

In Brief

Doyang Wildlife Division inaugurated to boost conservation

Kohima: The Doyang Wildlife Division, Wokha was inaugurated by the Nagaland Environment, Forests and Climate Change department on Thursday in a bid to strengthen wildlife conservation and address growing human-elephant conflict in the region. With the inauguration, the Doyang Wildlife Division, headquartered in Wokha, will cover forest areas across Wokha, Mokokchung, and Zunheboto districts. Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change and Village Guards, C.L. John, in his address, emphasised the importance of ecological balance, stating that humans cannot survive in isolation from nature. He remarked that while environmental degradation is often caused by human activities, the government is frequently blamed for the consequences. He assured that the new division would help address the human-elephant conflict and gradually bring development, adding that more staff would be deployed in Wokha to effectively tackle wildlife-related concerns.

Violence Erupts in Chirang

Guwahati: Police opened fire to control a violent protest at the Runikhata Forest Range Office along the India-Bhutan border in Assam's Chirang district after clashes between demonstrators and security personnel escalated sharply. According to officials, the situation spiralled out of control when protesters allegedly attacked police and forest personnel and resorted to heavy stone pelting. Security forces first used a baton charge and tear gas to disperse the crowd before opening fire, triggering panic in the area. Tension continues to prevail despite reinforcement of additional police personnel. The unrest began on Thursday night after forest officials detained 25 individuals from the Adivasi community on charges of encroaching on protected forest land.

Fuel Supply Stabilises in Assam, Says IOC

Guwahati: Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) today said that the supply situation of domestic LPG cylinders and petroleum products is completely normal in Assam. The supply of all petroleum products, including petrol, diesel, and LPG, in the state of Assam is fully normal and under control. Uninterrupted supply is being ensured through the state's robust infrastructure, continuous monitoring system, and effective co-ordination with State government officials," an official statement from IOC stated. Currently, there are a total of 1,737 retail outlets in Assam (OMCs: 1,461 and private: 276) along with 9 supply locations/depots in operation. On average, 2,935 KL of petrol (MS) and 3,670 KL of diesel (HSD) are being made available daily through these retail outlets, it said. At present, sufficient stock equivalent to 21 days of petrol and 46 days of diesel is available. All oil marketing companies (OMC) retail outlets are functioning normally, and there are no restrictions on sales, it stated. The statement added that nozzle sales are in line with normal consumption levels of January-March 2026, indicating stable demand.

LPG and Petroleum Supply in Assam Stable and Adequate: Nitin Bhatnagar

Guwahati , Apr 17: The supply of domestic LPG cylinders and petroleum products in Assam remains stable and normal, with adequate stock available across the state, said Nitin Bhatnagar, Executive Director and State Head of Indian Oil's AOD State Office. Addressing a press conference organised with Press Information Bureau (PIB) Guwahati, Bhatnagar stated that petrol, diesel, and LPG supplies are under control, supported by strong infrastructure, continuous monitoring, and coordination with the state government. Assam currently has 1,737 retail outlets, including 1,461 operated by oil marketing companies (OMCs) and 276 by private firms, backed by nine supply depots. Daily



supply stands at around 2,935 KL of petrol and 3,670 KL of diesel. Stocks are sufficient to meet 21 days of petrol demand and 46 days of diesel demand. Citizens have been advised not to panic-buy. In the LPG sector, around 93 lakh consumers are served

through 604 distributors and seven bottling plants. On average, about 1.39 lakh LPG refills are delivered daily, and the backlog has been streamlined to about 4.28 days. Overall LPG supply remains stable. Significant progress has been

made in digitalisation, with 84% of LPG bookings now done through digital platforms, up from 49% two months ago. Delivery Authentication Code (DAC) compliance has also increased from 37% to 72%. Under the PM Ujjwala Yojana, daily LPG refills dropped from an average of 62,000 in February 2026 to about 44,595 in March 2026. To support low-consumption households, migrant workers, and students, 5 kg LPG cylinders are being made available. Commercial LPG allocation is currently maintained at 70%, prioritising essential sectors such as hospitals, educational institutions, defence, railways, government offices, hotels, restaurants, and industrial canteens.

Guwahati's LGBT Airport Set to Expand Connectivity with Terminal 2

Guwahati, Apr 17: The operationalisation of Terminal 2 at the Lokapriya Gopinath Bardoloi International Airport marks a significant step forward in strengthening air connectivity between the Northeast and key destinations across India and beyond. Designed to handle a larger volume of passengers and aircraft movements, the new terminal is expected to support expanded flight routes and higher frequencies, addressing long-standing connectivity gaps from Guwahati to several major cities.

With the enhanced infrastructure now in place, airlines will have greater operational flexibility to introduce new services and increase the number of flights on existing routes. Improved passenger handling capacity, modern facilities, and upgraded operational systems at Terminal 2 create a strong foundation for airlines to expand their networks from Guwahati.

One of the key outcomes anticipated from the new terminal is better connectivity to cities that currently have limited direct flight options. For instance, destinations such as Raipur, Mumbai, Bangalore and Ahmedabad have historically had restricted direct flight frequency from Guwahati, often requiring passen-



gers to rely on connecting flights or limited daily services.

With Terminal 2 operational, there is greater potential for airlines to add more direct flights and enhance schedule flexibility for travellers.

Industry stakeholders believe that improved connectivity will not only benefit passengers but also stimulate trade, tourism, and business travel. Enhanced air links with key economic and tech hubs like Mumbai, Bangalore and Ahmedabad can facilitate stronger commercial ties, while additional connections

to central India, including Raichur, Raipur, Lucknow, Jaipur can open new opportunities for regional mobility and economic engagement.

The increased capacity at the airport also allows for better management of peak-hour traffic and the possibility of accommodating more airlines and aircraft movements. This will help Guwahati strengthen its role as the primary aviation gateway to the Northeast and as a transit hub linking the region with the rest of India.

Beyond domestic connectivity, the upgraded terminal infrastructure also positions

the airport to support the gradual expansion of international routes in the future, further integrating the Northeast with global destinations.

As passenger traffic continues to grow in the region, Terminal 2 is expected to play a pivotal role in meeting rising demand while enhancing the overall travel experience.

With improved connectivity, increased flight options, and modern passenger facilities, the new terminal represents a major milestone in the ongoing development of aviation infrastructure in the Northeast.

Mizoram Excise Seizes Over 10kg Meth and Arrests Four Suspects

Aizawl, Apr 17: In a major drug haul, the Mizoram Excise and Narcotics Department seized over 10 kg of methamphetamine and arrested four persons, including a Myanmar national, during operations in Aizawl, an official said on Thursday, April 16. Acting on a tip-off, department officials conducted a raid near Folkland Park in the Falkland neighbourhood on Wednesday, department spokesperson Peter Zohmingthanga said. During the operation, officials recovered 10.021 kg of methamphetamine, totalling around 1 lakh tablets, he said. Two residents of Assam's Karimganj, identified as Jakaria Hussain (28) and Taj Uddin (25), were arrested at the scene, he said. Follow-up investiga-



tions also led to the arrest of two more individuals later in the day. Lalnunziri (38), a Myanmar national from Khawmawi village believed to be the supplier, was arrested in the Khatla neighbourhood around 4:30 pm, while Vanlalrintluanga (27), a resident of Armed Veng South in Aizawl, was taken into custody around 7 pm for allegedly facilitating the local transport of the consignment, he said. He added that officials also confiscated a Maruti WagonR car used to transport the consignment.

Third Maha Sangken Festival Celebrated in Namsai

Itanagar, Apr 17: The third edition of the International Maha Sangken Festival was celebrated with enthusiasm and spiritual fervour at Namsai in Arunachal Pradesh.

The Sangken Festival is a significant socio-cultural and religious event, symbolising unity, peace and the rich cultural heritage of the Tai Khamti.

Marking the beginning of the celebrations, prayers and rituals were offered to Lord Buddha on the first day of the festival, invoking blessings for the well-being and prosperity of all.

Extending his warm greetings and best wishes to the people on the occasion, Arunachal Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein also prayed for good health, peace, and happiness for everyone.

Mein noted that Sangken, the traditional water festival, carries a profound message of purification, renewal and harmony.

The Deputy Chief Minister expressed his delight in participating on the second day of the celebrations of the festival, which will have cultural performances by international and local troupes, including artists from Thailand, as well as from the Monpa Insti-



tute of Performing Arts (MIPA), Dirang, Kraa-Dadi District troupe, winner of Arunachal Super Dancer, and Tai Khamti Heritage and Literature Society.

Highlighting the significance of the festival, Mein stated that such platforms not only preserve and promote indigenous traditions but also strengthen bonds of friendship and cultural exchange with neighbouring countries.

The International Maha Sangken Festival continues to serve as a vibrant confluence of culture, devotion and community participation, celebrating the essence of Arunachal Pradesh's diverse heritage while fostering international goodwill.

Among others, MP (Lok Sabha) Tapir Gao, State BJP president Kaling Moyong, MLAs Moresh Chai, Chau Zingnu Namchoom, Jikke Tako, Mutchu Mithi and Mopi Mihu also participated in the festival.

Manipur CM Calls for Dialogue and Peace During Visit to Ukhrul Villages

Imphal, Apr 17: Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh on Friday called for dialogue and peaceful coexistence during his visit to several villages in Ukhrul district, aiming to bridge the trust deficit between Kuki and Tangkhul Naga communities.

Describing dialogue as the only way forward, the Chief Minister said, "There is no other option left other than dialogue for the restoration of peace." He emphasized that while every community may have both positive and negative elements, ordinary citizens and children aspire for a peaceful life.

During an emotional interaction at Thawai Kuki village, the Chief Minister was moved when a woman broke down in tears. Responding empathetically, he said he could feel her pain and anguish, stressing the urgent need for reconciliation through dialogue.

He warned that continued violence would have a long-term impact on future generations, urging elders to act responsibly and work towards harmony despite the prevailing tensions.

The Chief Minister assured villagers that steps would be taken to re-



sume normal schooling and address key infrastructure needs. He said the construction of a bridge in the area is already part of the government's work programme and promised priority attention to drinking water issues.

During his maiden visit to Ukhrul, Khemchand also visited Sharkaphung, a Tangkhul Naga village, where he received a warm welcome. Interacting with villagers, he highlighted how even global conflicts like World War II ended through dialogue, urging communities to move forward by setting aside past grievances.

He called for initiating peace talks in a calm and constructive environment and expressed concern over the uncertain future of children if violence continues.

The Chief Minister also directed officials to take up the construction of a bridge at Sharkaphung this year and reviewed progress on the Imphal-Ukhrul-Jessami road project, assuring that challenges would be addressed through discussions with senior officials.

On his way, he visited Shangkai, Shokvao, and Ramva villages, where

residents raised issues related to drinking water, road development, and ongoing government projects. He assured them of prompt action and inclusive development.

At the Ukhrul district headquarters, the Chief Minister received a grand welcome from the district administration, civil society organisations, and local residents. He later inspected preparations for the upcoming Shirui Lily Festival 2026 at Shirui village, along with Deputy Chief Minister Losii Dilkho, Tourism Minister Khuraim Loken Singh, and other officials.

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Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change and Village Guards, C.L. John, in his address, emphasised the importance of ecological balance, stating that humans cannot survive in isolation from nature. He remarked that while environmental degradation is often caused by human activities, the government is frequently blamed for the consequences. He assured that the new division would help address the human-elephant conflict and gradually bring development, adding that more staff would be deployed in Wokha to effectively tackle wildlife-related concerns.

