity.

This Ramadan, know this: I am me, a Muslim and a Briton. I am not a headline, a threat or a stereotype

As Ramadan begins, Muslims across Britain prepare for a month of fasting, reflection and charity. For most of us, it is a time of spiritual discipline and generosity. For too many of us, it is also a time when the drumbeat of anti-Muslim hatred grows louder. I have never liked the word “Islamophobia”. It sounds abstract, almost clinical. What we are dealing with is not a vague fear. It is hostility. Suspicion. Discrimination.

Abuse. So, I call it what it is, anti-Muslim hatred. Not a day passes without some overt expression of it in our national life. A crime committed by one Muslim becomes an indictment of all Muslims. A cultural practice is wrenched from context and weaponised to provoke anxiety. A theological concept is distorted to imply threat.

And on the streets, and increasingly online, it can turn into violence, intimidation or exclusion directed at anyone who “looks” Muslim. I have lived this contradiction personally. No one calls me the Mus-

lim chancellor of the University of Manchester. No one describes me as the Muslim chair of the Church of England’s safeguarding panel. When I am chair of The Lowry, my faith is rarely considered relevant. But when I was chief prosecutor for north-west England, suddenly I became the “Muslim prosecutor”.

When I took on grooming gangs and secured justice where others had failed, I was the “Muslim” decision-maker. I remember being introduced to the great and the good in New York by Niall Ferguson as “the Muslim prosecutor that prosecutes Muslims”. When far-right groups targeted me, my professional record did not matter. My religion did. Why is my faith incidental when I succeed in civic leadership, but central when I exercise authority? Why is it invisible when Muslims contribute, yet glaring when Muslims are accused? Britain’s Muslims contribute daily to our economy, our public services, our arts, our communities.

We are doctors, teachers, entrepreneurs, soldiers,

civil servants and care workers. Yet there remains a reflex, a readiness to see us first and foremost as “other”. Let me be candid. Not every challenge facing Muslim communities is invented. Extremism exists.

There are issues around integration in some areas. There is over-representation in prisons. Muslim communities are extraordinarily diverse: in London alone they trace their heritage to more than 60 countries, and that diversity brings complexity. Confronting problems honestly is not a gift to bigots. It is a responsibility to ourselves. Bigots do not require evidence to hate; they require only a target. Silence does not protect us. It merely postpones the reckoning. Still, what frustrates me is the absurdity of collective blame. Some Muslims dislike dogs.

I have had one for nine years and she is a joy in my life. When an individual Muslim demands that others not eat in front of him while he is fasting, he speaks for himself, not for 3.9 million British Muslims. When someone extols

halal meat as a defining issue, they do not speak for a vegetarian like me. And when critics attack halal practices as uniquely cruel, they conveniently ignore that the vast majority of halal meat in Britain is pre-stunned, just like non-halal meat.

Then there are the moral panics: first-cousin marriage, honour-based abuse, female genital mutilation (FGM). I have worked on these issues for decades. I organised the first national conference on honour-based abuse 22 years ago and helped lead the UK’s response. These abuses are not rooted in Islam. They are rooted in misogyny and patriarchal cultures that have no place in any society. I wrote about the dangers of first-cousin marriage from a health perspective years ago and about FGM nearly 20 years ago – while many of those supposedly angry about it now said nothing. Progress has been made, prevalence has reduced, but nuance rarely makes headlines. And then there are the so-called “Muslim grooming gangs”.

I led prosecutions that brought hundreds of offenders to justice. I have sat with victims. I have examined the evidence. I never once saw a religious motivation. What I saw were men exploiting vulnerable girls, and institutions that failed to listen.

I will give evidence to the national inquiry and say more then. But let us be clear: evil actions do not become theological simply because the perpetrator has a Muslim name. Our laws, too, offer uneven reassurance. Because Muslims are not a race in legal terms, victims of anti-Muslim hatred must rely on religious hate crime legislation, which sets a higher threshold for prosecution.

I remember sitting across from a lawyer for the British National party who calmly told me they knew exactly where the legal line was, and pushed up to it every time. Today, social media has blurred even that line. Anonymity, bots and stretched policing allow hatred to multiply at an industrial scale. The noise radicalises the vulnerable far-right extremist. At the

same time, it fosters grievance among some young Muslims. Yet I remain stubbornly hopeful. Britain’s greatest strength is not uniformity. It is our imperfect but remarkable tolerance. Our insistence, at our best, that citizenship is not conditional on conformity. My faith does not define me. It refines me. It calls me to justice, to service, to compassion. It does not make me infallible, nor does it make me suspect. And let me say this plainly: anyone who claims to speak for “the Muslims” does not speak for me.

We are too diverse, too opinionated, too embedded in every corner of British life to be reduced to a single voice or caricature. This Ramadan, millions of us will fast quietly from dawn to dusk. We will feed our neighbours. We will give to charity – more than any other group. We will pray for a country we love. The question is not what it is to be a Muslim today. The real question is whether Britain is prepared to see us as we truly are, not a headline, not a threat, not a stereotype, but fellow citizens.

India-US defence deal: Washington must realise benefits of Delhi’s strategic autonomy

Is the tide turning with the Grand Old Party itself voting against President Donald Trump’s tariff policy? Indian Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal and US President Trump himself are both suggesting that a framework trade agreement may be agreed upon between India and the US very soon. It would also probably reduce the punitive tariffs to no more than 15 per cent overall. But, with the mercurial Trump administration, one never knows till the signing and the drying of the ink. While the 50 per cent trade tariffs on India persist in the meantime, one of the highest in the world, peppered with constant and diplomatically offensive pressure, a freshly minted agreement on defence cooperation offers unexpected hope.

Is this a first step to the classic Trump rollback or just the sniff of a parcel of deals? The framework agreement signed at the Defence Ministers Meeting in Kuala Lumpur by Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and US Secretary for War Pete Hegseth was accompanied by many feel-good statements on the importance of the US-India defence relationship, the rule-based order, international maritime security, the Asia-Pa-

cific and so on. But this was at the level of the defence ministers and offers a platform for a U-turn. Because the Indo-Pacific strategy to contain China is no longer a Trump administration priority. Neither is Quad, from all indications. It does cover real-time intelligence sharing, but let us remember America refused GPS coordinates during the Kargil War.

The formation of a joint task force for the Indo-Pacific, joint naval patrolling, technology transfer, and joint manufacturing of advanced military systems in India are all in the document. It says America will manufacture drones and the F414 fighter engines in India with partial, if not full, technology transfer. Stryker armoured vehicles will begin to be produced in India in 2026. This one has been in the air for years, and meanwhile India has made a number of good armoured vehicles of its own. The plan is to manufacture the 31 Predator drones on order in India by 2027. America will work with India on hypersonic missile technology by 2027. It will start developing KN engines in India, and by 2035 America will transfer complete 5th-generation fighter technology. Can

all this be believed? Why did America decide to draw up such an agreement for the first time ever? Is India meant to cross over into the US camp in delight?

As far as India’s defence co-operation with the US towards its Aatmanirbhar programme and technology transfer needs goes, the possibilities have always been vague. This is particularly in contrast with its progress made with France, Israel, and Russia. However, America is not enamoured with India’s policies of strategic autonomy in order to suit its own national needs. It prefers docile allies who do as they are told. So this is a persistent hindrance to the Indo-American relationship, unlike its progress with an apparently compliant Pakistan. Now the Americans are saying Pakistan is only useful for short-term goals. But how can one defence agreement turn a persistent, more or less anti-India policy on its ear? Americans have been good at saying one thing and doing another, rather like the Chinese. Written agreements mean little to both. America is also busy finding ways to cooperate with China, as the Trump-Xi meeting in South Korea demonstrates, af-

ter its attempts to bully it into submission failed. With India, the same thing applies in the minor register; we too won’t be bullied, but India does not enjoy the points of leverage that China does. So America tends to renege on commitments with impunity and drag its feet generally. It does not want to lose India altogether from its sphere of influence and so keeps agreements like this one going. If it means business, it could start with delivering the F404 engines quickly for a start. Purchases of American defence equipment by India, often necessary for their technology and quality, have to bear with interminable delays and sometimes renegotiations of cost.

The American system has many barriers and checks that take time for high-technology equipment, not helped by America not being in a hurry to execute them on agreed timelines. America does not part with its codes for defence equipment and has been known to use them to cripple aircraft and other weapons at critical times. Nevertheless, we do have several new defence deals on the anvil and ongoing, in addition to the \$25 billion in American military equipment

purchases made by India since 2007. Right now there is a \$3.8 billion MQ-9B armed Predator drone on order for 31 of them, being executed for completion by 2029-30. They say these will now be made in India.

The last three of six Apache helicopter gunships are being flown over in a transport aircraft for the Indian Army after a long delay. The order for 99 GE F404-IN20 engines for the Tejas MK1A, executed in 2021 for \$716 million, is proceeding very slowly after a two-year stoppage in supply. Only four engines of the 99 ordered have been delivered so far. Another follow-on order for 113 engines worth \$1 billion is being negotiated and is almost ready to be signed. Yet another order for hundreds of the GE F414 engine intended for the Tejas MK2, along with an 80 per cent technology transfer and manufacture in India, is also being negotiated. Is this defence agreement saying it is through? At what price? To be built in India starting when? This snail’s pace in these orders and negotiations suggests a strategic dimension in which America is apparently not keen on seeing India make its own fighter aircraft any time soon.

But perhaps it also wants to lure us away from the competition. India is working on alternatives of its own manufacture for unmanned aerial vehicles, drones and fighters in collaboration with Safran of France, even as its fit-forbattle fighter squadrons are much below comfort levels. India is also advancing a cooperation with Brazil for its Embraer C-390 Millennium transport aircraft in a possible barter deal for an equivalent value of Tejas fighter aircraft and Prachand helicopters. A collaboration with Airbus is already ongoing for H125 helicopters and C295 military transport aircraft in partnership with the private sector Tata Group. Russia is very eager to offer its latest Su-57E stealth fighter aircraft with full technology transfer and production in India in addition to the Sukhoi 30s made under licence in India with the Su-30MK1 largely customised to Indian needs. Very recently India has signed an agreement with Russia to jointly produce medium-sized commercial aircraft, the SJ-100, with full technology transfer in India. The message to America is that India is clearly not restricted by American sanctions imposed on Russia. This again

in the context of massive delays in supplying Boeing aircraft to the Indian aviation industry as well as quality concerns highlighted by the tragic Dreamliner crash in Gujarat. India is already very successful with its Brahmos missiles jointly developed with Russia. It extensively uses the Russian S-400 air shield, with more sets on order. Other cooperation with the UK, Russia, Germany and France in the naval engines, propulsion units, nuclear engines, submarines and specialised naval ships is a precursor to more in commercial shipbuilding as a new thrust area. While American Cummins engines are used in our light Zorowar tanks, India is trying to develop its own as well. So, it is clear that America is not India’s only mainstay, even as the Indian Aatmanirbhar defence industry is growing very fast and is reflected in more and more export orders as well. Perhaps America realises these are favourable results of India’s strategic autonomy and wants to ensure it stays in India’s procurement and technology demand game. In the overall scheme of things, however, and on the face of it, this 10-year defence framework agreement is most welcome.

Taking sides: On Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s visit to Israel

Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s 24-hour visit to Jerusalem was a significant bilateral outreach to Israel, but a missed opportunity on Palestine, with complex consequences for India’s ties with West Asia. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had announced the visit in December and confirmed the dates on Sunday, indicating Israel’s keen interest in hosting Mr. Modi. From Mr. Modi’s landing, to every engagement up to his departure, Mr. Netanyahu personally escorted Mr.