On mitigation measures, John stated that the State Action Plan has already been submitted for assessment and expressed hope for positive out-

- Inauguration of the Doyang Wildlife Division in Wokha aims to strengthen wildlife conservation and tackle human-elephant conflict.
- The division will manage forest areas across Wokha, Mokokchung, and Zunheboto districts.

comes. When asked on the compensation for the man who lost his life from New Riphyim village, Wokha, last year due to human-elephant conflict, he informed that an ex gratia of Rs 9 lakh has been provided, comprising Rs 5 lakh from the department and Rs 4 lakh from the State Disaster Management. Speaking at the programme, Principal Secretary Kikheto Sema highlighted the growing issue of human-elephant conflict in the region and stressed the need for a dedicated wildlife division in Doyang, which he said has been a long-felt necessity. He noted that increasing forest clearances and shrinking habitats are likely to intensify such conflicts in the future, and urged the need to maintain human-wildlife coexistence while preserving habitat for wildlife.

He also stated that the department is exploring new strategies and conducting training programmes to effectively address human-elephant conflict.

To improve sanitation, approves the Greater Shillong Waste Management Agency



Shillong, Apr 17: The Meghalaya government has approved the creation of a new organization to better manage garbage in the Shillong urban area since the current system has been plagued

by issues with inconsistent service and inadequate coordination. According to officials, the main goal is to remove coordination problems and improve the overall functioning of waste

management services in the city.

Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma said the decision has been taken in view of Shillong's fast urban expansion and growing population pressure. He noted that multiple agencies are currently responsible for waste services across different jurisdictions, leading to duplication of work and reduced efficiency. The Greater Shillong rubbish Management Agency, a new organization that will be established as a registered society, would combine rubbish collection and disposal operations that are now managed independently by several local administrations.

In Aizawl, more than 10 kg of meth was found four people, including a Myanmar national, were detained

Aizawl, Apr 17: During an anti-drug operation in the city, the Mizoram Excise and Narcotics Department found over 10 kg of methamphetamine and arrested four people, including a citizen of Myanmar, according to officials on April 16. On Wednesday, authorities conducted a raid close to Folkland Park in response to specific intelligence and found 10.02 kg of methamphetamine in the form of around one lakh tablets. Known as a "crazy drug," methamphetamine is an extremely addictive drug that is prohibited in India. Among those arrested are two individuals from Karimganj and a foreign national from Myanmar, the department's spokesperson Peter Zohmingthanga said. The accused have been booked under Section 21(c) of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985, and were produced before a court in Aizawl on Thurs-



day. Officials added that since January this year, the department has seized 7.24 kg of heroin, 49.39 kg of methamphetamine, and 90.83 kg of ganja, along with other narcotic substances, as part of intensified anti-drug operations in the state.

At the Kohima meet, the Athletics Federation of India focuses on talent pipeline and grassroots shortages

Kohima, Apr 17: The Athletics Federation of India (AFI) addressed inadequacies in grassroots systems and talent development throughout Nagaland during its Annual General Meeting, sparking a renewed drive for institutional reforms in athletics in Kohima. In order to improve coordination between national and local organizations, senior authorities and leaders from district athletic associations throughout the state participated in a private meeting. Restructuring district units, holding more competitions, and bolstering channels for spotting and developing talent were the main topics of debate. Officials acknowledged that inconsistent competition exposure and uneven institutional capacity at the district level continue to limit athlete development.

The federation emphasised the need for standardised practices and expanded training and certification programmes for coaches and technical officials to address these gaps. Speakers at the meeting stressed that a stronger grassroots network is critical to building a sustainable talent

pipeline. They also highlighted athletics as a tool for youth engagement and national integration, calling for wider participation and more inclusive access to sport. Beyond policy discussions, the federation combined its agenda with a community outreach initiative at the Kohima Orphanage and Destitute Home.

Delegates interacted with children and local residents, distributing gifts and sharing words of encouragement in what organisers described as a goodwill gesture. The outreach was led by former world championships medallist Anju Bobby George, whose presence, along with other athletes and officials, aimed to inspire children through sport.

The visit coincided with the orphanage's 53rd Foundation Day, where members of the Sunshine Orchestra, mentored by AR Rahman, performed for the gathering. The Kohima engagements reflect AFI's attempt to pair administrative reforms with community-facing efforts, as it seeks to strengthen athletics systems while expanding its social footprint.

The Sikkim government instructs employees to attend PM Modi's statehood celebrations



Gangtok, Apr 17: The Sikkim government has instructed its staff to attend Narendra Modi's events, which are planned for later this month to commemorate the state's 50th anniversary of independence. The Department of Per-

sonnel has issued a circular requesting all officers and staff, including those stationed in districts, to take part in the Prime Minister's welcome in Gangtok on April 27. The circular further stated that officers, along with Group 'C' and

'D' employees posted in and around Gangtok, are required to attend the main closing ceremony at Paljor Stadium on April 28. Employees have also been encouraged to wear traditional attire during the events. Heads of Departments have been instructed to coordinate schedules and ensure arrangements for both the reception and the main event. Prime Minister Modi had earlier inaugurated the year-long 50th statehood celebrations, addressing the event virtually from Bagdogra in West Bengal due to inclement weather.

Meghalaya's chief minister praises the women's quota bill and anticipates more state seats

Shillong, Apr 17: Conrad K. Sangma, the chief minister of Meghalaya, has praised the Women's Reservation Bill as an important step toward improved democratic representation and anticipated benefits for the state in Parliament following delimitation. On April 16, the Center presented three measures to the Lok Sabha that would create a delimitation commission and modify the women's quota law. The Bill, according to Sangma, is a "very welcome step" that satisfies a long-standing desire. "This is something which should have been done a long time back, but we must give credit to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for this bold decision," said Sangma, leader of the matriline-

al state where women hold significant social roles. He highlighted low female participation in Parliament and state assemblies, arguing the Bill would bridge this gap. "This will be a very important democratic reform and will allow greater representation of women at the top level, enabling them to take decisions that will benefit society at large," he added. Sangma anticipates more seats for Meghalaya, based on its population and terrain challenges. "I expect that seats will increase in Meghalaya, and I feel that the Government of India and the delimitation commission will positively look into this aspect," he stated. The CM urged caution in linking delimitation with the Bill's rollout.

Meghalaya approves the Greater Shillong Waste Management Agency proposal

Shillong, Apr 17: Concerned about disjointed systems and inconsistent service delivery, the Meghalaya Cabinet has authorized the establishment of a specialized agency to simplify garbage management in the growing urban area of Shillong. It is anticipated that the proposed Greater Shillong Waste Management Agency, which will be registered as a society, will oversee the collection and disposal of waste in several currently autonomous jurisdictions. Officials said the move is aimed at addressing "gaps in coordination and inefficiencies" that have affected the overall effectiveness of waste management in the city. Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma said the decision comes in response to the pressures of rapid urbanisation and population growth. "With Shillong witnessing rapid growth and increasing urbanisation, waste collection and management are currently being handled by multiple agencies across different jurisdictions," he noted, adding that this fragmentation has impacted efficiency. The agency will cover the Greater Shillong Planning Area, which spans around 288.5 square kilometres.



The government said consultations were held with localities within this region before finalising the proposal, reflecting what it described as a "clear and growing need to enhance the efficiency of garbage collection and waste management". Authorities clarified that the agency's services will not be compulsory. Localities will

retain the option to decide whether to use the centralised system or continue with existing arrangements. The initiative is part of broader efforts by the state government to improve urban infrastructure and service delivery in Shillong, which has seen steady expansion in recent years.

Imphal West's Manipur torch demonstration was put on hold following a fight, demonstrators were dispersed with tear gas

Imphal, Apr 17: On April 16, tensions in Imphal West, Manipur, increased as police troops at Singjamei halted a sizable Meira rally that was planned in relation to the Tronglaobi incident. The attack in Tronglaobi village, Bishnupur district, on April 7, when a suspected militant strike killed two young siblings and gravely injured their mother, served as the impetus for the rally. A strong explosion was reportedly caused by a projectile, thought to be a rocket, striking a civilian home in Moirang Tronglaobi. A five-year-old boy and his five-month-old sister were recognized as the victims. The projectile, which highlighted persistent tensions along the hill-valley boundary abutting Churachandpur district, was allegedly fired from neighboring hill slopes more than three kilometers distant, according to locals. The rally began from Lilong and moved towards Singjamei, drawing a significant number of participants under the aegis of the All Manipur United Clubs' Organisation (AMUCO), with support from several other groups. Protesters raised slogans including "Go back Central Force" and "Long live Manipur", while demanding the arrest of suspected Kuki militants linked to the Tronglaobi bomb attack. Security had been tightened earlier in the day in sensitive areas such as Kakwa and Singjamei, with police and central



forces deployed in anticipation of unrest. The rally was halted at Singjamei, leading to a confrontation between demonstrators and security personnel. Officials used tear gas shells to disperse the crowd after the situation turned volatile. Several protesters reportedly sustained injuries during the clash.

The agitation continued into the night before authorities brought it under control. The protest followed an earlier round of talks between the government and a Joint Action Committee (JAC) formed after the Tronglaobi incident, which ended without a final agreement. The meeting, held at the official residence of Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh, was attended

by senior ministers, MLAs, JAC members and families of the victims.

According to JAC representatives, the delegation presented a charter of demands, including a military crackdown on suspected Kuki militant groups, redeployment of central forces from valley areas to the hills, and a judicial inquiry into the role of security personnel at the time of the incident. The committee also sought compensation and protection for the victims' families. JAC member Moirangthem Gouro said the government "responded very well and listened patiently", but noted that "in certain points, they couldn't reach understanding". Both sides

agreed to continue discussions. The committee has also demanded the immediate arrest of those responsible for the killing of two children and injuries to their mother. It stated that the families would not claim the bodies of the deceased and would continue a blockade along Tiddim Road until their demands are met. In a statement issued later, the chief minister expressed "profound grief" over the incident and assured that the investigation is being carried out with "utmost seriousness".

He said those responsible would face strict action in accordance with the law and reaffirmed the government's commitment to delivering justice.

AIUDF promises to support the opposition group targeting Assam administration

Guwahati, Apr 17: Rafiqul Islam, an MLA for the All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF), has indicated a possible realignment following the 2026 assembly elections by lending his party's support to any opposition group ready to oppose the BJP in Assam's next administration. On April 17, Islam told reporters that Assamese voters are tired of BJP governance and want change. He cited the highest-ever turnout of 85.38 percent in the April 9 elections as evidence of anti-incumbency sentiment. "People reject the BJP government," he said. "If an opposition front forms against them, AIUDF will extend full support to help build a new administration. We expect over 15 seats and stand ready to sacrifice if required." The elections saw women outpace men with 85.96% participation against 84.80 per cent, while third-gender turnout reached 36.84 per cent. Islam argued this surge reflects a clear pivot towards opposition forces, with final numbers pending results. BJP, however, interprets the numbers differently. The party hailed the turnout as evidence of robust faith in democracy and its governance model.

Arunachal Pradesh hotspot, researchers find 19 species of vespid wasps

Itanagar, Apr 17: In Tawang district, Arunachal Pradesh, scientists have identified 19 species of vespid wasps, which is a significant advancement in the mapping of insect diversity in India's Eastern Himalayas. Antepipona bhutanensis, a solitary potter wasp that was previously only known in Bhutan, has been found in India for the first time, according to a recent study. Targeted surveys revealed the presence of this uncommon species, which prefers warmer, lower-altitude regions. Fieldwork spanned 2019, 2021, and 2022 across Jang, Lumla, and Panchen subdivisions. Teams used sweep nets, pan traps, and direct observations in varied settings—

from subtropical forests and alpine meadows to riverbanks and altered landscapes. The effort skipped 2020 amid COVID-19 curbs. ZSI affiliates Puthuvayi Girish Kumar, Atanu Nasrkar, Kumarapuram Apadodharan Subramanian, and Dhriti Banerjee worked with lead author Dibyajyoti Ghosh of the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI), Kolkata. On April 10, 2026, their study, "Notes on the distribution of vespid wasps (Hymenoptera: Vespidae) in Tawang, Eastern Himalayas, India," was published online in the Taylor & Francis journal Oriental Insects. Ten genera in three subfamilies—Eumeninae, Polistinae, and Vespinae—are included in



the study, which provides Tawang's first thorough checklist. It includes new distribution data, photos, habitat characteristics, plant connections, and diagnostic features.

The deputy chief minister of Arunachal Pradesh finishes the census self-enumeration and requests public involvement

Itanagar, Apr 17: Chowna Mein, the deputy chief minister of Arunachal Pradesh, finished his self-enumeration for the forthcoming Census 2027 on Wednesday, marking the beginning of the process in the state and encouraging citizens to fully participate. The action is a component of the state administration's larger initiative to promote early participation in the digital self-enumeration process, which went live on April 16. Senior public officials' involvement is anticipated to raise awareness and response rates, according to officials. Local representatives, including Chau Zingnu Namchoom and Chau Sujana Namchoom, also completed their self-enumeration and appealed to residents to cooperate with the exercise by submitting accurate information. Speaking after completing the process, Mein stressed that reliable



data is critical for planning and development at both state and national levels. He called on citizens to cooperate with census officials and ensure that information provided is correct. Officials involved in the exercise said the early participation of senior leaders is likely to strengthen public confidence in the process. Census authorities in the region have also urged households to take part in self-enumeration before

field verification begins. The Census 2027 will be conducted in two phases. The first phase, the housing listing and housing census, will gather data on housing conditions and access to basic amenities such as water, electricity and sanitation. Self-enumeration for this phase will continue until 30 April, after which enumerators will carry out door-to-door verification between 1 May and 30 May. The second phase, population enumeration, will collect detailed demographic and socio-economic data, including age, gender, education and occupation. Officials said the data will be used to guide policy decisions, welfare programmes and infrastructure planning. Authorities have reiterated that public cooperation and accurate responses remain essential for the success of the nationwide exercise.

MNF Slams Mizoram Government For Stalling CBI Probe Into 188 Crore Lengpui Land Scam

Aizawl, Apr 17: The Mizo National Front (MNF), Mizoram’s principal opposition party, on Friday accused the Zoram People’s Movement (ZPM) government of delaying the initiation of a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe into the alleged ₹187.90 crore Lengpui land compensation case. At a press conference, MNF legal board vice-chairman Lalpianfela Chawngthu said the government’s February 23 notification granting general consent for a CBI investigation was only procedural and had not been followed by any concrete action.

He alleged that the move was “mere eyewash,” stating that a consent notification alone does not trigger a CBI probe unless a



formal request is sent to the CBI director along with the required documents, which, according to him, had not been done.

Chawngthu said MNF representatives had sought updates from the chief secretary on March 25 but were directed to the vigi-

lance department. He added that although the vigilance secretary had assured the party of providing relevant documents on March 26, no information had been shared so far.

A ZPM representative, however, said the government had already granted consent for a CBI investigation following complaints raised by both the MNF and the Congress. The issue relates to land near Lengpui airport, about 32 km from Aizawl, which was acquired by the Indian Air Force for fighter aircraft operations and refuelling facilities. Opposition parties have alleged irregularities in compensation distribution, claiming that two non-original landowners received the bulk of the shares.

Tea Bodies Urge Narendra Modi to Allow Flexible Sale Options for Producers

Guwahati, Apr 17: Four Assam-based tea organisations have urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to allow tea producers the freedom to choose how they sell their produce, instead of being mandatorily required to sell through public auction centres. The organisations—Assam Bought Leaf Tea Manufacturers’ Association (ABLTMA), North Eastern Tea Association (NETA), Bharatiya Cha Parishad (BCP), and North Bengal Tea Producers’ Welfare Association (NBTPWA)—stated that the cost of selling tea through auction centres often exceeds the net profit margins of producers, making the business increasingly unviable.

In a joint representation submitted on April 16, the organisations called for amendments to government orders issued in February 2024 and October 2025, which made it compulsory for tea producers to sell a significant portion of their output through public auctions.

According to the organisations, the rules require producers to sell 100% of dust-grade tea and at least 50% of their total annual production via auction centres. They argued that this system places tea producers at a disadvantage. “The auction system involves higher transaction costs and longer selling cycles compared to direct ex-factory sales. The cost of selling through auctions is around ₹10 per kilogram, which is nearly 5% of the average selling price and often exceeds the net profit margins,” the organisations said.

They have requested the government to either withdraw or modify these orders, allowing producers to choose between auction and private sales based on market conditions. They also sought relaxation or exemptions for affected stakeholders.

Assam and West Bengal together account for nearly 83% of India’s total tea production, while South India contributes about 17%. Out of the country’s annual production of around 1,350 million kilograms, North India produces approximately 1,120 million kilograms.

The four organisations collectively represent about 60% of North India’s tea production, highlighting the scale and significance of their concerns.

Tripura CM congratulates Tipra Motha for victory in TTAADC polls

Agartala, Apr 17: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Friday congratulated the Tipra Motha Party (TMP) on its resounding victory in the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) polls. “Congratulations to all the winners, and warm wishes to the Tipra Motha Party on their success.

While we accept the people’s mandate with humility, we see this as an opportunity to learn and come back stronger,” Saha wrote on Facebook.

The Pradyot Debbarma-led party securing 24 of the 28 seats and the BJP bagged the rest of the four seats, while the CPI(M) and Congress failed to open their account for the second time in a row.

“I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all the karyakartas of the Bharatiya Janata Party in the ADC elections for their courage, hard work, and dedication. I sincerely thank all our karyakartas for their tireless efforts, taking the message of the lotus to every household is a proud achievement,” Saha said.

“Our commitment to development, unity, and the people remains unwavering. We will continue to move forward with greater strength and determination,” he added.

CM Himanta Biswa Sarma Asks Pawan Khera to Surrender After SC Denies Bail Extension

Guwahati, Apr 17: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on April 17 said Congress leader Pawan Khera should surrender before the law and appear in Guwahati after the Supreme Court of India declined to extend his transit anticipatory bail. Speaking in Uttar Dinajpur, Sarma said Khera should

follow due legal process and present himself before the appropriate court in Assam. “He should come to Guwahati and surrender there,” he said. Earlier in the day, the Supreme Court rejected Khera’s plea seeking an extension of transit anticipatory bail, which had earlier been granted by the Telangana High

Court. The plea sought additional time to approach a competent court in Assam for relief in the case filed against him. The case arises from allegations made by Khera regarding multiple passports and overseas assets linked to Sarma’s wife, Riniki Bhuyan Sharma. The Sarma family has denied the claims, de-

scribing them as fabricated and misleading. Meanwhile, Sarma also commented on the upcoming West Bengal Assembly elections 2026, expressing confidence that the state would witness a political change. Polling is scheduled in two phases on April 23 and April 29, with results to be declared on May 4.

SupremeC rejects Pawan Khera’s plea to extend transit anticipatory bail

● The Supreme Court rejected Pawan Khera’s plea to vacate the stay on his transit anticipatory bail granted by the Telangana High Court.

Guwahati, Apr 17: The Supreme Court on Friday rejected Congress leader Pawan Khera’s plea to vacate the stay imposed by it on the transit anticipatory bail granted to him by the Telangana High Court in a case registered by Assam Police based on a complaint filed by Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma’s wife, Riniki Bhuyan Sharma.

Sharma lodged the police complaint after Khera accused her of holding multiple passports of different countries and offshore properties.

The apex court also turned down Khera’s plea to extend the transit



bail till next Tuesday so that he can approach the Assam Court on Monday. The bench comprising Justice JK Maheshwari and Justice Atul S Chandurkar observed that if the concerned

court is not functioning, a request can be made to take up the matter, which be considered in accordance with the prevailing practice. The bench also clarified that neither the observations

in the Telangana High Court’s order nor the Supreme Court’s stay order should influence the concerned court while considering Khera’s application for anticipatory bail.

Fuel Supply Stabilises in Assam, Says IOC

Guwahati, Apr 17: Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) today said that the supply situation of domestic LPG cylinders and petroleum products is completely normal in Assam.

The supply of all petroleum products, including petrol, diesel, and LPG, in the state of Assam is fully normal and under control. Uninterrupted supply is being ensured through the state’s robust infrastructure, continuous monitoring system, and effective coordination with State government officials,” an official statement from IOC stated.

Currently, there are a total of 1,737 retail outlets in Assam (OMCs: 1,461 and private: 276) along with 9 supply locations/depots in operation. On average, 2,935 KL of petrol (MS) and 3,670 KL of diesel (HSD) are being made available daily through these retail outlets, it said. At present, sufficient stock equivalent to 21 days of petrol and 46 days of diesel is available. All oil marketing companies (OMC) retail outlets are functioning normally, and there are no restrictions on sales, it stated.

The statement added that nozzle sales are in line with normal consumption levels of January-March 2026, indicating stable demand.

Regarding LPG supply, services are being provided to approximately 9.3 million consumers through 604 distributors and 7 bottling plants in the state. Currently, distributors have adequate stock of domestic LPG cylinders and no dry-out have been reported. On average, 1,39,000 refills are delivered daily, and a backlog of about 4.28 days is being cleared as per the scheduled booking list. Supply remains completely stable, IOC stated.

Promoting digitization in LPG services, 84% of bookings are now being made through digital means, compared to just 49% two months ago. Delivery Authentication Code (DAC) compliance has been ensured in 72% of cases, up from 37% two months ago. Consumers are requested to use digital booking methods and share the DAC at the time of delivery to ensure safe and transparent distribution. The number of PMUY (Ujjwala) daily refills in Assam was approximately 44,595 during March vis-à-vis average 62,000 during February. To support low consumption households, migrant labourers, students, etc., 5 Kg LPG cylinders are being made available.

In accordance with the guidelines of the Government of India, commercial LPG allocation is currently maintained at 70 per cent. Priority is being given to hospitals, educational institutions, defence, railways, government establishments, hotels/restaurants, industrial canteens, and food processing units. Daily monitoring is being conducted to ensure smooth distribution.

To curb hoarding and illegal diversion, OMC officials in association with officials from the State Government has conducted 319 inspections since last month. During this period, 274 cylinders have been seized, 1 FIR has been registered, and 3 arrests were made. Action has also been initiated against OMC LPG distributors for not adhering to Standard Operating Procedure including digital protocol of booking and Delivery Acknowledgement Confirmation (DAC). So far show cause motices have been served to 88 OMC LPG distributors, and 6 OMC LPG distributors have been suspended till now. All OMCs are taking Strict action under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955. The Government of Assam and the Oil Marketing Companies in the state assure all citizens that the supply situation of petroleum products is fully stable and under control, and uninterrupted supply to the public is being ensured, the statement added.

Violence Erupts in Chirang as Police Open Fire After Protest Turns Violent

Guwahati, Apr 17: Police opened fire to control a violent protest at the Runikhata Forest Range Office along the India-Bhutan border in Assam’s Chirang district after clashes between demonstrators and security personnel escalated sharply.