Modi everywhere. After bilateral talks on Thursday, the two leaders agreed to upgrade ties to a “Special Strategic Partnership”, and signed a critical technologies partnership among more than 15 MoUs in AI, agriculture,

culture and education. They also agreed to facilitate the employment of 50,000 Indian workers in Israel over the next five years. The engagement, and Mr. Netanyahu’s deep praise for Mr. Modi and the India relationship was even more intense than during Mr. Modi’s 2017 visit. This possibly accrues from the timing of the visit, as Israel faces growing isolation over high casualties in Gaza and Mr. Netanyahu’s West Bank settlement plans. In the past week, Israel’s West Bank proposals have been condemned by dozens of countries, which includes Germany, France, and the U.K. that have been measured so far. Mr. Netanyahu heads into an election later this year, which will be seen as a referendum on his record, in terms of alleged corruption

in his government as well as for accountability for security lapses in 2023 and the civilian toll of Israel’s response. Mr. Modi’s visit would bolster him politically. In his speech at the Knesset, Mr. Modi referred only obliquely to Palestinian sovereignty, saying that the U.S.-led Gaza Peace Initiative, which commits to a two-state solution, “holds the promise of a just and durable peace... including by addressing the Palestine Issue”. The Prime Minister said that India shared the pain and grief of every life lost in the October 2023 terror attack by Hamas but made no mention of the high toll — more than 72,000 killed — in the strikes on Gaza by Israel since then. Mr. Modi’s expected clarification of India’s stance on the Israel-Palestine con-



flict, similar to his previous post-visit explanations, may

be exemplified by a subsequent visit to Palestine. His

journey occurs amid potential U.S. military actions against

Iran, presenting the risk of appearing to take sides during

a complex geopolitical situation. The implications of his visit will not only be evaluated through bilateral relations but also in terms of its broader influence on the West Asian region. His announcement regarding the progression of the India-Israel-UAE and the I2U2 initiatives, alongside the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), suggests that India perceives regional collaboration as feasible, despite existing tensions. Conversely, a strong commitment to Israel may jeopardize India’s relations with other influential regional players, who anticipate a continuation of India’s traditionally balanced approach anchored in principles of peace, morality, and compassion regarding the Israel-Palestine conflict.

Tata Capital, IRFC, and Reliance Industries Ten stocks to keep an eye on Technologie

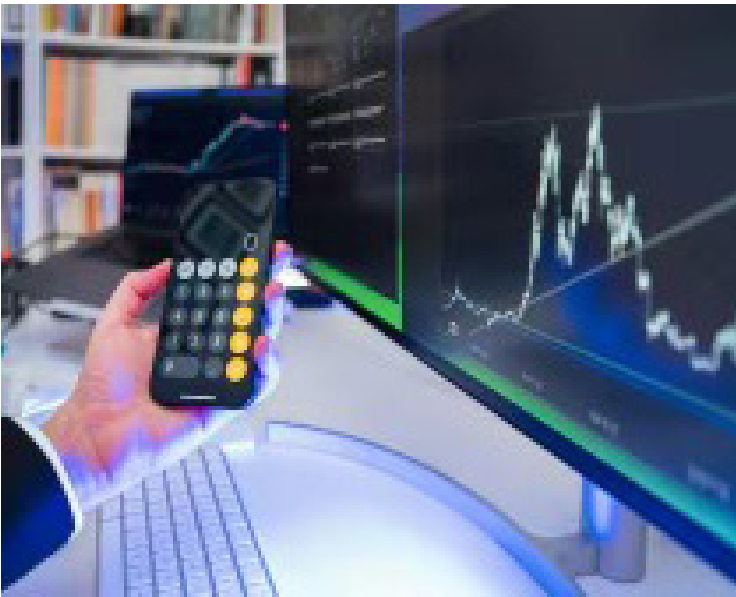
New Delhi: Several companies are likely to remain in focus today after announcing key updates such as stake sale decisions, dividend payouts, fund-raising plans, fresh business orders and management changes. These developments could lead to stock-specific movement during the session. Here's a quick look at the key stocks that may see action today. The dividend will be paid to shareholders whose names are recorded as of March 6, 2026. The decision was approved by the company's board in line with listing rules. This payout will go directly to eligible investors.Markets recap

Indian benchmark indices closed slightly in the green on Wednesday (February 25). The Sensex ended 50 points higher at 82,276, while the Nifty added 58 points to finish at 25,483. The stake sale was done through an Offer for Sale, which allows promoters to sell shares through the stock exchange. The government had the option to sell an additional 2% stake under a greenshoe option. However, it has chosen not to use this option. As a result, the total divestment will remain limited to 2%.Sanofi India

Sanofi India has recommended a final dividend of Rs 48 per share

for the financial year ended December 31, 2025. Each share has a face value of Rs 10. Lupin has informed stock exchanges that the Goods and Services Tax Department in Maharashtra has started an inspection at its office. The inspection relates to documents connected with Goods and Services Tax payments and input tax credit claims. The company said it is fully cooperating with the authorities.Lupin also clarified that this action does not affect its financial position or daily operations. Earlier, the company had already declared an interim dividend of Rs 75 per share in October 2025. If shareholders approve the final dividend at the annual general meeting, the total dividend for the year will be Rs 123 per share. The stake sale was done through an Offer for Sale, which allows promoters to sell shares through the stock exchange. The government had the option to sell an additional 2% stake under a greenshoe option. However, it has chosen not to use this option. As a result, the total divestment will remain limited to 2%.Sanofi India

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value of Rs 10.Earlier, the company had already declared an interim dividend of Rs 75 per share in October 2025. If shareholders approve the final dividend at the annual general meeting, the total dividend for the year will be Rs 123 per share. Stocks to watch today, February 26, 2026Reliance Industries

Reliance Industries, led by Mukesh AmbaniMukesh Ambani, has made a change in its group structure. Reliance Enterprise In-

telligence has now become a step-down subsidiary of the company after a fresh issue of shares. The company allotted 85.32 crore equity shares of Rs 10 each. Out of these, 59.66 crore shares worth Rs 596.6 crore were given to Reliance Intelligence, which is a wholly owned subsidiary of Reliance Industries. Another 25.66 crore shares worth Rs 256.6 crore were allotted to Facebook Overseas Inc, a subsidiary of Meta Platforms Inc.

Nifty cruises past 25,600 led by tech; Sensex jumps nearly

New Delhi: Markets at 11 am: It's a smart rally after the recent bout of correction. The Nifty is comfortably cruising past the 25,600 mark, while the Sensex is up close to 600 points in intra-day trade. The tech sector stocks are the star in trade today. The Nifty IT Index is up over 2% after the recent 17% drubbing. Several large-cap counters like HCLTech and Tech Mahindra see brisk buying, up over 3% apiece. Some steel stocks like Tata Steel and aviation plays like IndiGo are also up sharply in trade. Markets at open: Indian equity benchmarks kicked off the session on a firm note. The Sensex opened higher and surged 462.41 points, or 0.56%, to trade at 82,688.33 in early deals. The Nifty also advanced 122.35 points, or 0.48%, to hover around 25,547 at the opening bell. On February 25, US markets ended higher. The S&P 500 gained 0.77% to close at 6,890.07, while the Nasdaq Composite climbed 1.04% to settle at 22,863.68. The Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 370.44 points, or 0.76%, finishing the session at 49,174.50.US dollar

The US Dollar Index (DXY), which measures the dollar's value against a basket of six foreign currencies, was trading 0.05% up at 97.83 on Wednesday morning. The index evaluates the strength or weakness of the US dollar in comparison to major currencies. The basket contains currencies such as the British Pound, Euro, Swedish Krona, Japanese Yen, Swiss Franc, etc. The rupee appreciated 0.07% to close at 90.95 to the dollar on February 24. Crude oil prices moved higher in early trade on Wednesday.US West Texas Intermediate



(WTI) crude climbed around 0.87% to trade near \$66.20 per barrel. Meanwhile, Brent crude, the global benchmark, advanced about 0.83%, hovering close to \$71.26 per barrel. On February 24, foreign investors net sold Indian equities worth Rs 103 crore, according to provisional exchange data. Meanwhile, domestic institutional investors were net buyers, purchasing shares worth Rs 3,161 crore during the session.Gold rate today

In the international market, gold was trading at \$5,162 per ounce.Gold prices in India remain in sharp focus. On the MCX, April 2, 2026, gold futures were trading at Rs 1,59,916 per 10 grams in the latest update. Markets at pre-open:

GIFT Nifty indicates a firm start for Indian equity markets, trading near the 25,670 mark and up around 0.26% in early trade.As the session gets underway, investors will track global cues, including trends across Asian markets and overnight movements on Wall Street. Currency swings and commodity price trends are also expected to influence market sentiment.

UK enforces stringent “No Permission,

New Delhi: Global citizens will not be allowed to enter the UK unless they follow the new travel regulations. The UK has introduced new travel regulations that will affect thousands of global travellers as well as citizens from visa-exempt countries, including British dual nationals. From 25 February 2026, visitors without an Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) will not be able to board their transport and will not be permitted to travel to the UK, unless they are exempt. If you are making a new application for permission to come to the UK on or after 25 February 2026, you may not get a visa sticker if you make a successful application for a visit visa or some other visa type on or after 25 February 2026. Instead, you will need to access your eVisa through your UKVI account to see the permission you have been granted before you travel to the UK. From 25 February 2026, visitors to the UK who need a visa will get an eVisa only. Once you have received your visa decision, create your UKVI account, view your eVisa and check the details whether they are correct or not. Applying for an ETA is quick and simple through the official UK ETA app.An ETA currently costs £16 and permits multiple journeys to the UK for

stays of up to six months at a time over two years or until the holder's passport expires – whichever is sooner. Once granted, ETAs are digitally linked to a traveller's passport and allow for stays of up to six months at a time – including both short trips and more extended staysFrom 12 January, most people who were granted a visit visa, and some other visa types, are being told that they will get an eVisa as well as a visa sticker. Most people with a valid UK visa sticker that was issued before 12 January will also be able to access their eVisa through their UKVI account.Later in 2026, UKVI will stop issuing visa stickers. All successful applicants will only get an eVisa. International students and foreign workers entering the UK are already experiencing a change in the visa application procedure. Since July 15, the UK has introduced eVisas for student and skilled worker categories. In the new process, one will not receive a vignette when they apply for a work or study visa. eVisas allow applicants to submit biometrics and collect their passports on the same day, eliminating the need to return to the Visa Application Centre.An ETAprice trends are also expected to influence market .

Ashish Dhawan hikes stake to 5% in this beaten-down infra

New Delhi: Ashish Dhawan, the co-founder of ChrysCapital and one of India's most astute private equity veterans, is possibly doubling down on what we can only assume to be a high-conviction contrarian play. The sales of the company have grown at a rate of 30% from Rs 2,682 cr in FY24 to 3,484 cr in FY25. Coming to the current financial year, in the nine months ended December 2025, the company has recorded sales of Rs 2,517 cr.EBITDA (Earnings Before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation, and Amortization) jumped from Rs 78 cr to Rs 83 cr in the same period, logging a growth of just 6.4%. In FY26 so far the EBITDA recorded is Rs 53 cr.Net profits seem to be an area for big concern as the company has been reporting consistent losses. Losses jumped from Rs 149 cr in FY24 to Rs 173 in FY25. In FY26 so far, the company has logged losses of Rs 26 cr.The share price of Bluspring Enterprises Ltd after demerger was around Rs 85 in June 2025 and as of closing



on 24th February 2026 it was Rs 55, noting a big drop. Now, while retail sentiment remains unsteady around the infrastructure sector's volatility, Dhawan has quietly increased his stake in an infrastructure service provider to a significant 5%, up from

4.1% in the preceding quarter. Incorporated in 2025 after a demerger from Qess Corp, Bluspring Enterprises Ltd is in the business as an infrastructure services company.With a market cap of Rs 826 cr, Bluspring is an infrastructure services company. It

is an integrated facility management service provider offering end-to-end solutions like Soft Services, Hard Services / Engineering Services, Production Support Services, Hygiene Services, Technology Enabled Services.Ace investor Ashish Dhawan, who held a 4.1% stake at the end of the quarter ending September 2025, has hiked his holding to 5%, which is worth Rs 41 cr as per trendlyne. comLet us look at the financials to see if we can find out why he decided to raise the stakes.which is a Foreign Institutional Investor, has also hiked its holding from 3.56% to 3.7%. The infrastructure player has faced a gruelling period of price erosion, hit by sectoral headwinds and broader macroeconomic pressures that have kept the stock in the red. No wonder seasoned market observers take such moves by investors like Dhawan as either an undervalued asset base ripe for a rebound or a fundamental turnaround that the broader market has yet to price in.

Software could take a backseat



New Delhi: The tech sector stocks have seen a sharp rebound in trade today. The Nifty IT Index is up over 2%, and the top 5 gainers on the Nifty are tech sector stocks. Infosys, TCS, Tech Mahindra and HCLTech are all up over 2% apiece. In fact, the tech stocks have been battered significantly in February on concerns about AI-led disruption and the recent Jefferies downgrade on key stocks. Many market observers now believe that the sector might see some near-term rebound. Meanwhile, the bigger concerns about AI continue to linger. In a recent report, HSBC Securities (USA) says that

while artificial intelligence may be driving the current technology rally, the bigger and longer-term winner could be enterprise software companies.HSBC says 2026 may be the real start of AI monetisationIn a February 24, 2026, report titled “Software Will Eat AI Equities”, HSBC argues that AI will not replace enterprise software platforms. Instead, AI will be embedded inside them, and 2026 could mark the beginning of serious monetisation for software vendors. At a time when investors are debating whether AI could disrupt traditional software vendors, HSBC's analysis makes a direct counterargument.

Sensex is up 200 points, the Nifty is above 25,500, and the Nifty IT Index is up 1%

New Delhi: Markets at open: Indian markets opened on a mildly positive note on Thursday, tracking firm global cues. The Sensex rose 200 points, or 0.27%, to 82,418 in early trade, while the Nifty gained 70 points, up 0.31%, to trade at 25,537.Markets at pre-open: Indian stock markets are likely to open on a positive note, as GIFT Nifty is showing early gains and trading close to the 25,645 level. This hints at a steady start for the day.Investors will be watching how other Asian markets performed and how the US markets closed overnight. Changes in the rupee's value and prices of crude oil and other commodities may also influence how the market moves during the session. Key global and domestic cues to watch on February 26, 2025Asian markets

Asian markets traded higher on Thursday, tracking the tech-led rally on Wall Street. Japan's Nikkei 225 jumped 1.1% to hit a record 59,199.31, while the broader Topix index gained 1.45%. In South Korea, the Kospi rose 1.65% and the Kosdaq added 0.57%. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 also moved up 0.8%. On February 25, US markets closed higher with strong gains across major indices. The S&P 500 rose 0.81% to end at 6,946.13, while the Nasdaq Composite climbed 1.26% to 23,152.08. The Dow Jones Industrial Average also moved up 0.63%, gaining 307.65 points to settle at 49,482.15, reflecting positive sentiment on Wall Street. Nvidia reported stronger-than-expected results for its fourth quarter, a sharp 75% jump in revenue from its main data center business. The company earned \$1.62 per share on an adjusted basis. Its total revenue came in at \$68.13 billion,



also above market expectations of \$66.21 billion.US dollar

The US Dollar Index (DXY), which measures the dollar's value against a basket of six foreign currencies, was trading 0.08% down at 97.57 on Thursday morning. The index evaluates the strength or weakness of the US dollar in comparison to major currencies. The basket contains currencies such as the British Pound, Euro, Swedish Krona, Japanese Yen, Swiss Franc, etc. The rupee depreciated 0.01% to close at 90.95 to the dollar on February 25. Oil prices edged up in early trade on Wednesday. US West Texas Intermediate crude rose about 0.31% to around \$65.62 per barrel, while Brent crude gained 0.30% to trade near \$71.06

per barrel, showing a mild uptick in global energy prices.FII, DII data

On February 25, foreign investors net bought Indian equities worth Rs 2,991.64 crore, according to provisional exchange data. Meanwhile, domestic institutional investors were net buyers, purchasing shares worth Rs 5,118.57 crore during the session. Jhunjhunwala & Damani's 55%+ crash: Why the 'big bulls' refuse to sell these 2 stocksIn the international market, gold was trading at \$5,162 per ounce.Gold prices in India remain in sharp focus. On the MCX, April 2, 2026, gold futures were trading at Rs 1,61,242 per 10 grams in the latest update. In the last trading session, mining stocks led the gains with a rise of 2.93%,

followed closely by non-ferrous metal shares which climbed 2.91%. Iron and steel companies also saw strong momentum, advancing 2.29%, while cable stocks moved up 2.12%.Best and worst performing business group in last trading session

In the last trading session, Jaipuria Group rose 6.45%, Jindal BC Group gained 5.79%, and Essar Group advanced 4.42%, showing strong upward movement. On the other hand, Shapoorji Pallonji Group slipped 1.86%, while Ambani Group declined 2%.Meanwhile silver too had a strong season. The prices in the international market rallied to \$90 per troy ounce levels. Safe haven demand boosted sentiment across the commodity space.

Hornby sells slot car racing brand Scalextric for £20m

Paris: For almost six decades Hornby has watched Scalextric drive revenues for its hobby business but on Friday the company said it had decided to sell the famous slot car racing brand for £20m to a little-known buyer.The model railway company, which also sells toy planes and cars under the Airfix and Corgi brands, has sold the Scalextric business and intellectual property rights to Purbeck Capital Partners. As part of the deal, Mark Brown, who has set up Scalextric Motorsports to house the business, is to take a role helping Hornby with a longer-term strategic transformation to create a “series of entrepreneurial, profitable brands operating sustainably and independently, led autonomously from the centre”He hopes to develop the Scalextric business into new areas as an antidote to online pursuits.“As we look to a long-term future, with Scalextric as a now family-owned company, we are energised by the opportunity to continue bringing competitive racing fun to families,” he said“While [also] expanding into new areas of motor sport and helping to build physical and hand-eye coordination skills, particularly at a time when families are trying to balance time spent online versus real world activities.

Mark Brown grew up in the UK but has spent the last 46 years in the US, where he is permanently based. He spent a total of 37 years working for Sazerac in two stints separated by five years at Brown Forman. From 1997, when he returned to Sazerac, he was chief executive until stepping down in 2023.Kent-based Hornby, which experienced a hobby boom during the Covid pandemic, has owned Scalextric since 1968. Invented by Fred Francis, the very

first Scalextric set was made in Hampshire in 1956.On Friday, Hornby’s parent company, Castelnau, which also owns businesses including the funerals firm Dignity, said it was selling the toy car racing business to Purbeck Capital Partners.Purbeck is run by Mark Brown, the former chief executive of Sazerac, the US-based spirits company that owns brands including Southern Comfort. The deal is the first investment by Brown’s family office.Hornby, which dates back to 1901 and produced its first model train set in 1920, said the proceeds of the sale would be used to pay down debt and invest in its other brands.The company said it would manage the Scalextric business as an agent and support it through its existing infrastructure.In 2024, the founder of Sports Direct, Mike Ashley, became a consultant to Hornby after his retail empire Frasers Group took an 8.9% stake in the business.Last April, Hornby delisted from London’s junior stock market, Aim, ending almost four decades as a public company.The company, which had been publicly listed since 1986, blamed the “regulatory burden and cost of maintaining the public quotation” and said delisting would save it about £400,000 a year. Richard Brown, the chief executive of Castelnau, said: “Scalextric has made significant progress in recent years, and we are truly excited for its next phase.“We look forward to working closely with him going forward on the wider transformation at Hornby. This transaction is consistent with Castelnau’s strategic intention to ensure that our businesses are owned and led by the best owners to deliver their full potential.”

Rep. Summer Lee on Boycotting Trump Speech, Jesse Jackson

Paris: Many Democratic lawmakers boycotted Tuesday’s State of the Union address to attend alternative events, including our guest Congressmember Summer Lee of Pennsylvania, who gave the Working Families Party response to President Trump. “The president is disgraceful, and I don’t think it’s worth our time to give him an audience,” says Lee, who encourages opponents to keep challenging his falsehoods. “When you take away the lie, there is no foundation for President Trump.”Lee also challenges Trump’s claims about non-citizen voting, which experts say is exceedingly rare, and the decision by Republican House leadership to deny honors to the late Reverend Jesse Jackson at the Capitol following the civil rights icon’s death. REP. SUMMER LEE: Let’s start with a simple truth. What we are witnessing from our government is authoritarianism. Any response that doesn’t acknowledge that truth is a disservice to Americans who deserve and need honesty right now. I listened to Donald Trump’s speech tonight. While Trump and his friends profit off his presidency, he is gaslighting us. He wants to convince working families that we are better off under his regime. But we know the truth. Our country is in crisis. For millions of Americans, affordability is out of reach. Trump has driven up the unemployment rate, cutting thousands of federal jobs across the country.Everything he does is making Americans less safe at home and abroad. He is bringing us to the brink of wars in the Middle East and South America. And at home, ICE agents are hunting down human beings and cities are under siege. The FBI is raiding election offices in Georgia. Students are being disappeared for protesting tyranny and genocide in Palestine. The environmental protections we earned after a generation of advocacy are being stripped away.

AMY GOODMAN: That was Pennsylvania Congresswoman Summer Lee giving the Working Families Party response to the State of the Union. Joining us now from Capitol Hill, Congressmember Lee. If you can carry on from what you were saying last night? You did not attend the State of the Union. Tell us why as wellREP. SUMMER LEE: Because the president is disgraceful and I don’t think it’s worth our time to give him an audience. That’s what he wants. He wants to be able to tell us to our face lies and gaslight us to our face. And the reality is that we have better things to do with our time and I think that there are people who deserve our attention far more than he does.AMY GOODMAN: Talk about the People’s State of the Union on the Mall last night with many congressmembers like you as well as senators speaking out.

REP. SUMMER LEE: I think it was an opportunity for us to get in front of the people who are harmed most by Trump’s and Republicans’ policies. Right now people in this country, they really want an end to the status quo. They don’t care about the pomp and circumstance and the decorum of this institution. They’re wondering why we’re not disrupting or



doing things differently or at least not giving any more credibility to this administration.

So the People’s State of the Union I was grateful for, because it was an attempt for us and an opportunity for us to walk away from him, to turn our backs on a president that is insistent on lying to us, and just talking straight to the people about a truth that they were just not going to get last night. That started obviously before the State of the Union but there was no reason for any of us to believe this would be the first night that he finally actually tells the American people the truth about the state, the truth about his policies and the truth about what his intentions are for the country. AMY GOODMAN: As you stand at the Rotunda, I’m reminded that the House speaker has said that Jesse Jackson’s body cannot lay in honor in the Capitol as John Lewis did, as Rosa Parks did. Can you talk about the significance of this and what Jesse Jackson meant to you?REP. SUMMER LEE: Certainly. I don’t find that shocking. This whole administration this past year has been about attacking Black folks, attacking our history, attacking the legacy that has been created out of movements like the Civil Rights Movement, like the Black Power Movement and so many more. So for him to kind of try to insult the Reverend Jesse Jackson and his legacy at this last final resting point is not shocking.

But the reality is that he could do no such thing, right? What Reverend Jesse Jackson has done and what he has meant to this country is not interrupted or is not changed by the fact that Donald Trump would not do right by him in his last moment. This is a man who has impacted people, my district, and my life—me, myself—around his ministry, his activism, his politics, laying the groundwork for more progressive campaigning when there is a desperate need for an alternative message and for alternative ways of doing your politics. Jesse Jackson came and ran for president. He set the foundation for so many people after him, including me, to run on a progressive, unapologetically bold platform. So I am grateful for the work that he has done. Whether or not he is in the Rotunda or not, we still honor the history. We still honor the work that he did. But more importantly, we recognize that right now more than ever we have to

carry on the work. That what those civil rights activists, heroes, movement leaders did 50 years ago is still happening right now and that we have to re-up that battle. So right now, listen, don’t focus as much on that. Focus on the attacks not on his person, on attacks not on his final farewell, but focus on the attacks on his work.AMY GOODMAN: Let’s go back to President Trump criticizing Democrats last night for not supporting the SAVE Act, which voting rights advocates warned could disenfranchise millions.PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: And the reason they don’t want to do it—why would anybody not want voter ID? One reason! Because they want to cheat. There’s only one reason.PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: They make up all excuses. They say it’s racist. They come up with things you almost say, what imagination they have. They want to cheat. They have cheated. And their policy is so bad that the only way they can get elected is to cheat. And we’re going to stop it. We have to stop it, John. AMY GOODMAN: That was President Trump last night. I’m looking at a piece in The Hill saying in fact instances of noncitizen voting are exceedingly rare. A 2016 general election study showed an estimated 30 incidents of suspected-not-confirmed noncitizen votes out of 23.5 million, which is .0001% of the votes cast. Voter fraud generally also exceedingly rare. Numerous studies have found fraud rates that are just a fraction of 1%. Talking about Trump’s claims of widespread fraud the 2020 election rejected by 62 courts that reviewed the matter. If you could comment further, Congressmember Lee, on what President Trump is trying to do here by questioning the legitimacy of U.S. elections?REP. SUMMER LEE: Oh, we all know what he’s trying to do. When you take away the lie—and it’s not just on this topic—when you take away the lie, there is no foundation for President Trump, there’s no foundation for any of his cronies to stand on. They have to lie to people to get folks riled up. They have to lie to get conservatives to participate or to at least not come to the side of where people are actually fighting for their interests. They don’t want people to vote. They don’t want people who won’t vote for them to vote. Clarification—they don’t want people who won’t vote for them to vote.