According to officials, the situation spiralled out of control when protesters allegedly attacked police and forest personnel and resorted to heavy stone pelting. Security forces first used a baton charge and tear gas to disperse the crowd before opening fire, triggering panic in the area. Tension continues to prevail despite reinforcement of additional police personnel.

The unrest began on Thursday night after forest officials detained 25 individuals from the Adivasi community on charges of encroaching on protected forest land. They were kept at the Runikhata Range Office for questioning, which

led to a large crowd gathering and gheraoing the office, demanding their immediate release. The situation turned volatile after allegations surfaced that forest guards physically assaulted and harassed local women who had entered the premises during the confrontation. This further intensified public anger. On Friday morning, protests turned violent in front of the Runikhata Police Station. Demonstrators torched several vehicles belonging to the forest department and damaged parts of the office building. Some protesters allegedly took away arms from forest guards, while others continued pelting stones, causing significant damage to property. Earlier, a lathi charge during the protest had left a young woman injured, further fuelling the unrest.

Authorities have rushed in additional security forces, but the situation remains tense and volatile as efforts continue to restore normalcy in the area.

Mizoram Governor Flags Off New Ambulance Service For Silsury Village Benefiting Locals Under A Corporate Social Responsibility Initiative

Aizawl, April 17: Mizoram Governor, General (Dr) Vijay Kumar Singh, PVSM, AVSM, YSM (Retd), today flagged off a Basic Life Support Ambulance procured under the CSR fund of NBCC (India) Ltd. The ambulance is designated to serve Silsury Village, located along the Indo-Bangladesh border in Mamit Aspirational District. The short flag-off ceremony was held at the Upper Lawn of Lok Bhavan in Aizawl. Addressing the gathering, the Governor General (Dr) Vijay Kumar Singh emphasised the need for balanced development, with special focus on infrastructure in international and state border areas. “These border areas require a lot of attention and ultimately, the people living there are the ones who suffer the most,” he said. He expressed appreciation to NBCC (India) Ltd., for donating a well-equipped ambulance to Silsury Village, describing it as one



of the critical healthcare needs of border villages. The Governor commended NBCC for the dynamism it has brought to its operations and urged the company to utilise its best practices and advanced

technology to improve the living standards of people in a small state like Mizoram. He also highlighted the Central Government’s focus on Aspirational Districts and called upon NBCC to con-

Experts Discuss Women’s Empowerment at Kohima Seminar

Kohima, Apr 17: A State-level seminar on ‘Women in Contemporary Naga Society’ was organised by the Nagaland State Commission for Women (NSCW) at the SIRD conference hall in Kohima on Friday.

The objective of the seminar was to reflect on the role of women towards inclusive development in society.

The programme was graced by special guest, MLA Achumbemo Kikon.

Speaking on the theme ‘Women in Contemporary Naga Society’, Kikon said that in the modern context, Naga women have gone through a significant transformation over the years and are no longer participants in decision making but are leading to overall development in the Naga society. “Women in contemporary Naga society are emerging as educators, entrepreneurs and professionals towards empowerment,” he said.

Kikon also encouraged the womenfolk to continue shaping the society as they are the source of strength in the modern era to empower and transform society.

Secretary, Social Welfare, Limawabang Jamir, in his address, highlighted that women in the contemporary Naga society stand at the crossroads of traditions and change. “They are no longer silent contributors but active participants and leaders,” Jamir said. He said empowering women is not just about equality but also about strengthening the society as a whole. He also urged everyone to support and celebrate the contribution of Naga women as they continue to shape a more inclusive and progressive future. Students, tribals organisations and officials attended the seminar.

Nagaland women leaders unite, seek early rollout of 33% reservation

Kohima, Apr 17: Women leaders from across political parties and organisations in Nagaland came together in Dimapur on April 17 to push for the early implementation of the 33 per cent women’s reservation, calling it a long-awaited step towards fair representation and inclusive governance. The “Women’s Conference on the 33% Women Reservation Bill” was organised by the BJP Mahila Morcha at Town Hall in Dimapur. The event saw participation from leaders of different parties and civil society groups, who spoke in one voice on the need to move forward without delay on the reservation issue.

tinue prioritising the development needs of people residing in border areas, given the company’s significant role in border infrastructure projects.

Dr. R. Lalthangliana, MLA of Dampa Assembly Constituency, described the ambulance as a welcome gift for Silsury Village and the surrounding areas in Mamit Aspirational District. He thanked NBCC (India) Ltd., and expressed hope that the well-equipped ambulance would be put to genuine and effective use by the local community. The programme was chaired by Gyanaranjan Samal, CGM and Head of the North East Region, NBCC, who highlighted various initiatives and achievements of the company. Debasish Satapathy, Executive Director (HRM) & Head of CSR, NBCC, conveyed his gratitude and assured that the company would continue to successfully implement other CSR project proposals received from state.

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Data Privacy in the Digital Age

As digital services become integral to everyday life, concerns around data privacy are growing. Personal information is constantly collected, stored, and analysed—often without users fully understanding how it is being used. From mobile apps to online transactions, data has become a valuable asset. However, the lack of strong safeguards raises the risk of misuse, breaches, and surveillance. Users are often left with little control over their own data, navigating complex terms and conditions that offer limited transparency. This imbalance of power between individuals and corporations is a cause for concern. Strengthening data protection laws, ensuring accountability, and promoting digital awareness are essential steps. In the digital age, privacy is not optional—it is a right that must be protected.

Even if dormant, the RTI Act’s promise remains powerful

As the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2009 remains effectively dormant in Bangladesh, RTI advocates must now rely on the new government’s resolve to operationalise it. The law has been inoperative due to the absence of information commissioners since the interim government assumed power in August 2024 following a mass uprising—a situation that appears to reflect deliberate inaction intended to shield its activities from public scrutiny. While prioritising pressing issues in its early days, the current government has chosen to postpone consideration of the slapdash RTI (Amendment) Ordinance, along with a few others, left behind by the interim administration. While that matter must now wait, what cannot be delayed any further is the urgent need to fill the vacant posts of information commissioners and restore the law to full functionality. This is important not only in its own right but also because the law’s effective use can help the government fulfil its commitments—commitments in which citizens themselves have an important role to play through the proper use of the RTI Act. However, as we await its revival, citizens would do well to acquaint themselves with the law’s broader possibilities beyond the routine uses observed since its adoption. For this, we need not look far: experiences of our neighbouring countries that embarked on the RTI journey around the same time offer valuable lessons. We highlight a few recent cases from India and Sri Lanka for their relevance to Bangladesh.

Indeed, RTI enthusiasts in Bangladesh—and the new team of information commissioners, once appointed—would do well to consult, among other sources, the decisions of the Right to Information Commission of Sri Lanka and the Court of Appeal’s role in strengthening RTI jurisprudence. These experiences underscore the critical im-

portance of an independent and neutral dispute resolution mechanism in advancing the effective use of the RTI law. We begin with the story of former Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, who fled the country in 2022 at the height of a popular uprising—a situation not entirely unfamiliar in our own context. A citizen sought information on whether he had left aboard a naval vessel and what public resources were used. The authorities refused, citing national security.

Sri Lanka’s RTI Commission, and ultimately the Court of Appeal, rejected this blanket refusal. While allowing limited withholding of sensitive operational details, they held that financial information regarding the use of public resources must be disclosed. The court affirmed that “national security” cannot serve as a blanket excuse for withholding information when public money and executive accountability are at stake, underscoring the pri-

macy of transparency even in moments of crisis.

By contrast, public engagement with such sensitive uses of the law in our own context remains limited. Unless civil society, equipped with knowledge and a sense of responsibility, actively utilises the RTI framework, its full potential will remain unrealised. Another Sri Lankan case, *M.J.K. Dissanayake v. Asia Broadcasting Corporation (Pvt) Ltd*, further illustrates the law’s reach. The Court of Appeal upheld a ruling by the Information Commission that a private television broadcaster, Hiru TV, could be treated as a “public authority” under the RTI Act. The case arose from an RTI request seeking information on the editorial verification of a disputed news report. Rejecting the claim that the broadcaster was purely private, the Information Commission and the Court of Appeal underlined that entities performing public functions under a state licence, such as the use

of public frequencies, are subject to RTI obligations, while allowing for the protection of journalistic sources.

This decision is significant for extending RTI’s reach beyond the state to private actors exercising public influence. In Bangladesh, we often lament that the law does not extend to private entities while doing little to explore its existing possibilities, including recourse to the High Court. An instructive example from India concerns the disclosure of a committee report. In *Sajimon Parayil v. State of Kerala and Others*, a citizen sought access to the Justice Hema Committee Report on gender discrimination in the Malayalam film industry. Although it was submitted in 2019, the government withheld it, citing sensitivity.

The Kerala State Information Commission ordered disclosure with redactions, and the Kerala High Court upheld the decision on August 13, 2024. It affirmed

that the RTI Act does not permit blanket refusal merely because parts of a document are sensitive; rather, it permits partial disclosure, with protected information removed. The court emphasised that privacy concerns can be addressed through redaction and that matters of public interest warrant disclosure. In Bangladesh, many such committee reports remain out of public reach, largely because citizens seldom seek them under the RTI Act.

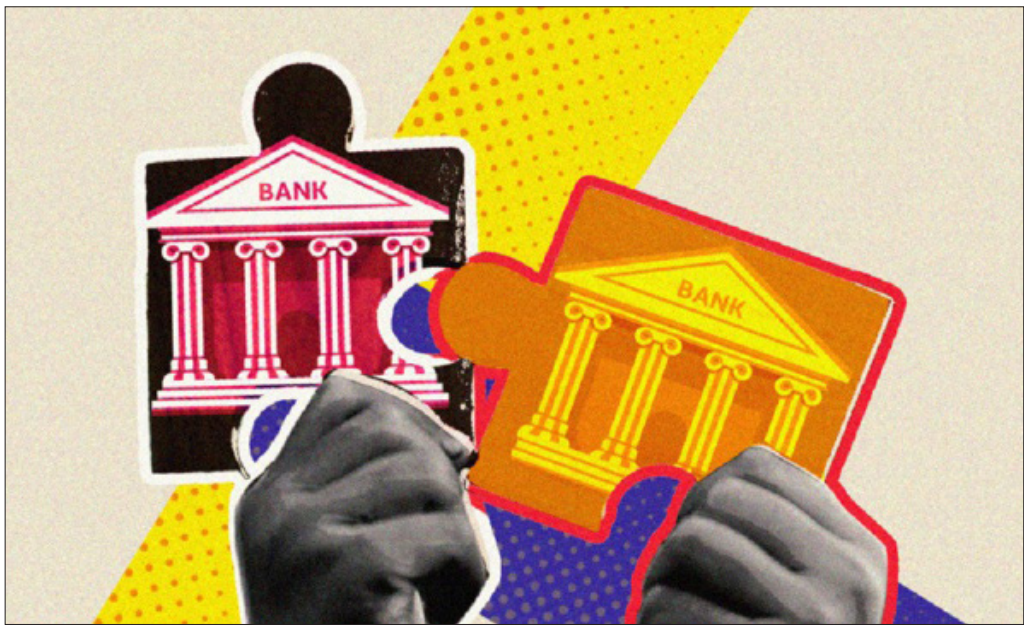
The lesson is clear. Even in its current state, the RTI Act retains immense, largely untapped potential. Realising its full promise will depend not only on the government’s political will but also on an informed and engaged citizenry ready to use it. The responsibility, therefore, lies with them—to understand the law, test its limits, and begin reclaiming it as an instrument of accountability, even before the information commissioners are appointed, and more so once they are.

Opening the door for owners of looted banks poses a serious risk

The Bank Resolution Ordinance, issued during the previous interim government, has recently been passed at the national parliament. However, the way the ordinance was amended at the time of its passage—creating an opportunity for the merged banks to return to their former owners—has raised some serious questions and concerns. The objective of the Bank Resolution Ordinance formulated during the interim government was to bring any bank under resolution if its beneficiary owners directly or indirectly used the bank’s assets or funds fraudulently for their own or others’ interests. Resolution measures include appointing an administrator to a distressed bank, temporarily bringing it under government ownership, establishing a bridge bank, and transferring shares, assets, and liabilities to a third party—all aimed at protecting depositors’ interests and maintaining financial stability. Under this ordinance, in December 2025, five Shariah-based private banks, that became distressed by being looted and were unable to return depositors’ money, were merged into a state-run entity titled *Sommilito Islami Bank*. These five banks were First Security Islamic Bank, Social Islamic Bank, Union Bank, Global Islamic Bank, and Exim Bank. The chairman of Exim Bank was Nazrul Islam Mazumder, one of the owners of Nassa Group. The ownership of the remaining banks was linked to the Chattogram-based S Alam Group.

At Tk 35,000 crore, of which the government has contributed Tk 20,000 crore. The remaining Tk 15,000 crore will be provided as shares to depositors. In addition, Tk 12,000 crore has been provided from the Deposit Insurance Bank has extended another Tk 36,000 crore as loans. According to Bangladesh Bank data, as of December 2025, the total loans of the five merged banks stood at Tk 196,827 crore. Of this, Tk 165,781 crore has turned into default loans. That means 84.23 percent of the total loans of these banks are non-performing.

Even after the merger, it remains unclear how thousands of crores of defaulted loans will be recovered, how depositors’ funds will be returned, and where new lending capital will come from. None of the owners who looted deposits in the name of loans, the officials who facilitated the looting, or the Bangladesh Bank officials responsible for oversight have faced any trial or punishment. Under such circumstances, there are already doubts about how successful this merged bank can be. Amidst this, the recent amendment of the Bank Resolution Ordinance to create an opportunity for these five Islamic banks to return to their former owners further deepens the existing crisis of confidence in the banking sector. The question is: what justification can there be for returning ownership to those whose looting led the banks into such distress? The argument of respecting private property rights is not acceptable here. Banks are not like other private fami-



ly-owned businesses. A paid-up capital of Tk 500 crore is required to establish a bank. After that, thousands of ordinary people deposit their savings there. By investing only Tk 500 crore, the bank owners are able to control the deposits of thousands of crores of taka, decide where to invest it, and whom to lend it to. This is how the owners of the distressed Islamic banks withdrew many times more money than their initial investment in the name of loans. Returning ownership to them now means allowing those who previously syphoned off public money through anonymous loans or laundered it abroad to regain control of these banks by reinvesting only a small portion of that laundered money. This provision of returning ownership also contradicts ongoing efforts to recover money laundered abroad by these looters.

Ten banks in the country have already signed 36 non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) with multiple multinational firms to recover funds laundered by six major industrial groups, with a total of 59 agreements expected. Among these industrial groups are those responsible for looting the Islamic banks in question. In this situation, returning ownership to these groups would effectively weaken the entire process of recovering laundered funds.

To justify the amendment, it is being argued that certain conditions must be met to regain ownership. According to these conditions, former directors or owners of banks merging or listed for mergers can pay 7.5 percent upfront of the amount injected by the government or the Bangladesh Bank to reclaim the banks. The remaining 92.5 percent is to be repaid within two years at 10

percent simple interest. Additionally, all claims and liabilities of pre-merger depositors, domestic and foreign creditors, and third parties must be properly settled. The question is: how will the same business groups—who over the past one and a half decades repeatedly violated Bangladesh Bank regulations, took anonymous loans, rescheduled loans with minimal down payments of just two percent, and repeatedly defaulted—suddenly become compliant with these conditions? And how will the same regulatory institutions which failed to enforce compliance before now be able to do so? The way the Bank Resolution Ordinance was amended at the last moment to return looted banks to their former owners recalls the amendment of the Bank Company Act during Sheikh Hasina’s tenure. At that time, too, a last-minute

amendment extended the tenure of bank directors from nine to 12 years. The incident unfolded as follows: on June 8, 2023, then Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal placed the Bank Company (Amendment) Bill, 2023 in parliament. The original proposal contained no provision regarding extending or reducing the tenure of directors. It was later sent to a parliamentary standing committee for review, which also did not propose any such amendment. However, just before the bill was passed on June 21, 2023, the then-ruling party MP Ahsanul Islam proposed an amendment to extend directors’ tenure to 12 consecutive years. Despite protests from the opposition, it was passed. The recent Bank Resolution Ordinance amendment also followed the same pattern. This time, the BNP government formed a 10-member committee to draft the law converting the interim government’s Bank Resolution Ordinance 2025 into legislation. The committee included four members from the Ministry of Finance, two from the Legislative and Parliamentary Affairs Division, and three from the central bank, with Bangladesh Bank serving as the secretariat. The committee proposed several amendments. However, according to the daily *Samakal*, it did not recommend any provision to return looted banks to their former owners. The newspaper reported speaking to three members of the committee who said that from the outset, a “certain quarter” had suggested including such a provision, but due to objections from most members,

it was not included in the final draft. On the night of April 9, just before the bill was passed on April 10, Bangladesh Bank became aware of the inclusion of this provision. The next morning, Bangladesh Bank requested the Ministry of Finance not to proceed with it. However, ignoring the objections of both the committee formed to amend the ordinance and Bangladesh Bank, the provision allowing banks to return to their former owners was added. It is not difficult to understand for whose benefit this last-minute amendment was introduced. It seems that what the then Jatiya Party MP Mujibul Haque said in parliament in 2023, protesting the last-minute amendment of the Bank Company Act, remains equally relevant today: “It seems that many bank directors, who are aligned with the ruling party, have convinced the finance minister to bring this for passage. If that is the case, we withdraw all our amendments. Because nothing could be more unjust than this. Banks are being looted, money is being laundered abroad, and Bangladesh Bank just sits idle. Bank chairmen and directors take thousands of crores and go abroad. You do not see this. You are here to favour certain people.” Ultimately, the recent amendment to the Bank Resolution Ordinance lends credence to fears that, rather than learning from the wrong practices and policy failures of the previous autocratic regime, the BNP government is going to accommodate them—at the cost of accountability, financial stability, and public confidence.

Women’s Reservation Bill 2023: A New Era of Women Decision-Makers for Women-Led Development

The passage of the Women Reservation Bill 2023, formally known as the *Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam*, marks a historic turning point in India’s democratic journey. After nearly three decades of political debate, deliberation, and consensus-building, India has taken a decisive step toward ensuring greater representation of women in legislative bodies. The bill mandates a 33% reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies, aiming to structurally correct the long-standing gender imbalance in Indian politics. At the heart of this transformation is the vision of Narendra Modi, who has consistently emphasized the shift from “women’s development” to “woman-led development.” His recent appeals for cross-party support underline not only the political importance of the bill but also its role in redefining India’s governance framework.

The Lok Sabha passed the Women’s Reservation Bill (*Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam* 2023) with more than a two-thirds majority, a historic step towards inclusive democracy. India, despite being the world’s largest democracy, has historically witnessed low representation of women in legislative bodies. At

the time of the bill’s passage, women constituted only about 14% of Members of Parliament, far below global benchmarks. The Women’s Reservation Bill seeks to change this reality by ensuring that one-third of seats are reserved for women, potentially tripling their representation.

This is not merely a numerical increase. It is a structural reform that will bring women into decision-making roles, ensure policy sensitivity towards gender issues, and strengthen democratic inclusivity. Prime Minister Modi has described this reform as a step that will “strengthen democracy” and usher in a new era of governance led by women. Over the past decade, India has witnessed a paradigm shift in how women’s empowerment is approached. Earlier, policies focused on welfare; today, the focus is on leadership, participation, and empowerment. Several initiatives reflect this transformation. The last 10–12 years have seen Indian women excel across multiple domains. In science and technology, women scientists are leading missions in ISRO and other institutions, and India has one of the highest shares of women in STEM graduates globally, at 43%. In entrepreneurship, the rise of

women-led startups and MSMEs is in the news every day; under schemes like *Stand-Up India*, 84% of beneficiaries are women, reflecting growing female participation in business. 69% of loans under *Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana* have women beneficiaries, enabling entrepreneurship at the grassroots level. In defence, women now serve in armed forces, including as combat officers and *Agniveers*, breaking traditional barriers.

In sports, women athletes have brought global recognition in the Olympics, Commonwealth Games, and international championships. In politics and governance, increasing participation in local bodies due to *Panchayati Raj* reservations and the emergence of strong female leaders at state and national levels is visible. This transformation reflects a broader ideological shift—women are no longer seen as beneficiaries but as drivers of growth and governance. And although these achievements reflect a society gradually embracing gender equality, a women in decision-making roles representation gap remained. The vision of “women-led development”, strongly articulated by Narendra Modi, goes far beyond welfare schemes or participation — it fundamentally demands

that women occupy key decision-making positions across governance, economy, and society. Without this, empowerment remains incomplete. While women’s participation has increased over the last 10–12 years, their presence in actual decision-making roles remains limited. Women hold only about 21% of board seats in India, and in 97% of companies, there is only one-woman director. Women’s share in senior management roles declined from 39% (2021) to 34% (2024).

This clearly shows that presence does not equal power. Women are often included, but not empowered to influence strategic decisions. Similar is the case in politics. Women voters in India have emerged as a decisive electoral force. In many states, female voter turnout equals or surpasses that of men. For political parties, women-centric policies translate into electoral gains, yet leadership representation is still low – 14% in Parliament and lower in many State Assemblies, something the Women Reservation Bill directly addresses. Prime Minister Modi’s push for the Women Reservation Bill is now not merely legislative — it is strategic. His approach includes building consensus across parties, linking

representation with development, and promoting women as leaders in governance. He has actively reached out to MPs and stakeholders, emphasising that this reform requires collective political will. His vision aligns with the idea that “empowered women lead to empowered societies and stronger nations.”.

The impact of the Women’s Reservation Bill is particularly significant for Assam and the Northeast regions with distinct socio-political dynamics. The Northeast has traditionally seen higher female participation in social movements, a strong presence of women in grassroots governance and active involvement in self-help groups and entrepreneurship. In Assam, women have been at the forefront of cultural preservation, economic activities like weaving, agriculture, and small enterprises and even social activism. The Women’s Reservation Bill will act as a force multiplier, giving institutional backing to this progress. The implementation of 33% reservation will have profound political implications for Assam and the Northeast. More women from Assam and the Northeast will enter legislative bodies; diverse voices from tribal, rural, and marginalized communities will be heard. Women legislators are

more likely to prioritize health and nutrition, education, women’s safety and welfare, and rural development. This aligns with the developmental needs of Assam and Northeast states. With existing reservations in *Panchayati Raj* institutions, many women leaders already have governance experience. The bill will create a pipeline of leaders’ transition from grassroots leaders to state and national politics. In short, the Women’s Reservation Bill 2023 is not just a legislative reform—it is a civilizational shift. It recognises that true democracy cannot exist without equal participation of women. For India, it marks a move towards inclusive governance, a step toward gender justice, and a foundation for women-led development. For Assam and the Northeast, it opens new avenues for leadership. Greater representation of regional voices and accelerated socio-economic development. Under the leadership of Narendra Modi, India is witnessing a transformation where women are no longer at the margins but at the centre of policymaking and governance. The bill’s success will be measured by how well women shape India’s future as the nation moves forward. Because when women lead, nations rise.