Observers raise concerns over secret ballot breaches at Gorton

Paris: An election observer group has raised concerns over people appearing to collude on voting in the Gorton and Denton byelection.Democracy Volunteers, an organisation founded by Dr John Ault, and supported by the Conservative peer and psephologist Prof Robert Haywood, deployed four accredited election observers across the constituency.The team attended 22 of the 45 polling stations while polls were open, spending between 30 and 45 minutes in each, working in pairs. The organisation said its volunteers were looking at people appearing to collude on votes in breach of secret ballot rules, which it called “family voting”, as well as the impact of the requirement for voters to show ID before they were issued with a ballot paper.Manchester city council said its staff had been trained to look for evidence of voter interference and that no concerns had been reported or raised with them while polls were open.What a Gorton byelection win would mean for Reform, Greens and Labour

Read more Democracy Volunteers said that while the enactment of the Ballot Secrecy Act in 2023 made “family voting” more clearly a breach of the secret ballot, signage to discourage the practice was only seen in 45% of the polling stations observed.The observing team said they saw family voting in 15 of the 22 polling stations observed, reporting 32 cases in total, nine cases in one polling station alone.

They observed a sample of 545 voters casting their votes, of which they said 12% either directed or were affected by family voting.Ault, director of Democracy Volunteers, said: “Today we have seen concerning high levels of family voting in Gorton and Denton. Based on our assessment of today’s observations, we have seen the highest levels of family voting at any election in our 10-year history of observing elections in the UK.”He added: “We rarely issue a report on the night of an election, but the data we have collected today on family voting, when compared to other recent byelections, is extremely high.“In the other recent Westminster parliamentary byelection in Runcorn and Helsby we saw family voting in 12% of polling stations, affecting 1% of voters. In Gorton and Denton, we observed family voting in 68% of polling stations, affecting 12% of those voters observed.”Labour said the reports were “extremely worrying and concerning”. Anna Turley, the Labour party chair, told BBC Newsnight: “That’s not what we want to see in our democracy. So obviously we need to see the evidence and the report, and then make due decision about what authorities should look into this.”The Green party leader, Zack Polanski, told the same programme he would back an investigation. “I think it’s important that there’s full transparency about the democratic process, and if the recommendation is that there should

be an inquiry or further steps then yes I’d support that,” he said.

The Reform UK chair, David Bull, said that “electoral fraud is a stain on democracy”. He added: “We would support reporting it and making sure that it’s done in the spirit and fairness with the law.”The volunteers also observed cases of voters being turned away, but they said in every case this was due to not being registered to vote in Westminster elections – for example, if they had EU citizenship and were eligible to vote only in local elections.They also reported seeing voters taking photographs of their ballot papers, and one person being authorised to vote despite them already having been marked as voted earlier in the day.A spokesperson for the acting returning officer said: “Polling station staff are trained to look out for any evidence of undue influence on voters. No such issues have been reported today.“If Democracy Volunteers were so concerned about alleged issues they could and should have raised them with us during polling hours so that immediate action could be taken.“We have operated a central byelection hub which has been rapidly responding to reported issues during the day, in liaison with the police – who had a presence at every polling station – where necessary.“It is extremely disappointing that Democracy Volunteers have waited until after polls have closed to make such claims.”

Congressmember Omar Demands Probe Into the Arrest of Her Guest

London: Minnesota Congressmember Ilhan Omar is demanding an investigation into the arrest of her guest at the State of the Union Tuesday night. Aliya Rahman was removed from the House chamber and jailed — all for standing silently during President Trump’s speech. She described what happened on Democracy Now!Aliya Rahman: “I was not just removed and arrested. I was arrested so physically that two other attendees upstairs attempted to intervene in officers pulling on my shoulders after I told them I have a torn rotator cuff tendon and multiple cartilage tears in both of my shoulders.” Four Cuban exiles were killed Wednesday in a shootout between Cuban border guards and a U.S. speedboat carrying 10 Cuban exiles. According to the Cuban government, the men on the Florida-registered speedboat opened fire when Cuban forces approached the boat for an inspection off the northeast coast of Cuba. The Cuban guards then fired back, killing four of the men. Six others were injured and are now being held in Cuba. The Cuban government says the men were attempting to carry out “an infiltration with terrorist ends.” Cuban media report the men were carrying weapons, Molotov cocktails, bulletproof jackets and camouflage gear.

On Wednesday, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said the U.S. would investigate what happened. Rubio was speaking at a gathering of Caribbean leaders, who expressed alarm over the growing humanitarian crisis in Cuba due to a U.S. oil blockade that has cut off the island from desperately needed fuel. On Wednesday, two Mexican navy ships departed from Veracruz with over 1,000 tons of humanitarian aid for Cuba. Russian officials say they’re discussing the possibility of providing fuel to Cuba, and on Wednesday Canada became the latest country to pledge food aid to Cuba. We’ll have more on this story after headlines with Me-dea Benjamin, co-founder



of CodePink, who’s helping organize a humanitarian solidarity mission Cuba next month; she’s just back from the island.In a statement, Minneapolis Congressmember Ilhan Omar wrote, “The heavy-handed response to a peaceful guest sends a chilling message about the state of our democracy.” Rahman is a U.S. citizen. Last month, federal immigration agents smashed her car window and dragged her out of her car in Minneapolis. She is autistic and reportedly told them that she was disabled. She was detained at the Whipple Federal Building and later released without char U.S. and Iranian negotiators have begun indirect negotiations in Geneva over Iran’s nuclear program after President Trump ordered the largest deployment of U.S. forces to the Middle East since the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. Ahead of the talks, the Trump administration imposed new sanctions on 30 individuals accused of enabling Iran’s oil sales and weapons production. This comes as Trump’s envoy,

Steve Witkoff, is claiming that Iran has enough fissile material to make a nuclear bomb within days, but several nuclear experts say that Iran’s nuclear program hasn’t advanced since U.S. and Israeli military strikes last June. This is Iran’s Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi.Abbas Araghchi: “We were negotiating last June, when Israel attacked us, and then the U.S. joined that attack. So that memory is still fresh for us. The wounds of that aggression is still alive in our minds. So we cannot forget that once we were negotiating with the U.S., and then they decided to attack us.”Dozens of international aid organizations have made a final appeal to the Israeli Supreme Court to prevent a de facto ban on their operations in Gaza and the occupied West Bank, set to take effect in early March. The 37 international groups — including Oxfam and Doctors Without Borders — collectively provide more than half of all food assistance in Gaza; operate the majority of field hospitals; and run all

inpatient treatment for children suffering severe acute malnutrition

This comes amid a surge of violence by Israeli soldiers and settlers targeting Palestinians in the occupied West Bank. On Tuesday night, settlers set fire to vehicles and tents in the Palestinian village of Susya. This is resident Ahmed al-Nawajeh.

Ahmed al-Nawajeh: “We were shocked when around 30 settlers arrived. They were carrying incendiary materials and burned this tent and that one. They burned the chicken coop. They burned all the furniture; they left nothing.”

Meanwhile, independent journalist Aida Chavez is reporting that Democratic lawmakers on the House Foreign Affairs Committee are trying to prevent a vote on an Iran war powers resolution sponsored by Congressmembers Ro Khanna and Thomas Massie. The bill would require every member of Congress to go on the record about a potential U.S. war with Iran.

Dyson Supersonic Nural review: can a hair dryer really save your scalp from heat damage

Tell most hair-care enthusiasts you want to upgrade your hair dryer, and I’d bet good money you’ll be asked, “Will you buy a Dyson?” That would have been a ludicrous question more than a decade ago when the brand specialised in vacuum cleaners, but not since it took the luxury hair-care market by storm in 2016 with its Supersonic hair dryer. The Supersonic ripped up the hair-dryer rulebook, with its distinctive design, lightweight feel and quiet operation. Eight years after the original, Dyson launched the Supersonic Nural: an upgraded version with new tricks up its sleeve.

Upgrading to one of the best hair dryers is still one of my top beauty tips: they’re better at controlling heat levels and dry hair faster. All the same, is there really any need to spend up to £400? Having put the Supersonic Nural hair dryer through its paces and compared it with 19 other hair dryers that I tested, I was mostly impressed. Still, a few niggles ensure it’s not a recommendation without caveats. Over the month I tested the Supersonic Nural, I took note of the look, feel and finish of my hair. I timed how long it took to rough-dry hair and achieve a smooth blow-dry, and judged the effectiveness of the scalp-protect mode, as well as the versatility and intuitiveness of the controls for more precise styling. I also used all of the attachments. In each case, I was hoping to dry my hair quickly, leaving it with minimal frizz and feeling healthy. Comfort was also a factor:

I didn’t want my arms to ache or to feel any wrist strain in use. For more quantitative test results, I used an anemometer to measure the Supersonic Nural’s top wind speed, plus a sound meter to assess noise levels from 15cm away. I popped this data into my comparison spreadsheet to see how the hair dryer measured up to the competition. Dyson hair dryers are notoriously expensive. Prices start at £219 for the original Supersonic with its concentrator nozzle attachment, and climb to £450 for the latest Supersonic R hair dryer – the smallest, lightest and most powerful model that Dyson offers. Sitting slightly below the Supersonic R is the £400 Supersonic Nural.

As with its stablemates, it comes with intelligent heat control to prevent the excessive temperatures that can damage hair, and uses Dyson’s patented Air Multiplier technology



to draw in surrounding air through the ring shape, for a claimed three times more airflow over models with a conventional shape.

The Nural uses the Dyson Digital Motor V9, the same motor as the original Supersonic. This is marginally heavier and less powerful than the Hyperdymium motor in the brand’s Supersonic R hair dryer, but still spins at a whopping 110,000 RPM. That’s plenty fast enough for most people. On a basic level, the Nural has three speed levels, three heat settings and a continuous cool shot. All these can be controlled by small buttons on the rear of the dryer, alongside a button that turns scalp-protect mode on and off. On the handle, there’s a dedicated cool shot button and a power switch. It has a 2.62m cord, which is perfect for home use. The most tangible difference between the original and the Nural is its scalp-protect mode. This sees the device adjust the temperature of the air based on the dryer’s proximity to the scalp: the closer it gets, the lower the temperature goes. This means you never burn your scalp or frazzle any of the delicate new strands as they grow. Dyson claims this strengthens the scalp bar-

rier, balances oils on the scalp, and reduces visible flakes and shedding. Another clever addition is pause detect, which automatically slows the dryer down when it’s placed on a surface. This is ideal for those who section their hair while drying, or place the dryer down during a round-brush blow-dry. Dyson offers eight different magnetic attachments for the Nural. Whether you buy the version for straight and wavy or for curly and coily hair, you’ll find five attachments in the box, with others available to buy separately.

All the Nural’s attachments have RFID tags that are programmed with the ideal heat and speed settings, eliminating any guesswork on the user’s part. If you prefer to tweak the settings, it will then remember these the next time you use that attachment. That, alongside the high-end design, is one of the main reasons to invest in a Dyson hair dryer over other high-end options. Most of its competitors only include a concentrator nozzle and diffuser, with the closest equivalent in attachment range being the £220 Shark Speed-Style Pro. The Shark also features a Scalp Shield mode, but it’s not automatic or proximity-based like the

Nural’s. Instead it’s activated via a button on the handle (so no different from simply reducing the temperature on any old dryer). There’s much to like about the Supersonic Nural. Its design is attractive – it’s made from a lightweight-but-sturdy plastic, with a metallic finish that screams high-end.

I tested the Nural in the limited-edition Amber Silk colour, but it’s also available in blush pink, navy or dark blue. There have been various limited-edition colours, too, so it’s always worth checking the Dyson website before you buy. Its vegan leather presentation case – which is free in some limited editions, but costs £60 separately – is another luxury. It houses all the attachments – bar one, which I’ll moan about momentarily. If you prefer to ditch the case, the dryer is compact enough to fit in most vanity drawers. The Nural is staggeringly quiet, with volume levels ranging between 75 and 81dB in my tests. That makes it the second quietest hair dryer I’ve tested, just a touch louder than the Cloud Nine Airshot Pro on its fastest settings. I adored the scalp-protect mode, which made drying my hair comfortable and allowed me to

disengage during the process. This isn’t a luxury I get with most hair dryers, which require me to manually lower the temperature at the scalp, or suffer the consequences. The dryer took about seven minutes to rough-dry my hair, which is a few minutes slower than the most powerful hair dryers I’ve tested. However, my hair was left feeling smooth and healthy, with the flyaway attachment quickly handling any rogue hairs for an effortless finish that lasted until my next wash. The magnetic attachments were easy to swap, and the automatic settings meant I could make the most of them without faff. I’m not a fan of doing round-brush blow-drys:

I haven’t quite got the knack of using a round brush, so I’m often left sweating profusely, with my arms feeling as if I’ve done 40 reps by the end. But the Supersonic Nural’s lightweight, evenly weighted design made sure my arms and wrists didn’t feel the strain, even when tackling the tricky spots on the top of my head.