CRISIL dividend announcement 2026: Board meeting schedule; record date, payment

New Delhi: CRISIL interim dividend announcement: Rekha Rakesh Jhunjhunwala-backed CRISIL Ltd is set to announce its first interim dividend, along with the quarterly results for the three-months ended on March 31, 2026. The company board of CRISIL shall meet on April 16 and 17 for the same. Even before the announcement of dividend amount, the rating agency has already disclosed the record date for the payment of first interim dividend. The dividend amount shall be announced on Friday, April 17. The company informed about the same through an exchange filing on Wednesday, April 08. The company has fixed April 23, 2026 (Thursday) as the record date for the first interim dividend and the same will be paid on May 8, 2026, said CRISIL in an exchange filing. Prior to this, shares of CRISIL trade ex-dividend



on April 2, 2026 as the company had announced a final dividend of Rs 28 apeece for the year ended on December 31, 2025. CRISIL Dividend history according to the data from BSE, CRISIL has announced as

many as 78 dividends since April 2001. It has declared more than 20 dividends in the last five years. However, the company has not announced any bonus issue for shareholders last 26 years, while it has traded

ex-split in 1:10 ratio in September 2011. Shares of CRISIL have rebounded 14 per cent from its 52-week low at Rs 3,689, hit two weeks ago.

The stock has hit Rs 4,204.60 levels on Thursday. Despite the rise, the trading agency player is down 34 per cent from its 52-week high at Rs 6,329.95, hit in July 2025.

The stock has jumped 125 per cent in the last five years. Jhunjhunwala stake in CRISIL According to the shareholding pattern of CRISIL as of December 31, 2025, Rekha Jhunjhunwala owned 37,99,000 equity shares, or 5.19 per cent stake, in the company, which was valued at Rs 1,597.33 crore as of today's high. Domestic institutions including mutual funds and LIC of India, owned 88,48,535 equity shares or 12.10 per cent stake in the rating agency.

Groww Reaches a BofA Expects 13% More Gains

New Delhi: Billionbrains Garage Ventures, the parent company of the stockbroking platform Groww, share price is in focus. Bank of America Securities' has initiated coverage on the stock and the core argument rests on a longer earnings compounding story. The Billionbrains Garage Ventures shares surged over 7% on April 15, 2026, hitting a fresh 52-week high of Rs 212.90 on the bourses, the same day the brokerage initiated coverage with a 'Buy' rating and set a price target of Rs 235, leaving room for 13% upside from current levels. Bank of America Securities builds its case around Groww being a direct play on India's

underpenetrated retail investing opportunity, with revenue expected to grow at about 30% compound annual growth rate between FY26 and FY28, alongside margin expansion driven by a fixed-cost technology-led model. Bank of America Securities on Groww: India's retail investment wave has barely begun

The single most important structural argument in Bank of America Securities' note is that India's retail investing story is genuinely early-stage. The brokerage points out that active investors stand at roughly 6.9 crore, which amounts to approximately 5% of the total population, a figure that compares poorly

with the United States where active broking account penetration sits at 62%. Meanwhile, only about 12% of total household savings in India are parked in mutual funds. The high and upper-middle income household base in India, which the brokerage identifies as the primary pool of potential new investors, is expected to expand to 19.7 crore households by 2030 from 6.9 crore in 2018. Bank of America Securities estimates the active investor base can grow to 10 crore by 2030, and it believes Groww is better positioned than peers to capture a disproportionate share of those new entrants.

Adani Enterprises Jefferies sees FY27 as the 'turning point' despite airport drag

New Delhi: Jefferies has trimmed its price target on Adani Enterprises to Rs 2,600 from Rs 2,750, but continues to rate the stock a 'Buy' with an implied upside of about 22%. The report notes that traffic remained largely flat through FY26 after handling about 94 million passengers in FY25, with similar trends seen across peers. This has pushed back expectations around the pace at which Navi Mumbai International Airport will scale up. "Multiple disruptions through FY26, including Middle East-related softness, weighed on airport traffic," Jefferies said. "The business is currently operating in a weak industry environment, with depressed margins weighing on near term profitability," Jefferies says. The brokerage expects improvement only as utilisation levels rise and raw material sourcing becomes more stable, supported by recent agreements for long term concentrate supply. Even so, the brokerage sees some support from non aeronautical revenue streams such as retail, cargo and ground handling, which are expanding across key airports. It also points to the company's focus on monetising airport led real estate developments in cities like Mumbai and Ahmedabad as a longer term lever.

The brokerage attributes the downgrade in target to weaker near-term airport traffic and a slower than ear-

lier expected ramp up in the copper business, which together led to a 3% to 7% reduction in its earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation estimates for FY26 to FY28. Even so, Jefferies maintains that a broad-based scale-up across airports, new energy, roads and copper from FY27 should drive a sharp recovery in earnings, supporting its positive stance. Another factor behind the target price cut is the slower build up in the copper segment, which only began operations recently and is still facing industry headwinds. Despite the near term setbacks, Jefferies continues to see FY27 as a key year when multiple businesses start contributing meaningfully. The brokerage estimates about 30% year on year growth in earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation in FY27, driven by a simultaneous scale up across segments. "While FY26 EBITDA would likely be flat or lower year on year, in FY27 the company would see ramp up across airports, copper, roads and solar expansion," Jefferies said

This includes contributions from the Navi Mumbai airport, higher output from the copper plant, full year benefit from road projects such as the Ganga Expressway and expansion in solar manufacturing capacity. Jefferies continues to place significant weight on the company's new energy



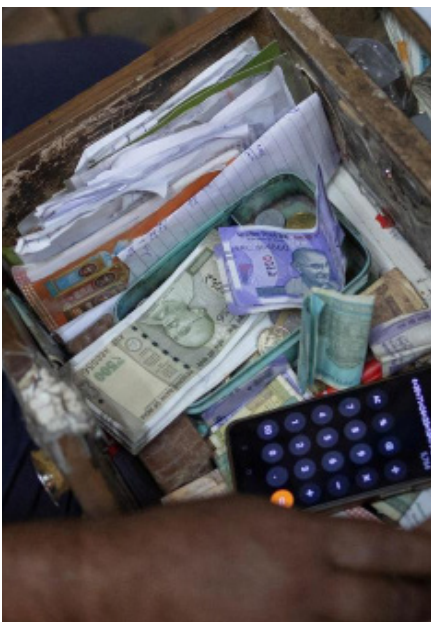
business, especially solar manufacturing and the broader push towards energy security. The brokerage notes that policy support and global supply concerns are accelerating investments in domestic renewable capacity. "Energy security is emerging as a sharper policy focus amid global disruptions, driving a push toward domestic renewables and local supply chains," Jefferies adds. The Kutch copper smelter, with a capacity of 0.5 million tonnes per annum, started operations in mid 2025. However, weak treatment and refining charges have affected profitability in the initial phase. Jefferies on Adani Enterprises: Near-term pressure from airports Jefferies values the company using a sum of the parts approach and notes that a large share of its value comes

from a few key segments. Airports and the new energy business together account for about 75% to 80% of the company's total enterprise value, according to the brokerage's estimates. This means the long term investment case remains closely tied to how these segments scale up. "We believe the new businesses will emerge as industry leaders and that the company will be a key beneficiary of green energy, aviation growth and digital infrastructure," Jefferies says. The brokerage continues to assign higher valuation multiples to these segments, indicating their expected growth trajectory.

Jefferies points to softer passenger traffic as a key drag in the current year, especially due to disruptions that have weighed on travel demand.

Rupee rises 2 paise to 93.33 against US dollar

Mumbai: The rupee rose 2 paise to settle at 93.33 against the US dollar on Wednesday, aided by positive sentiments in the domestic equity markets and hopes of resumption of talks between the US and Iran. US President Donald Trump has said a second round of talks with Iran could be held "over the next two days". At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 93.19 and touched the intraday high of 93.13 against the greenback and a low of 93.44. It finally settled at 93.33, up 2 paise from its previous close. On Monday, the rupee weakened by 52 paise to settle at 93.35 against the US dollar. The forex market was closed on Tuesday on account of Baba Saheb Ambedkar Jayanti. Government data released on Wednesday showed that the Wholesale Price Index (WPI)-based inflation rose sharply to an over 3-year high of 3.88 per cent in March, driven by a sharp spike in rates of fuel, power and manufactured items amid the West Asia crisis. Consumer price index-based retail inflation rose 3.4 per cent in March compared to 3.21 per cent in the preceding month, mainly due to an uptick in certain food items, data released earlier this week showed. Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst – Commodity and Currency, LKP Securities, said, "The currency continues to remain highly sensitive to developments around the Strait of Hormuz, which remains a key risk factor for global oil supply. In the near term, the rupee is expected to trade in a range of 93.10–93.65, with direction dependent on further geopolitical developments and



oil price movement". Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was marginally higher by 0.05 per cent at 97.95. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, was trading 1.50 per cent up at USD 96.21 per barrel in futures trade. On the domestic equity market front, the 30-share Sensex jumped 1,263.67 points, or 1.64 per cent, to settle at 78,111.24, while the Nifty climbed 388.65 points, or 1.63 per cent, to 24,231.30. Foreign Institutional Investors were net sellers on Wednesday and offloaded equities worth Rs 666.15 crore, according to exchange data.

Sunrise Spices leverages Bihu campaign to drive cultural capital and market growth in Assam

Jorhat: ITC Ltd.'s Sunrise Spices has rolled out a Rongali Bihu-themed music campaign, highlights its strategy of leveraging cultural capital to strengthen market positioning in Assam. The brand, which has built a strong regional portfolio with products such as Duck Curry with Ash-gourd masala, Til Chicken masala and traditional spice blends, is aligning its marketing investments with local traditions to drive consumer engagement and long-term growth. The campaign, developed in collaboration with Baahi, features a fusion Bihu track composed by Assamese

musician Kussum Kailash, with vocals by Kailash and Neel Akash. Featuring Kamal Lochan, Bedabrat Borah and Gayatri Baishya, the music video integrates traditional elements like Goru Bihu, egg fight rituals and Gamusa weaving with contemporary storytelling, reflecting evolving consumer preferences while retaining cultural authenticity. "The effort is to capture Bihu as it is lived in everyday life, through shared experiences of food, music and celebration," said Piyush Mishra, Business Head, Sunrise Spices. The video has been released on YouTube, while

the audio is available across Baahi, Spotify, Apple Music, Amazon Music and JioSaavn. Sunrise has also launched an interactive microsite enabling users to create personalised Bihu avatars, enhancing digital engagement. In Jorhat, Sunrise Spices is witnessing steady demand growth, driven by rising preference for region-specific blends and branded packaged spices. Increased retail penetration and digital adoption are supporting category expansion, with culturally aligned campaigns expected to further boost consumption patterns in Upper Assam.

Google eyes AI deal with Pentagon to deploy Gemini AI in classified

New Delhi: Google. However, it will be the tech giant to expand its partnership with the US government. In February 2026, OpenAI locked a "All Lawful Purposes" deal with the Pentagon to deploy its AI models for classified operations. It was suggested that the deal would allow the DoD to use OpenAI also provided clarity on its deal that it has banned the use of its AI for domestic mass surveillance and autonomous weapons. And that AI will be used only through cloud systems, not deployed free-

ly or independently. Also read: Anthropic signs multi-gigawatt AI compute deal with Google, Broadcom On the other hand, Anthropic's engagement with the Pentagon took a more guarded turn, as the company refused to ease its safeguards. As a result, it is now facing a potential ban from the US government, with the Pentagon labelling it a "supply-chain risk." Anthropic has since taken legal action against the government, alleging the move was unlawful retaliation for its public safety stance.

Sensex settles 741 pts lower from day's high, Nifty below 24,200 index losers HDFC Bank, Titan lead

New Delhi: Domestic equity benchmarks BSE Sensex and NSE Nifty declined on Thursday after a sharp uptick at the opening bell, weighed down by profit booking and selling pressure in banking, auto and other heavyweight stocks. At close, the Sensex declined 122.56 points, or 0.16 per cent, to close at 77,988.68, slipping 741 points from day's high of 78,730.32, while the Nifty declined 34.55 points, or 0.14 per cent, to settle at 24,196.75. Markets are waiting for clarity on the second round of US-Iran negotiations, which will determine the near-term trend, said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited. "A higher-than-expected WPI inflation print weighed on auto and consumption stocks, while IT stocks found support from improving confidence in clearer visibility on AI-led demand. Banking stocks stayed under pressure due to mixed Q4 FY26 earnings expectations. Metal stocks also advanced, supported by a softer dollar and favourable macro data from China," Nair said

Top gainers & losers Among Sensex constituents, HDFC Bank emerged as the top loser, falling 1.75% to Rs 795.50. Titan Company followed with a 1.45% slide, while Mahindra & Mahindra (M&M), Bharti Airtel, Kotak Mahindra Bank and Bajaj Finance declined 0.99%, 0.82%, 0.75% and



0.74%, respectively. While Trent, Eternal and Adani Ports were among the gainers on the 30-pack index, which rose up to 2.81%.

Five stocks, namely HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, M&M, Titan and Kotak Mahindra Bank, contributed largely to the Sensex's fall.

Among sectoral indices, the BSE Top 10 Banks index fell 0.70% to settle at 16,717.07, while the BSE Auto index slipped 0.22% to

close at 58,278.22. "Initial optimism around a potential second round of US-Iran talks helped cool crude prices, offering some relief to inflation concerns. However, the market's inability to hold gains suggests that investors remain cautious and are not yet willing to chase the rally aggressively," said Hariprasad K, SEBI-registered research analyst and founder, Livelong Wealth.

At least 12 people are killed when Russia bombards Ukraine with missiles and drones



Russia: Following Moscow’s nocturnal assaults on its neighbor, local authorities in Ukraine said that at least 12 people had died as a result of Russian strikes. Six persons were murdered in missile and drone assaults on the southern port city of Odesa, according to a Thursday Telegram post by Sergiy Lysak, the lead-

er of the military administration in the city.At least four people, including a 12-year-old, were murdered in strikes on Ukraine’s capital city of Kyiv, according to the country’s official emergency agency. Oleksandr Ganzha, the chairman of the regional administration, reported that two more persons perished in the

central city of Dnipro. Ten individuals were injured in the incident, including a 40-year-old woman who was admitted to the hospital “in a serious condition,” according to Ganzha’s earlier statement. Whether the woman was the individual who had been reported dead was not immediately apparent.According to Vi-

tali Klitschko, the mayor of Kyiv, a child was rescued from the debris of a residential structure that fell in the Podilsky district. He claimed that at least ten individuals, including multiple doctors, were injured in the attack on the capital. According to Klitschko, automobiles caught fire and missile debris fell from a structure in the capital’s Obolonsky neighborhood. Civilians were advised to seek cover until a missile alert was removed by Tymur Tkachenko, the head of Kyiv’s military government. A drone strike on the north-eastern city of Kharkiv also wounded a 77-year-old woman and a 66-year-old man, the head of the regional military administration, Oleh Syniuhov, said on Telegram. Moscow has fired hundreds of drones on its neighbour almost nightly since the beginning of the four-year war and recently expanded daytime strikes.

South Africa appoints a negotiator from the apartheid era as its ambassador to the US

South Africa: In an effort to mend the extremely tense diplomatic ties between the two nations, South Africa selected a former senior negotiator for the apartheid government during the negotiations that ended white rule in the 1990s as ambassador to the United States.Ebrahim Rasool, who was dismissed in March 2025 for criticizing the Trump administration, is replaced by Roelf Meyer.The US president has accused South Africa’s government of racial discrimination against white Afrikaners, who ruled the nation during apartheid, ever since he took office for a second term. Additionally, although nearly all other refugees have been turned away, his government has prioritized white South Africans who have fled to the US. The current president, Cyril Ramaphosa, was Meyer’s opposite number in the African National Congress during the discussions that resulted in democracy in 1994. Meyer, an Afrikaner, served as a reformer minister in the previous apartheid regime. The two developed a strong relationship. In 2006, Meyer became a member of the ANC. Ramaphosa’s spokesperson, Vincent Magwenya, stated that the ambassador-elect would not conduct interviews until the United States had approved his qualifications.

“At this stage, until all administrative protocols have been completed in Washington it would be unwise for him to be speaking to the media now. I don’t have a sense of timelines, as it’s a state department process and we have no control over it,” he added. South Africa has not had an ambassador in Washington since Rasool was expelled, accused by the US secretary of state, Marco Rubio, of being a “race-baiting politician who hates America”.Rasool had told a thinktank event that Trump’s Make America Great Again movement was a “su-



premacist” response to demographic shifts meaning that white people would soon no longer be a majority in the US.In July 2025, Meyer said in an interview that the US was an “important partner” that could not be ignored. “We have to work at restoring that relationship. I think it’s very important,” he said. “And I think maybe there is something of a blame going our way, and that is that we didn’t pay enough attention to keeping that relationship going over a period of time, even pre this current administration’s period.” The 78-year-old said at the time that the hard work of being ambassador needed “youthful energy”, adding, “I don’t think somebody of my age should take on that responsibility at this stage, quite frankly.”Meyer criticised “Afrikaner groups that went [to Washington and] are not speaking on behalf of me as an Afrikaner, let alone the rest of the nation”, saying their lobbying was “distorting the picture”.The conservative Afrikaner group AfriForum has

promoted the idea in Washington that the killing of white farmers is racially targeted, despite South Africa’s high murder rate affecting all races. Trump has made incorrect claims about a “white genocide” occurring in South Africa on numerous occasions. The nation’s affirmative action programs and its case before the international court of justice, which charges Israel with genocide in Gaza, have also come under fire from his administration.Meyer is “the right person, at the right time,” according to Professor John Stremlau, a specialist in US-Africa relations at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. Stremlau told Associated Press that Meyer needed to “stabilize the relationship” between South Africa and the US.

“He is an excellent and experienced negotiator who not only negotiated in South Africa, but has brokered agreements elsewhere in various other places under very difficult circumstances.”

China may experience longer-term suffering as a result of the US-Iran war’s short-term benefits

China: Wang Yi, China’s foreign minister, declared two months ago that this year will be a “big year” for ties between the US and China. Maybe not in the way he had anticipated, but he was correct.Wang was giving a speech before of Donald Trump’s scheduled March visit to Beijing, which would have been his first visit to China since 2017. However, the trip and a meeting with his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping, were postponed by a few weeks following Trump’s decision to initiate strikes with Israel against Iran, sparking a Middle East conflict that has disrupted diplomatic relations worldwide and created a global energy crisis.

The delicate relationship between the two superpowers in the world has been upset by the maelstrom that the conflict has unleashed. Wang said in March that the two sides should “treat each other with sincerity and good faith”. Now, China is accusing the US of “dangerous and irresponsible” behaviour regarding its blockade in the strait of Hormuz, and has vowed to retaliate against the threat of US tariffs. Meanwhile, the US treasury secretary, Scott Bessent, accused China on Tuesday of being an “unreliable global partner” for stockpiling oil.China declined to elaborate on Wednesday on whether any of this would affect Trump’s visit, rescheduled for May. But a trip that was supposed to be about reaching a win-win trade deal now looks likely to be overshadowed by the war, with US intelligence briefing that China may have helped Iran militarily in the conflict. Beijing has denied such claims.When the conflict started on 28 February,

analysts forecast some short-term gains for China. Rising oil prices hurt the US more than China, the war damaged Trump’s credibility on the world stage, the conflict used up crucial US military resources and distracted political attention in Washington away from Beijing and security threats in the Asia Pacific. China’s fossil fuel stockpiles and diversified energy mix insulated it from the worst of the oil shock.But those days now seem like a distant memory. There are two main risks to China from the current crisis. First, despite its energy stockpiles, there is the risk that it will start to feel the pain of shortages. Pump prices for drivers have already increased. That may not make much difference to day-to-day life in China, but it threatens Beijing’s longer-term planning. Shen Dingli, a Shanghai-based scholar of international relations, said the conflict “deeply undermines China’s energy security” and this needed to be taken into account regarding its potential plans to invade Taiwan at some point in the future. “China needs to think: what are the consequences of a Taiwan contingency due to an energy cutoff?” Shen said. Although oil accounts for less than one-fifth of China’s total energy mix, that share is much higher in sectors such as transportation and aviation, which are important to the military. China buys more than 80% of Iran’s oil, which, before the US counter-blockade of the strait of Hormuz started this week, had been reaching China in flows that were largely uninterrupted. Those Iranian imports make up about 12% of China’s oil supply.

As the humanitarian crisis worsens, more than £1 billion is promised for Sudan



Africa: At a summit in Berlin, more than £1 billion (€1.15 billion) was committed for war-torn Sudan, surpassing the cash target organizers had set to assist alleviate the biggest humanitarian crisis in the world.In a nation devastated by three years of conflict, where two-thirds of the population—34 million people—need aid, the financial commitments agreed on Wednesday will also help overcome a persistent humanitarian funding gap.A theoretical goal of \$1 billion (£740 million) in funding commitments from foreign donors had been set by German ministers.Delegates have committed a total of £1.13 billion just hours after UN chief António Guterres called for an end to the “nightmare.” However, with little progress reported on ceasefire negotiations, the hope of peace is still as far off as ever. The army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), Sudan’s opposing factions, did not make it to Berlin.Sudan’s army-aligned foreign ministry accused

western nations of utilizing a “colonial tutelage approach” and condemned participants for failing to consult it as the meeting got underway. Hundreds of demonstrators gathered outside Germany’s foreign ministry, many of them chanting against the United Arab Emirates and its purported support for the RSF.Speaking on the margins of the event, Massad Boulos, Donald Trump’s senior assistant for African issues, stated that “our only concern is humanitarian” and that the US was not picking sides in the conflict.Boulos stated that the US was looking for a humanitarian ceasefire that would enable aid to reach those in need and that any such ceasefire should result in a long-term ceasefire. Thus far, diplomatic initiatives spearheaded by the United States, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates—collectively referred to as the Quad—have not yielded significant results. Johann Wadephul, Germany’s foreign minister, announced the financing

commitments, saying they were a rare positive development given the declining aid resources.“In a world of diminishing humanitarian resources, the fact that participants have already pledged more than €1.3 billion in support is a good sign,” he stated. I want to sincerely thank all of the donors for this.Sudan is facing a severe lack of money to address its numerous humanitarian issues.Just 16% of the £2.1 billion humanitarian needs assessment for Sudan this year has received funding thus far. Earlier, Guterres told international delegates that “credible allegations of the gravest international crimes” were continually emerging from the conflict.He said: “Women and girls have been terrorised and systematic sexual violence has prevailed. Families and communities have been devastated.“Partners must step up. But let’s be clear: funding alone cannot substitute for peace.”Guterres called for an immediate cessation of hostilities, adding:

“External interference and the flow of arms that fuel this war must finally end.”Egypt is among a number of states supporting Sudan’s military, while evidence suggests the UAE is backing the RSF; a claim it denies. Without naming any countries, the UK foreign secretary, Yvette Cooper, called for a concerted international effort to stop the flow of arms into Sudan.She said: “Countries from across the world are coming together here in Berlin to discuss the way, frankly, the international community has failed the people of Sudan.”