And when sectioning my hair, the pause detect was an invaluable little luxury that I’ll miss when I’m using a different hair dryer. The results from the blow-dry were beautifully smooth, with plenty of volume where I wanted it. The Dyson’s speed settings provided extra control when styling the shorter hairs that frame my face, and the cool shot set the style quickly. My hair felt noticeably smoother than usual, thanks to having been dried with more gentle heat. Let’s start with the obvious: the Supersonic Nural is expensive. At full price, you’ll be splashing out about £400 (although you could find one for about £300 at the time of writing). There’s definitely no need to spend that much, with plenty of equally powerful options available for less in our test of the best hair dryers.

If you have a sensitive scalp and are tired of accidentally scorching it, no other hair dryer offers the same automation as Dyson’s scalp-protect mode. That said, the sensor isn’t flawless. During testing, it would sometimes lower the temperature when there was no need to. Mercifully, it never incorrectly increased the temperature in my tests, but I found the random lower temperatures slightly frustrating, since this added to overall drying times. You can easily disable scalp protect mode, of course, but you’d be missing out on one of the key selling points. Another

gripe was that the presentation case – as gorgeous as it looks – didn’t have enough space to store all the attachments. No matter how much rejigging I did, I couldn’t get the diffuser attachment to fit, meaning I had to let it gather dust on top of the case. For a case this expensive, that isn’t good enough. Finally – and this is nitpicking – when I unboxed the hair dryer, I was prompted to download the MyDyson app. Now, I’m not a fan of having random apps clogging up my phone, but I will be happy to do so if useful features are on offer. Sadly, all you get with the Supersonic Nural is styling and maintenance advice – which is available online.

If you buy the Nural, do yourself a favour and skip the app. All Dyson hair-care products, including the Supersonic Nural, are covered by a two-year warranty. During that time, Dyson will repair or replace your hair dryer if it stops working. You can also buy spare parts and replacement attachments from Dyson, which arrive with a one-year warranty. As with all Dyson hair stylers, the Nural has a filter that needs cleaning once a month, or when you see the LED cleaning light switch on. If necessary, you can use soapy water, but you’ll need to wait for the filter to fully dry before reassembling.

Dyson also has a helpline (0800 298 0298) where you can book a repair if your model is under warranty. If your Dyson kicks the bucket after its warranty expires, all isn’t necessarily lost. Secondhand sites such as Sell My Dyson will buy old Dyson hair dryers, to stop all the parts from going to waste. There’s no getting past it – the Supersonic Nural is a brilliant hair dryer that is well suited to people with sensitive scalps. Scalp burn and frazzled hair will be a thing of the past; it’s staggeringly quiet with an attractive design, a clever pause-detect feature and a brilliant range of attachments.

It’s a clear cut above hair dryers of old. Whether that’s worth £400 will, of course, depend on your budget. I’m not convinced. In fact, you can get a very good hair dryer for far less. For less than £150, you can buy the Head Jog Futaria hair dryer, which is lighter and faster. Or you could opt for the reliable Hershesons hair dryer, which is my top pick for most people. However, if you want to splash out on a luxury hair dryer and you have a sensitive scalp, you certainly won’t regret buying the Supersonic Nural.

5 Reasons Why Eye Examinations Must Be A Part Of Your Annual Health Check-ups

Eye health is one of the most neglected areas when it comes to the annual health check-up, whereas many vision-threatening conditions are known to develop silently and become difficult to reverse when diagnosed late. Data from India’s National Programme for Control of Blindness and Visual Impairment highlight the scale and scope of prevention through timely care. According to the report, around 117,55,185 people benefited from annual eye exams in 2024-2025, which then led to 9,893,679 timely cataract operations, 12,14,395 free spectacles distribution among school-children and 6,47,111 treated for other eye diseases like diabetic retinopathy and glaucoma. These figures go beyond merely reflecting the scale of the programme. It highlights the widespread prevalence of undiagnosed eye conditions in the community and reinforces why preventive eye examinations should be part of every annual health check-up. Dr Vasant

Sapovadia, Senior Cataract & Refractive Surgeon at NetradEEP Maxivision Super Speciality Eye Hospitals, says, “Most people associate eye check-ups with blurred vision or the need for spectacles, but many serious eye diseases progress silently without causing any visual complications in the early stages. Glaucoma and retinal conditions can progress silently for years, and by the time symptoms become noticeable, irreversible vision loss may already occurred. Annual eye examinations help us to detect these subtle changes at the initial stages, monitor risk factors, and intervene before vision is compromised. Regular screening is one of the most effective ways to preserve eyesight over a lifetime.”

Early Detection of Silent Eye Diseases

Several significant eye diseases can occur without any initial warning signs. For instance, glaucoma, sometimes called the ‘silent thief of sight’, can continually damage the optic nerve without any noticeable effects on vision until it is

very advanced. Similarly, the retina may be affected due to ageing or systemic diseases, which can go undetected for a long time. Regular eye check-ups help the ophthalmologists to measure eye pressure and examine the condition of the optic nerve and the retina, enabling them to spot the onset of the disease before vision is noticeably impaired.

Family History and Preventive Screening

Family history is a major factor that increases the risk for specific eye disorders, especially glaucoma and hereditary retinal disorders. Most people are not aware of the risk until their vision starts to deteriorate. Eye check-ups at least once a year are a chance to identify genetic risk factors and promote screening among immediate family members, particularly those over the age of forty. An easy and effective way to preserve eyesight in the future is to have the eyes checked during the annual medical check-up. Regular eye screening is the key to early diagnosis and timely

treatment of eye diseases, which can therefore help to maintain good eye health, lowering the chances of losing vision from conditions that are preventable or treatable.

Impact of Systemic Health on the Eyes

The eyes remain one of the major indicators of a person’s overall health condition. For example, ophthalmologists can non-invasively examine the blood vessels and nerves in the eyes, which are often directly affected by conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure, and thyroid disorders. Sometimes, for instance, diabetic retinopathy can still develop despite good blood sugar control based on one’s blood sugar levels. Awareness about including eye examinations as part of the regular health check-up can help prevent systemic diseases from silently affecting eyesight while enabling timely and coordinated care between the physicians and ophthalmologists.

Age-Related Changes Need Regular Monitoring

With age, the chances of



cataracts, glaucoma, and macular conditions increase. Such changes are gradual and can easily go unnoticed. Routine eye check-ups provide a baseline for normal changes caused by ageing and help to determine if ageing is

accompanied by a disease and allow for timely treatment if necessary. In most cases, early interventions result in good visual outcomes and less dependence in the later stages of life.

Improving Productivity and Quality of Life

Good vision plays a vital role in daily functioning, mobility, and workplace productivity. When vision problems are not correctly diagnosed, they can interfere with activities such as reading, driving, and using a screen. Having eyes test-

ed regularly can contribute to sustaining clear and comfortable sight, it can also lessen the occurrence of eye strain, and these benefits can be very productive over a long time, especially for working adults and the elderly.

Sunny-Bobby Deol Rift Rumors Are Dispelled by Hema Malini



Mumbai: On November 24, 2025, renowned actor Dharmendra passed away. Hema Malini and her daughters, Esha and Ahana, as well as Dharmendra’s other family members, wife Prakash Kaur, sons Sunny and Bobby, and daughters Vijeta and Ajeita, were rumored to be at odds with one another.

The rumors had been circulating for a while. Hema has now refuted the rumors in an interview with a news portal. Hema Malini responded to the rumors by saying, “Papa hai na, papa ke liye sab karenga be it these bachchas (Esha, Ahana) or those bachchas (Sunny, Bobby) they were all very fond of Dharamji.” They have a great affection for one another. The family is all positive; where is the negativity when Dharamji is present? They have inherited Dharamji’s ideals, love, and strength. Although I was invited, I was unable to go. They really wanted me to come see the film. Why should we showcase all these times in public

revealed that before he passed away, she had hoped for one more opportunity to collaborate with him on television.

The audience will still remember what we have done in the past. I’m happy that he was my life partner and that I spent more than half of my life as a co-artist. I cry when I think about it, but we must go past the pain, and I’m a tough person. It’s impossible to believe that he’s gone. Breakdown toh hota hai, no matter how strong you are. Three months have passed since Dharmendra’s passing on February 24.

She stated, “His spot boy and all of his companions are so depressed that they keep approaching me and saying, ‘Saab ki yaad aa rahi hai main saab koi chai deta tha.’ You can only imagine how much we are missing him. ‘I’ll take any good movie role that comes my way; kuch achcha aata hi nahi.’” Regarding OTT, I’m not sure.

Dharamji enjoyed watching me dance and would advise me to keep going since it’s critical to maintain both physical and mental fitness. I used to bring my guruji along to shootings so Dharmji ki unse dosti bhi ho gayi. Hema continued, “He has been keeping herself busy with dance shows. He particularly enjoyed watching the girls dance and appreciated that we are maintaining Indian tradition.”

Gauahar Khan and Zaid Darbar share their kid Farwaan’s first photo

Mumbai: Farwaan, the younger son of actor Gauahar Khan and Zaid Darbar, has finally been made public. Fans were in awe of their younger son’s adorableness when the couple published photos of themselves performing Umrah in Mecca and Madina during the holy month of Ramadan in 2026. Gauahar posted a picture of herself and Zaid holding both of their kids on Instagram on Thursday, with the Kaaba in the background. She also wrote a heartfelt message introducing her son to the world. “Al-lahumma baarik!” she wrote. Toh chote ka salaam bhi toh banta hai, bade ko kaaba se pehla salaam karwaya tha. From Farwaan, as salaamu alaykum, lovely planet. Please remember our kids in your prayers. From the sacred land, we offer up prayers for the globe. Her acquaintances in the industry lavished the child and family with love. “Beautiful family, God bless you,” remarked Divya Agarwal. Red heart emoticons were used in comments by Bharti Singh, Mukti Mohan, and others. Fans lavished the infant with affection as well. “He has beautiful eyes,” one commenter wrote. “Aww so cute, Farwaan is so precious just like his big brother Zehaan,” someone else commented. “Cutest family,” wrote another enthusiast. On September 1, 2025, Gauahar and Zaid welcomed Farwaan, their second son. The happy news was shared on Instagram by the couple, who said, “Zehaan is thrilled to kindly share his kingdom with his new baby brother, born on 1 September 2025.”



I’m wishing our happy family the ongoing love and blessings of everyone. Zaid and Gauahar, thankful and jovial partners. The couple later disclosed the baby’s name that same month. On social media, they shared the name of their child along with a cute photo of their older son, Zehaan, holding his younger brother’s hand. FARWAAN. Zehaan presents his younger sibling. The side message said, “Allahumma baarik lahu.” It all began when Zaid secretly sent Gauahar direct messages on Instagram. Gauahar stated that Zaid asked her to marry him after just one month of communication. In November 2020, the couple were engaged, and on December 25 of that same year, they were married.

Triptii Dimri posted a cute photo of herself with her alleged boyfriend, Sam Merchant

New Delhi: On February 23, Triptii Dimri celebrated her 31st birthday. On Thursday, the Animal actress posted a number of photos from her birthday festivities. One photo from the album that caught my attention shows Triptii posing for the camera while giving Sam a hug. She offered us a glimpse of the festivities with her family in more photos. She appears to be 13 years old in one photo when she is carrying birthday balloons with the numbers 3 and 1 reversed. Sam Merchant and Triptii had previously exchanged photos. To keep the rumors going, she continues to post photos of herself with her purported boyfriend.

The reported couple vacationed in Goa in March of last year. The actress posted gorgeous vacation photos. One of the photos shows Triptii Dimri posing against a picturesque



background while wearing black pants and a white top. Sam Merchant, her alleged lover, posted pictures from the same spot as well. The identical backgrounds in their separate shots imply that they were on vacation together, even though they haven’t shared any group photos. “Triptii-Sam rumor

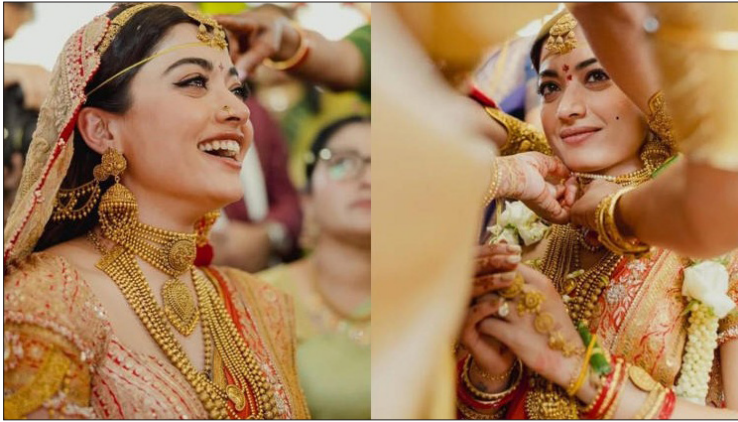
is plain hogwash,” a source close to the actress stated when questioned about her connection previously. Triptii is completely unmarried.

Some people’s imaginations are very creative. The fact that she was connected to Sam is not her fault. These days, such practices are typical in all spheres of

At her dream wedding to Vijay Deverakonda, Rashmika Mandanna gets teary-eyed

New Delhi: Vijay Deverakonda and Rashmika Mandanna are now formally married. This morning at 10:10 AM, the pair tied the knot in a traditional Telugu ceremony.

In keeping with Rashmika Mandanna’s Kodava ancestry, there was another wedding this evening. On their individual Instagram pages, Rashmika Mandanna and Vijay Deverakonda posted official wedding photos that went viral. There were several images of Rashmika Mandanna crying in Vijay Deverakonda’s Instagram carousel. Her teary-eyed photos, which capture unadulterated joy and love, have gone viral. Vijay Deverakonda shared the pictures and wrote, “One day, I missed her. Missed her in a way that made me feel like my day would’ve been better if she were around. Like my meals



would’ve felt more wholesome if she were sitting across from me. Like my workouts would’ve been more fun and less of a punishment if she were doing them with me. Like I needed her - just to feel that sense of home and calm, no matter where

I was. So, I made my best friend... my wife, 26.02.2026.” “Hello my loves, I’m pleased to present to you my husband, Mr. Vijay Deverakonda!” Rashmika Mandanna wrote in a lengthy statement that included photos from their wedding ceremony.

People want to see “big ticket films like Animal, Dhurandhar,” according to Adarsh Gourav



New Delhi: According to actor Adarsh Gourav, who most recently starred in Tu Yaa Main, people ought to give these kinds of movies “a chance to show what we’ve done with” them. In an interview with Zoom, Adarsh stated that Bejoy Nambiar and Abhishek Bandekar had “very intelligently adapted and written and developed the film,” and that it is “important that people watch smaller commercial films.” Adarsh discussed the trends that moviegoers

follow. After the pandemic, people only want to see expensive movies. They want movies like Dhurandhar, Animal, and Border 2. However, I also believe that a certain amount of people should attend these (smaller) movies.

I’m not advocating for these movies to be extremely profitable, but if they keep losing a lot of money, it will deter filmmakers from trying out new narratives. Then, he warned, “all you will see are big movies with big stars.” Ranveer Singh appeared in Dhurandhar, whereas Ranbir Kapoor was the star of Animal. Sunny Deol, Varun Dhawan, Diljit Dosanjh, Ahan Shetty, Mona Singh, Sonam Bajwa, and Anya Singh featured in Border 2. “Where will actors like me go?” the actor went on. What will happen to the new actors? These days, OTT platforms also take similar factors into account. People who go for this, in my opinion, won’t be let down. Nine out of ten individuals who have written to me have admitted to having preconceived ideas about the movie. But it changed once they saw it. Shanaya Kapoor and Adarsh played the main parts in the Bejoy Nambiar-directed film. Aanand L. Rai, Himanshu Sharma, and Vinod Bhanushali are the producers of Tu Yaa Main.

Rani Mukerji on “Mardaani 3”: A female-led movie receiving positive reviews in theaters is a good omen

Mumbai: Mardaani 3, directed by Rani Mukerji, is continuously breaking box office records. According to the producers, the crime thriller has now made ₹75 crore globally and ₹50 crore net at the Indian box office. Rani has complimented the movie and termed its revenues evidence that women-led films are still successful in India, saying she is “thrilled” about the milestone. Mardaani 3 has made ₹50 crore net (₹61 crore gross) in India during its four weeks in theaters, according to data released by the film’s studio, Yash Raj Films. The movie has also earned \$1.53 million abroad, increasing its total earnings to a respectable ₹75 crore. The movie’s domestic earnings, according to trade sources, were a little lower at ₹43 crore net (₹53 crore gross). According to YRF, Mardaani 3 is the franchise’s highest-grossing movie. “I’m really appreciative that Mardaani 3 has connected with audiences in such a big way,” Rani says in a statement regarding the movie’s box office receipts. This success shows that there is a market for female-led movies at a time when the box office discourse is somewhat focused on



“alpha male” characters. In order to see more films like this produced, I hope the industry has taken notice. According to Rani, the movie’s box office receipts are “more than numbers,” demonstrating that releases starring women can rival those starring heroes. “This milestone is much

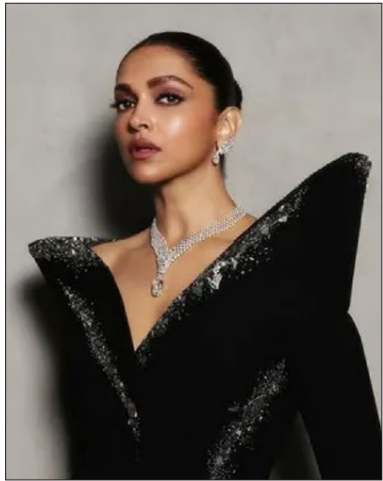
bigger than numbers,” she says. It tells filmmakers that investing in female-led tales is an opportunity rather than a risk, and it conveys to the industry that material with a strong female protagonist can coexist with hero-driven movies. Rani Mukerji’s portrayal as a tough officer in the Mardaani franchise has been a hit. Her performance has drawn comparisons to other fictional police officers in Indian cinema, and fans have frequently referred to Mardaani as the “female” Singham, a reference to the popular Ajay Devgn franchise. Rani continues, “Shivani Shivaji Roy was not written as a ‘female version’ of anything,” without providing any particular analogy. She is just a hero, characterized by honesty, bravery, and compassion. She is on par with her male peers. People are ready for stories where a woman leads not just emotionally but also commercially, as evidenced by how warmly audiences have embraced her story. Mardaani 3, which is produced by Aditya Chopra and directed by Abhiraj Minawala under Yash Raj Films, features Janki Bodiwala, Mallika Prasad, Jishu Sengupta, Prajesh Kashyap, and Indraneel Bhattacharya.

Deepika Padukone’s second opportunity to appear on The White Lotus is lost

Mumbai: For the past few months, everyone has been talking about Bollywood star Deepika Padukone’s forthcoming ventures.

Fans have been anticipating DP’s return to action since she and her husband Ranveer Singh welcomed their daughter Dua Padukone Singh into the world. However, many were devastated when the actor left Sandeep Reddy Vanga’s Spirit and was replaced by Triptii Dimri. Shortly after, she broke off her relationship with the producers of the Kalki 2898 AD sequel. Deepika’s comeback to Hollywood with The White Lotus Season 4 has been the subject of recent rumors. Recent reports, however, state that the actor will not be appearing in the well-liked program. We may also be aware of the cause. Rumor has it that even last season, the creators of The White Lotus were eager to have Deepika Padukone join the cast. But because she was expecting her daughter Dua at the time, the actor had declined the offer. According to reports, Deepika was asked to try out for the show this season, but the star wasn’t eager to do so. “Auditions are a mandatory part of the casting process for The White Lotus,” a

source was cited as saying in a Variety India report. Before hiring performers, the producers were eager to have them audition. The White Lotus opportunity had to be passed because Deepika was not interested in trying out. An upscale vacation resort serves as the setting for the well-known American black comedy drama anthology series The White Lotus. Every season brings with it a fresh batch of wealthy visitors and the hotel employees who cater to them. As secrets, disputes, and personal issues surface, what begins as a restful holiday gradually becomes stressful. The show, which was created by Mike White, weaves together relationships, money, and power while combining humor and serious issues. Actors like Chris Messina, Talisa Manobal, aka Lisa from Blackpink, Alexandra Daddario, and Sydney Sweeney have all given us standout performances in previous seasons. Season 4 of the show is being keenly awaited by audiences. Deepika Padukone, meanwhile, is prepared to return to the big screen following a maternity leave. Shortly after giving birth to her daughter Dua Singh Padukone, she was last seen in Rohit Shetty’s



Singham Again (2024). In Siddharth Anand’s upcoming film King, Deepika will reconnect with Shah Rukh Khan, her co-star from Pathaan (2023) and Jawan (2023). The film, which is scheduled for release on December 24, also features Raghav Juyal, Abhay Verma, Rani Mukerji, Suhana Khan, SRK’s daughter, and Abhishek Bachchan as the primary adversary. Additionally, Deepika and Allu Arjun will work together on Atlee’s next movie, which is provisionally named AA22xA6.

Droupadi Murmu is the first Indian president to fly in the Prachand attack helicopter



Jaipur, Feb 27: President Droupadi Murmu, wearing an olive-green flight suit and helmet, flew with Light Combat Helicopter ‘Prachand’ for 25 minutes on Friday as co-pilot in the Jaisalmer district, close to the India-Pakistan border. The president was informed by the captain before the helicopter took off from the Jaisalmer Air Force Station, according to the Indian Air Force (IAF). Before taking off, she gave a wave from the cockpit. Murmu, the Su-

preme Commander of the Armed Forces, spoke to the country from the cockpit during the flight. The Prachand helicopter is a potent representation of independence. I am currently flying over the district of Jaisalmer. I send my warmest regards and sincere appreciation to our courageous military. “Jai Hind, Jai Bharat, I salute you warmly,” she uttered. During Friday night’s ‘Vayu Shakti’ firepower show, the IAF is expected to perform at the Pokharan firing range,

where the chopper passed over. The day-dusk-night demonstration will be seen in Murmu. The president was greeted at the IAF station earlier by IAF Chief Air Marshal A P Singh. Murmu achieved yet another milestone in her interactions with front-line military equipment with today’s sortie, becoming the first Indian president to fly in an assault helicopter. In October of last year, she became the first Indian president to fly in two separate IAF fighter aircraft when she conducted a sortie in a Rafale at the Air Force Station in Ambala. She flew for roughly thirty minutes over the Brahmaputra and Tezpur valley with a view of the Himalayas during a sortie in a Sukhoi-30 MKI fighter aircraft at the Tezpur Air Force Station in Assam in April 2023. Built by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited, the LCH Prachand is India’s first combat helicopter that was conceived and developed domestically. The LCH greatly improves the Indian Air Force’s combat capability with its modern avionics, stealth features, night-attack capability, and strong arsenal of armaments, which includes rockets, a 20 mm cannon, and air-to-ground and air-to-air missiles. When the first LCH was formally inducted into the IAF at the Jodhpur Air Force Station in October 2022, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh made a sortie in the Prachand, which means furious.

Police and students hurt in a JNUSU protest brawl; FIR lodged

New Delhi, Feb 27: Conflicts erupted during a Jawaharlal Nehru University Students’ Union (JNUSU) march at the campus gate on Thursday, injuring both students and police. Both sides accused one another of assault. According to the police, a FIR has been filed. As part of continuous demonstrations against problems like UGC restrictions, the rustication of JNU-SU office-bearers, and remarks made by Vice Chancellor Santishree Dhulipudi Pandit, about 400-500 students assembled on campus for a “Long March” to the Ministry of Education, according to the police. Protesters left through the main gate around 3:20 p.m. and made an effort to go in the direction of the ministry.

They were shoved back into the campus by police after they were halted at the North Gate. As the situation worsened, barricades outside the university sustained damage.

The demonstrators used physical assault, tossed shoes, and hurled sticks and flags. A senior police officer stated, “During the altercation, some police officers were bitten, resulting in injuries to several officers deployed at the spot.” About 25 staff, including ACP Ved Prakash, ACP Sanghamitra, SHO Atul Tyagi, and SHO Ajai Yadav, were hurt, according to the police. Under BNS sections 221, 121(1), 132, and 3(5), a formal complaint alleging assault and obstruction of public servants was filed at the Vasant Kunj North police station. Some of the demonstrators have been taken into custody. Some demonstrators are making

utterly unfounded claims that they were mistreated by police. The officer stated, “Every single officer assigned there was upholding law and order.” According to police, 51 demonstrators were arrested, including former president Nitish Kumar and JNUSU president Aditi Mishra. However, students said that they were subjected to disproportionate force and that a number of protestors, including women, were hurt.

The JNU Teachers Association voiced worry that some detained students were transported to “unconfirmed locations” and denounced what it called the “brutal use of force.” Additionally, the JNUSU said that during the police operation, a painting of B R Ambedkar was damaged. Videos of the altercation went viral online. The management of the university claimed in a statement that the students were encouraged to limit their protests to university property and that they had been told that no authorization was given for protests outside the school. Protesters at JNUSU are calling for the implementation of UGC norms.

The Honorable Supreme Court, which stayed the restrictions, is being broken by this. The registrar or vice chancellor of JNU have no authority over the rules, the statement stated. It further stated that the disturbance was caused by students rustication after a proctorial investigation for alleged violence and destruction. After the altercation, security is still strict both on and off campus.

Equitable Revenue Distribution for Content Creators “A must”: Ashwini Vaishnaw



New Delhi, Feb 27: As part of a larger initiative to preserve confidence in the digital era, Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw has stated that social media companies must implement equitable revenue sharing with all types of content creators, from independent voices in distant places to professional journalists. The minister of information and broadcasting issued a warning Thursday at the Digital News Publishers Association (DNPA) Conclave 2026 in Delhi, stating that coordinated disinformation efforts and deepfakes are jeopardizing global confidence. The Minister addressed the assembly of legislators, media executives, and business specialists, saying, “The way the world is emerging today, the core tenet of trust is under threat.” According to Vaishnaw, there are several sources of the hazard. The government is portraying both the regulation of deepfakes and syn-

thetic content and equitable income sharing as crucial to maintaining democratic stability and public confidence. He said that deepfakes have the ability to trick people into believing things that never happened. He stated that misinformation has spread throughout society. He emphasized that because deepfakes, fake news, and misinformation pose major threats to society and democratic institutions, platforms that host material must take accountability for what appears on them. The Minister gave income special attention. According to him, social media companies need to fairly distribute their profits to the content creators.

This includes news reporters and traditional media outlets, producers situated in remote locations, influencers, academics, and researchers who use these platforms to share their work.

Additionally, the speech expands the concept of “content creator” to include academics, researchers, and people who work remotely in addition to traditional newsrooms. This implies that future regulations might not only apply to media corporations but also to the whole digital economy. The idea must now be upheld everywhere, and those who produce the content must receive a fair portion of the profits,” he said. Without the permission of the individual whose voice, face, or personality was used to make the content, synthetic content shouldn’t be produced. It’s time to make that significant inflectional shift,” he continued. The requirement for express agreement before using someone’s face, voice, or personality in AI-generated content suggests that there will soon be limitations on synthetic media, possibly support-

first Super Eight match, they lost badly against South Africa by 76 runs, which put pressure on the team to recover. India’s campaign was initially challenged by the West Indies’ early victory over Zimbabwe, which put South Africa and the Caribbean team ahead of them in the standings. India took decisive action against Zimbabwe. The team set a record for the edition with a tournament-high total of 256 for four, including 17 sixes. Hardik Pandya scored an undefeated fifty off twenty-three deliveries, while Abhishek Sharma spearheaded the attack with a fifty-five off thirty balls. With a swift 44 from just 16 balls, Tilak Varma made sure India had a strong total. Brian Bennett scored 97 not out as Zimbabwe battled bravely, but the visitors were only able to reach 184 for six, falling short by 72 runs. In addition to removing Zimbabwe from the competition, the win gave India a boost in the Super Eight round.

With the victory, India’s prospects of making it to the semi-finals have increased to two points from two games. With four points, South Africa leads Group 2, followed by India and the West Indies with two points apiece.

The second semi-final position will be decided by the match against the West Indies on March 1 at Eden Gardens. India will go to the semi-finals, where they will play their opponent on March 5 at Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai, if they defeat the Caribbean team.

After defeating Zimbabwe, the India Semi-Finals Qualification Scenario



Chennai: With a decisive 72-run victory over Zimbabwe in their Super Eight match at Chennai’s MA Chidambaram Stadium, India got back to winning ways at the T20 World Cup 2026.

The victory puts the reigning champions on track to advance to the semi-finals, where they will face the West Indies on March 1 at Eden Gardens in Kolkata. Following India’s victory over Zimbabwe and West Indies’ crushing loss to South Africa, the Indian team captained by Suryakumar Yadav will now need to overcome West Indies by any margin in order to advance to the semi-finals. The Men in Blue had an impeccable group stage, winning all four games to take the lead in Group A with eight points and move on to the Super Eight stage. But in their

ed by new legal protections for individual rights and digital security.

Additionally, Vaishnaw mentioned a “disinformation barrage” that can foster mistrust that doesn’t actually exist. He cited the increasing abuse of technology to create videos that have no connection to reality and artificially created images of respectable members of society. He claimed that this kind of information reaches the average person and makes them wonder about the fundamental framework of society. The Minister clarified that India is not the only country facing this issue. According to him, it is a worldwide issue associated with new technologies and is occurring everywhere. He went on to say that in order to safeguard both individual rights and digital security, AI-generated content that features people should need express authorization.

He maintained that equitable income sharing should be provided by digital platforms to influencers, academics, educators, and independent artists in remote locations in addition to news organizations. I ask that all platforms reconsider their policy about negotiations. Many nations have already demonstrated the existence of legal avenues in the event that voluntary action is not taken,” he stated. “I will ask all the platforms to reconsider their revenue-sharing policies because that is also one of the main concerns that the entire society today is raising,” Vaishnaw reiterated while discussing equitable income structures for content creators. There are other nations who have demonstrated how to accomplish this legally if it is not done freely.”

Arvind Kejriwal Celebrates Court Relief With Family, Grinning and Hugging

New Delhi, Feb 27: After a court declined to file charges against him, party colleague Manish Sisodia, and others in a corruption case connected to the purported liquor policy scam, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Arvind Kejriwal was greeted with hugs, smiles, and tears at his home in New Delhi as he met his wife Sunita Kejriwal and his kids. Kejriwal’s wife was spotted rushing to him and embracing him tightly as the AAP chief and Sisodia exited his vehicle. The children of the former Delhi chief minister, Harshita and Pulkit Kejriwal, joyfully greeted their father with tears in their eyes. Kejriwal



al lost it earlier in the day when the court ruled that there was not enough evidence to move on with the accused and that no criminal offense, including criminal conspiracy, had been committed. “God is always

with us” is confirmed by the verdict, he told reporters. “We always said that truth prevails and that we have faith in the Indian judicial system,” he stated. Kejriwal said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi

and Union Home Minister Amit Shah were plotting to undermine the AAP while Sisodia and party officials comforted him. “It was an entirely false case. “I was repeatedly depicted as corrupt in television debates,” he claimed.

The purported fraud concerns the excise policy of the Delhi government for 2021-2022, which was later revoked due to claims of anomalies in the pricing and licensing processes. AAP leaders, including Kejriwal and Sisodia, were accused by central authorities of accepting payments from a cartel called the “South Group” in return for policy concessions that fa-

vored certain liquor licensees. In 2024, the Supreme Court granted bail to Kejriwal and Sisodia, who had previously been detained in relation to the liquor policy inquiry. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), which had filed its initial chargesheet in the case in 2022 and multiple further chargesheets after that, was struck a setback by the Rouse Avenue Court’s order.

The CBI insisted during arguments that the whole scope of the criminal conspiracy offense must be considered and that the trial should be used to determine whether the evidence is sufficient.

Tilak Varma Responds Honestly to Shift in Batting Position Against Zimbabwe

New Delhi: With an undefeated 44 in India’s 256-run rout of Zimbabwe in Chennai, Tilak Varma addressed pre-match rumors over his presence in the starting lineup and made a compelling case to keep his berth in the knockout match against the West Indies. Before the match, there had been talk regarding whether India might start Kuldeep Yadav instead of Tilak to bolster their bowling. Rather, the squad supported the left-hander, and he performed well in a game that needed to be won.

Tilak entered the game at the tenth over, gave solidity in the middle overs, and accelerated when needed to finish not out as India amassed the highest total of the competition. After the game, Tilak stated that the team had already settled on their strategy before taking the field. “We talked about our style of cricket before the game,” he remarked. We observed our performance throughout the past 12 months. Everyone felt more confident as a result. The message was straightforward: have fun, smile, and give it your all. Citing the manner in which Zimbabwe’s hitters approached the chase, he characterized the surface as good but noted that it stayed constant throughout both innings. He remarked, “To be honest, it was a very good wicket.” However, you can also observe how Bennett and Raza performed in the second inning. Compared to the first innings, the wicket was even better. After a great start, India needed to maintain pace, therefore Tilak’s innings arrived at a crucial moment. In response to a question about playing in the middle overs, he stated that he felt free to adjust to whatever the team needed. “I’m up for whatever the team needs,” Tilak declared. “I have played the same role for India in a few games and in the IPL for the past four years.” I can adapt to the circumstances. All I had to wait for was one inning. Now is the perfect moment. India’s aggressive approach was evident throughout the innings. Tilak disclosed that the squad had talked about staying focused despite early wickets. “We talked about sticking to the same rhythm



even if we lose three or four wickets during the powerplay,” he stated. We wish to demonstrate to the bowlers that we are prepared to hit each and every ball. He said that early momentum let the middle order to play freely and gave credit to the openers for setting the tone. “Numbers three, four, and five follow that confidence when the openers get off to a strong start,” he stated. “Everyone followed Sanju’s brilliant start.” Tilak also recognized a change in the group’s mindset. The focus was on maintaining pressure after a wicket rather than consolidating. He declared, “We will hit if the next ball is within range.” “I think I’m hitting it for six if it’s in my zone.” Tilak stated that the team would maintain the same goal but continue to adjust to the circumstances as they prepare to play the West Indies in the quarterfinals in Kolkata. He declared, “We want to play fearless cricket, which is the brand we have been playing since last year.” “We want to have the same mindset throughout the tournament and in the upcoming game. We will make adjustments if the wicket is poor, but the level of intensity will remain.” The team is not focused on chasing another 250-plus total,” he continued. He declared, “We are not considering scoring more than 250.” “But we will definitely go for it if the team is willing and we get off to a strong start.” After their most comprehensive batting performance of the tournament, and with Tilak having addressed the concerns about his position in the team, India enters the knockout stage with fresh confidence.

Ronaldo purchases a 25% stake in UD Almeria, a Spanish club



Madrid: Cristiano Ronaldo, a star for Portugal, has invested much in Spanish football. He has acquired a 25 percent share in UD Almeria, a second-tier team presently owned by Saudi investors. As part of the

club ownership group headed by SMC Group, the Al Nassr forward purchased the interest through the business CR7 Sports. In a statement issued by UD Almeria following the acquisition, Ronaldo gave an explanation of the club’s appeal. “Being involved in football outside of the field has always been a goal of mine.

The Spanish team UD Almeria has solid foundations and obvious room to expand. The Portugal star remarked, “I’m excited to collaborate with the leadership group to support the club’s next stage of growth.” Ronaldo was thanked by Almeria’s president, Mohammed Al Khereiji, for his investment in the team. In a statement issued by the club, Khereiji stated, “He is considered the greatest to ever play the game, he knows Spanish football very well, and he

understands the potential of what we are building here both in terms of the team and the academy.”

Almeria, which is presently in third place in the Segunda Division of Spain, is working to get promoted to the main league. Ronaldo is doing well for his team, Al Nassr, in the meantime. On Wednesday, the 41-year-old scored his 121st goal for the team, becoming him the team’s leading scorer. Ronaldo’s record versus Almeria is flawless. During his tenure at Real Madrid, he has faced Almeria seven times and scored seven goals in those games. In the summer, he also played in a friendly match against Al Nassr, which Almeria lost 3-2.

The Portugal star has scored 22 goals in 25 appearances this season and is still under contract with Al Nassr until 2027.

Indian Football League 2025-26 kicks off With exciting double-Header opening day

New Delhi: The Indian Football League (IFL), the country's second-tier men's professional competition, returns on Friday, marking the beginning of a new chapter in India's football pyramid. Formerly known as the I-League, the rebranded competition kicks off with a double-header. The opening fixture will see Namdhari FC host Aizawl FC at the Namdhari Football Stadium in Sri Bhaini Sahib (16:00 IST). Later in the evening, Chanmari FC take on former champions Gokulam Kerala FC at the Rajiv Gandhi Stadium in Aizawl (18:30 IST), as per a release from IFL.

Namdhari FC begin their campaign at home after a steady sixth-place finish in the 2024-25 season. Built on structure and balance, the Ludhiana-based side will look to convert last year's consistency into a stronger push toward the top half. Their opponents, Aizawl FC, arrive determined to reset after a challenging 2024-25 campaign in which defensive vulnerabilities cost them valuable points. The Mizoram side,



However, Carries experience and a proud history in Indian football, being the 2016-17 I-League champions under current national team Head Coach Khalid Jamil.

The contest promises to be a tactical battle with Namdhari's measured approach against Aizawl's intent to re-establish defensive stability. Chanmari FC vs Gokulam Kerala FC Newly promoted Chanmari FC, runners-up in I-League 2 last season, step into the IFL Spotlight against one of the

Most decorated sides in the recent history of the competition. Standing in their way are Gokulam Kerala FC, former back-to-back I-League champions, and one of the most consistent attacking sides in recent seasons, who finished fourth last year with 45 goals. An all-new format: The 2025-26 IFL season will unfold in two stages. In Stage 1, the 10 participating clubs will compete in a single-leg home-and-away round-robin format. In Stage 2, the league will split

Into two groups: The top half will enter a Championship Round (home-and-away). The bottom half will compete in a centralised Relegation Round. All points from Stage 1 will carry forward, ensuring that every match from the opening day carries weight. The team finishing top of the Championship Round at the end of Stage 2 will be crowned champions and earn promotion to the 2026-27 Indian Super League, while the bottom team will be relegated.

Bengaluru FC Eye Second Home Victory

Bengaluru: In a tactical showdown, Bengaluru FC (BFC) will take on Punjab FC in their ISL clash on Friday. The Blues are clear favourites on home soil, Sree Kantarava Stadium, while the Shers arrive desperate to win their first match of the season. At fifth position on the points table, BFC have made a steady start, collecting four points from their opening two fixtures (1 win, 1 draw). They opened with a 2-0 home victory over Sporting Club Delhi. Their follow-up was a gritty 1-1 draw against NorthEast United FC at the Kanteerava last weekend, where a brilliant shot from around 20 yards helped the team to get the lead. Punjab FC lost narrowly to Jamshedpur and are yet to register a point or goal in the league. However, counterattacks led by Dani Ramirez usually dictate the tempo.

IIS' India Knockout Nights Roar With Enthusiastic Chandigarh Response

Mohali: The Centre Lawn at CGC University, Mohali, transformed into a buzzing boxing arena as the opening night of India Knockout Nights delivered high-octane action in front of a packed crowd, with nearly 3000 spectators in attendance. The first-of-its-kind platform, powered by the Inspire Institute of Sport (IIS) in collaboration with professional boxer Neeraj Goyat, featured eight competitive bouts across weight categories and marked a significant step towards building a structured professional boxing ecosystem in India, as per a release from IIS.

The evening which kicked off on Thursday with a thrilling superfly contest between Shiksha and Jyoti, which set the tone for the night. Shiksha emerged victorious after four intense rounds in a bout that kept the crowd engaged from start to finish. The atmosphere remained electric throughout



The night, with fans staying on their feet until the final bell. India Knockout Nights has been conceptualised as a multi-city professional boxing league that will host regular fight nights, providing Indian boxers consistent competitive exposure across divisions and weight categories, while also bringing the sport closer to fans in a live, arena-style format. The initiative aims to Address a key gap in Indian

Boxing by creating a regular competition circuit, giving athletes more opportunities to compete, gain experience, and build sustainable professional careers beyond major multi-sport events. Several prominent dignitaries were present for the marquee event, including JSW Sports CEO Divyanshu Singh, IIS President Manisha Malhotra and former India hockey captain Sardar Singh.

Irfan Pathan backs Varun Chakravarthy to bounce back in India versus West Indies

New Delhi: Former India all-rounder Irfan Pathan feels Varun Chakravarthy's recent dip in form is a concern, but believes the mystery spinner can bounce back when India face West Indies in their must-win Super 8 clash in Kolkata. Varun has been one of India's standout performers in the tournament overall, picking up 11 wickets in six matches at an economy of 7.20, making him the fifth-highest wicket-taker so far. However, his impact has dipped in the Super 8 stage, where he has not been as effective as he was earlier in the competition. Speaking on his YouTube channel, Pathan pointed out that Varun's recent struggles have stemmed from inconsistency in length, particularly against right-handers.

The concern remains Varun Chakravarthy. About 63% of his deliveries were too short. He usually bowls a shorter length compared to traditional spinners, but not this short. In the last two matches, he has bowled fuller to left-handers but too short to right-handers. If this is a conscious tactical shift, it could complicate things," Pathan said. However, Pathan backed Varun to turn things around at Eden Gardens. Against West Indies in Kolkata — a pitch he knows well — he can bounce back. Just a slight adjustment in length, maybe come closer To the Stumps around the wicket to left-handers, and he'll be back. If he picks up an early wicket, he can create



Serious pressure," he added. With West Indies boasting a powerful batting lineup, India will need Varun to rediscover his rhythm quickly if they are to keep their semi-final hopes alive. Varun's overall numbers in the tournament remain strong, but his recent outings have raised concerns. Against South Africa in Ahmedabad, he conceded 47 runs at an economy of 11.75 while taking just one wicket. In the following match against Zimbabwe, he went for 35 runs in three overs at an economy of 8.75. These performances were a contrast to his earlier impact in the group stage, where his

Variations and control helped India gain crucial breakthroughs. As India prepare for a virtual knockout against West Indies, Varun's role becomes even more important. A return to tighter lengths and early wickets could tilt the contest in India's favour. Irfan Pathan identified that Varun Chakravarthy has struggled with inconsistency in his bowling length, specifically failing to maintain a proper distance when facing right-handed batters. Pathan noted that approximately 63% of the spinner's deliveries in recent outings were too short, a significant departure from his usual effective tactical length.

FIFA president voices confidence in Mexico Hosting World Cup despite cartel violence



Mexico City: FIFA president Gianni Infantino said Thursday he spoke with Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum and that he has "full confidence" in Mexico as a host country for this year's World Cup soccer tournament despite violent incidents following the death of a powerful drug lord that left at least 70 people dead. Last Sunday, the Mexican army killed Nemesio Oseguera Cervantes "El Mencho", the leader of the Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CNJJ)

sparking several days of violence. Cartel members burned cars and blocked roads in nearly a dozen Mexican states. "I had an excellent conversation earlier today with Mexico president, Claudia Sheinbaum," Infantino said. "I reiterated our full confidence in the host country and look forward to it staging all scheduled matches there at what will be the most inclusive and the greatest FIFA World Cup ever." Mexico is set to host 13 World Cup matches, four of them

in the western city of Guadalajara, in the Jalisco state, the central hub for the Jalisco cartel. "I spoke by phone with FIFA President Gianni Infantino; we continue working as usual to successfully host the 2026 FIFA World Cup," Sheinbaum posted on X. "We reaffirm our confidence in the country." Sheinbaum has vowed this week there was "no risk" for visitors, but on Thursday the World Cup diving event set to be held in a Guadalajara suburb next week was canceled over security concerns.

Earlier in the week the Portuguese soccer federation said it was "closely monitoring the delicate situation" ahead of a friendly match against Mexico's national team in Mexico City. Infantino said earlier this week in Colombia that he was convinced that "everything will go as smoothly as possible." Besides the four World Cup matches, the western city of Guadalajara is scheduled to host an international playoff in late March. New Caledonia will play Jamaica and the winner will face Congo for a spot in the tournament. The president of the Jamaica Football Federation, Michael Ricketts, said this week that his organization is closely monitoring the month.

Pakistan Seek Big Win Over Sri Lanka, Depend On England's Favor to Secure Semi-Final Spot

Pallekele: Pakistan will need a commanding win over already-eliminated Sri Lanka and a favour from England to keep their semifinal hopes alive in the T20 World Cup when they play their final Super 8 match here on Saturday. Co-hosts Sri Lanka have already crashed out of the semifinal race after Super 8 defeats to England and New Zealand, while England have sealed their place in the last four. Pakistan, placed third in the table, are locked in a battle with New Zealand for the second and final berth, but the Kiwis are in a far stronger position than Agha's side. With three points and a vastly superior net run rate of 3.050, New Zealand are in pole position compared to Pakistan's solitary point from two matches and a negative NRR of -0.461. But all hope is not lost for Pakistan, who can still qualify if England thrash New Zealand by a huge margin on Friday and Agha's men, in turn, beat Sri Lanka just as comprehensively.

However, it would be a big ask for Pakistan's batters and bowlers to put together a clinical show, having largely misfired in the tournament. Sahibzada Farhan stands head and shoulders above the rest with 283 runs at 70.75, including one century and two fifties, at a strike rate of 158.10. But beyond him, no other specialist batter in the Pakistan camp has crossed three figures in this T20 World Cup. All-rounder Shadab Khan, whose role in the side has



Sparked a heated debate between two prominent former cricketers, has the second-best tally with 111 runs. While skipper Agha (44 runs), Saim Ayub (70) and star batter Babar Azam (91) have only disappointed, Pakistan will have their hopes pinned on the dangerous Fakhar Zaman to deliver the goods. Usman Tariq's 10 wickets have offered Pakistan some hope in the bowling department, along with Shaheen Shah Afridi showing signs of form against England, albeit in a game he could not turn around on his own. For Sri Lanka, it will be imperative to give their passionate fans a win in their

Final appearance in the tournament. The last time Sri Lanka were co-hosts, they had finished as runner-up in 2011. Dasun Shanaka's side began impressively and almost added their name among title favourites when they pulverised Australia in the group stage. But since that win, Sri Lanka have lost three games on the trot against Zimbabwe, England and New Zealand to fizzle out. Pathum Nissanka's inspired century against Australia now feels like a distant memory as Sri Lanka stand battered not only by the string of defeats marked by underwhelming cricket all round. With a batting order

Lacking both depth and gumption, Sri Lanka have lost early wickets regularly and have failed to respond to pressure situations. With the ball, they have not caused any major concerns to the opposition batters either.

They allowed New Zealand to claw back in the final five overs of a contest they had firmly in control, before inexplicably crawling to 20 for two in the powerplay while batting at home, surrendering both momentum and the match as sections of the local crowd cheered for New Zealand. Sri Lanka's Indian batting coach Vikram Rathour said while reflecting on the team's poor performance.

"A Very Special Day": Karun Chandhok Drives Vettel's Red Bull R8 at Buddh



Greater Noida: Former Indian Formula 1 driver Karun Chandhok described driving Sebastian Vettel's Red Bull R8 at the Buddh International Circuit on Thursday as an unforgettable experience, calling it a "very special day." The legendary RB8, driven by Sebastian Vettel, won the F1 Indian Grand Prix in Delhi NCR back in 2012, en route to winning a historic World Drivers' and Constructors Championship double. In an X post, Karun Chandhok wrote, "Awesome day at the Buddh International Circuit! I never thought that I would get a chance to drive an F1 car in India again, so a big thanks to @redbullindia for a very special day in Sebas-

tian Vettel's 2012 Indian GP - and Championship winning - RB8." The Buddh International Circuit, which hosted its first Formula 1 Indian Grand Prix in 2011, holds a special place in Indian motorsport history. Driving Vettel's championship-winning Red Bull R8 offered Chandhok a rare opportunity to relive the legacy of one of F1's most iconic cars while celebrating his connection to his home track. Sports Ministry sources had said earlier this month that the Formula 1 race in Greater Noida could soon make a comeback. Union Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya recently visited the Buddh International Circuit (BIC) in Greater Noida,

signalling potential plans to revive the Indian Grand Prix. Former Indian Formula 1 driver Karun Chandhok described driving Sebastian Vettel's Red Bull R8 at the Buddh International Circuit on Thursday as an unforgettable experience, calling it a "very special day." The legendary RB8, driven by Sebastian Vettel, won the F1 Indian Grand Prix in Delhi NCR back in 2012, en route to winning a historic World Drivers' and Constructors Championship double.

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