How South Korea intends to use the Iranian crisis to spark a revolution in renewable energy

South Korea : Six days a week, residents of Guyang-ri, a farming village with 70 houses located approximately 90 minutes southeast of Seoul, get together for free communal dinners. The village’s one-megawatt solar plant, which makes about 10 million won (\$6,800) in net profit per month, provides funding for the meals.The village leader, Jeon Joo-young, explains, “Every day we eat lunch together, so we see each other’s faces and talk together.” “Residents” ties and unity grow significantly stronger. Life becomes more pleasurable. There has been a significant change. The 130-person town has limited public infrastructure, no restaurant, and no convenient means of transportation prior to the start of the solar project in 2022. Meals, a table tennis facility, a local “happiness bus” for senior citizens, and cultural events are now funded by solar revenue. Jeon claims that rather than being convinced, the village’s people made the conscious decision to use solar income for welfare rather than individual payouts. People feel alienated when money is divided according to individual income. Through the restaurant, “people who didn’t know each other for years now get to know each other within days,” he claims. Guyang-ri serves as the national prototype for South Korea’s rapidly expanding “solar income village” programme, which aims to reach 2,500 villages by 2030. The government is aiming to create 700 this year – up sharply from roughly 150.The acceleration is part of President Lee Jae Myung’s effort to use the Iran crisis as a catalyst for a faster clean energy transition. South Korea imports more than 90% of its primary energy, including roughly 70% of crude oil through the strait of Hormuz.Lee has repeatedly framed fossil fuel dependency as a dangerous vulnerability, telling his cabinet that the “nation’s fate” depends on energy transition.Many of the renewable targets predate the crisis, including a goal to generate 20% of electricity from renewables by 2030 and phase out coal by 2040, but officials say the pace and political urgency have shifted sharply, and funding increased.A supplementary budget allocates about 500bn won to energy transition, funding grid infrastructure upgrades and increasing overall annual support for renewable energy projects to a record 1.1tn won (\$670m). To speed up implementation, the villages initiative would also receive 400 billion won in low-interest loans.“The Middle East war is driving even faster acceleration of renewable energy transition around the world, so Korea too must pick up the pace,” stated Kim Sung-whan, the minister of climate, energy, and environment. But as renewable programmes scale up, they are col-



liding with the electricity grid’s capacity. Large parts of the south and south-west, where solar and wind development has concentrated, are already at or near capacity limits. Gigawatts of renewable projects are waiting for grid connection, with some renewable capacity in effect going to waste.Hong Jong Ho, an energy economist at Seoul National University, argues South Korea’s energy crisis began long before the Iran war. The state utility Korea Electric Power Corporation (Kepco), which controls national generation, transmission and distribution as a de facto monopoly and holds stakes in the state-owned companies operating most coal and nuclear plants, keeps electricity prices artificially low and discourages investment in renewable infrastructure, according to Hong.“Decades of government-subsidised electricity have led many Koreans to view power as a public good that the government should provide cheaply and abundantly,” he says, which, in turn, erodes public acceptance of the costs of transition.Kepco has focused on plans to build high-voltage transmission lines from renewable-rich southern regions to Seoul, but construction takes over a decade and faces growing local resistance from residents who view it as unfair: rural areas sacrificing land to supply the capital, while receiving no price benefit under South Korea’s uniform national pricing system.The push to expand solar is also exposing South Korea’s reliance on Chinese supply chains. China accounts for most solar panels installed in the country, reflecting its dominance in global manufacturing and significant-

ly lower costs. The government has responded with measures including domestic module requirements for solar villages and plans to introduce carbon footprint certification for imports. But environmental groups argue the overall response to energy transition falls short.Gahee Han, from group Solutions for Our Climate, acknowledges that President Lee has signalled “genuine political intent” in accelerating the transition. The concern, she says, is whether momentum can translate into delivery. While about 500bn won was allocated to energy transition in the supplementary budget, around 5tn won was simultaneously directed toward absorbing fossil fuel price hikes, including direct subsidies to oil refineries through a petroleum price cap system.“The government that suppresses price signals is the same government asking the public to conserve energy,” Han says. “This contradiction reflects a deeper institutional mindset that continues to shield fossil fuel incumbents from market reality.”The government has delayed some coal plant closures and accelerated nuclear reactor restarts, which officials describe as temporary measures to maintain grid stability amid the Middle East crisis. But a recent cabinet meeting confirmed that “capacity payments”, or guaranteed income streams, will continue flowing to 21 coal-fired power plants beyond 2040 as emergency energy reserves.“The window for transformative change is open now,” Han says. “Whether this government has the institutional courage to use it is the question that will define Korea’s energy future.”

Rachel Roddy’s ‘high-ranking’ penne with potatoes, cabbage, butter and cheese

In December 2023, the magazine La Cucina Italiana ranked Italians’ favourite pasta shapes, according to data gathered by Unione Italiana Food (“the leading association in Italy for the direct representation of food product categories”). I love this sort of thing. According to the UIF, by processing NielsenIQ data (comprehensive market research, consumer intelligence and retail measurement), they identified the five most popular shapes from over 500, and examined how preferences vary in different regions.

In first place was spaghetti, while penne came in second, with these two shapes – which also takes in thinner spaghettini, chunkier spaghettoni and both ridged and smooth penne – accounting for 78% of all pasta sold in Italy in 2023. The regional variations of three, four and five are as follows: in the north-west and north-east, fusilli, short pasta and mixed pasta for broth or minestra; in central Italy, short pasta, fusilli and rigatoni; in the south, mixed pasta for broth or minestra, short pasta and tortiglioni. It has to be said that the regional variations are a bit baggy, considering that short pasta takes in eight shapes: conchiglie, farfalle, mezze maniche, orecchiette, pasta mista, penne again (which is confusing), pac-

cheri and trofie. All of which is justification for calling this week’s column the second highest-ranking pasta shape in Italy with potatoes, cabbage, butter and cheese (while also noting that you can instead use the shapes ranked number three, four and five).

I am, however, not going to suggest you use pizzoccheri, which is best in a recipe called pizzoccheri della Valtellina, a dish typical of the alpine valley Valtellina, for which pizzoccheri (a short, fat, ribbon-like shape made with a blend of pale grey buckwheat flour and wheat flour) is boiled with greens (usually cabbage) and diced potatoes. It’s then layered with butter, a cow’s milk cheese called casera and parmesan, baked briefly and finished with garlic softened in butter. It is a wonderful dish. It is also an inspiring dish for its method; the potato softens at the edges as it cooks with the pasta, the cabbage (which goes in later) softens enough to wrap and cling, while the melted butter, cheese and starch from the pasta cooperate and act like a starchy-but-slippery adhesive that brings everything together. I have taken this idea and adapted it for a friendly recipe, which is an absolute favourite we eat almost weekly. It’s good value, too.

This high-ranking dish is best served as



soon as possible after mixing, passing around more grated cheese and some red chilli flakes for those who want them.

High-ranking penne with potatoes, cabbage, butter and cheese
Serves 4
Salt and black pepper

400-500g penne, fusilli, radiatori, or other short pasta
2 medium-sized potatoes (any kind), peeled and cut into small cubes
½ small savoy cabbage, sliced
75g butter
1 garlic clove, peeled and gently squashed

(but left whole)
4-6 tbsp grated parmesan, or grana padano, plus extra to serve
Red chilli flakes, to serve (optional)
Bring a large pan of water to a boil, then add salt and stir. Add the pasta and potatoes to the boiling water, stir well, and set a timer for five minutes shy of the pasta’s cooking time. When the timer rings, add the cabbage, stir, and reset the timer for the remaining cooking time.

While everything cooks, warm a large bowl by scooping out a ladleful of pasta water, swishing it around the bowl and discarding it. In a small pan, slowly melt the butter with the squashed garlic clove. Pour the melted butter into the warm bowl, add the grated cheese and lots of black pepper.

When the timer rings, use a sieve or slotted spoon to lift the pasta, potato and cabbage out of the pan, wait a few seconds so the excess water drips back into the pan, then drop them into the warmed bowl. Swish and jolt the bowl, and stir well, adding a little pasta cooking water if you feel it needs loosening, and swish again. Serve, passing around more grated cheese and some red chilli flakes for those who want them.

This Tangy Raw Mango Cashew Curry Is The Perfect Summer Recipe To Try

Raw mangoes are far more than just the base for preserved pickles or delicious drinks; they shine equally in savoury dishes. These fruits add a bright and zesty punch to dishes that lift everyday curries and gravies. When used in a savoury curry, the sharp acidity of raw mango melds beautifully with warm spices, nuts, and coconut, creating a comforting yet refreshing dish that cuts through rich, starchy sides like rice and roti. This raw mango cashew curry is a perfect example: it turns the tartness of unripe mango into a luscious, creamy sauce enriched with the buttery depth of cashews and the aroma of cumin, curry leaves, and green chillies, making it a quick week-night favourite that tastes like home.

Raw Mango Cashew Curry Recipe
Ingredients:
1 medium raw (unripe) mango – peeled, deseeded, and chopped into small pieces
½ cup raw cashew nuts (unsalted)
2 tbsp oil (preferably coconut or neutral cooking oil)
1 tsp cumin seeds
½ tsp black gram (urad



dal), whole
2–3 green chillies – slit or finely chopped
8–10 fresh curry leaves
1 small onion – finely chopped
½ tsp turmeric powder
½–1 tsp salt (adjust to taste)
½ cup water (or more, as needed)
Optional: 2–3 tbsp grated coconut or 2–3 tbsp full-fat coconut milk / cream (for a richer, creamier gravy)
Optional garnish: chopped coriander leaves

Method:
Prep the mango and cashews
Peel and chop the raw mango into small cubes.
If using whole cashews, lightly soak them in warm water for 15–20 minutes so they soften and blend smoothly.
Temper the spices
Heat 2 tbsp oil in a heavy-bottomed pan or kadai over medium heat.
Add 1 tsp cumin seeds and ½ tsp black gram (urad dal). Sauté for 1–2 minutes

until they turn lightly golden and fragrant.
Sauté aromatics
Add 2–3 green chillies and 8–10 curry leaves. Stir for about 30 seconds.
Add the finely chopped onion and cook on medium heat until the onions turn soft and translucent, about 5–6 minutes, stirring occasionally.
Add turmeric and salt
Sprinkle in ½ tsp turmeric powder and ½–1 tsp salt. Mix well and cook for 30 seconds so the spices coat

the onions evenly.
Cook the cashews
Add the soaked cashews (drained) to the pan. Gently stir so they mix with the onions and spices.
Cook for 3–4 minutes, taking care not to let them brown too much, just to lightly roast and release their flavour.
Add the mango
Add the chopped raw mango pieces and mix well with the onion–cashew mixture.
Cover the pan with a lid

and cook on medium–low heat for 4–5 minutes, stirring once, so the mango begins to soften and release its juices.
Add water and cook
Pour in about ½ cup water (add more if you want a looser, gravy-like consistency).
Mix well, cover again, and cook for 8–10 minutes or until the mango is fully cooked and mushy but still holds some texture. Stir occasionally to prevent sticking.
Make it creamy (optional)
If using coconut, add 2–3 tbsp grated coconut or coconut milk/cream at this stage. Stir gently and cook for 2–3 more minutes until the gravy thickens slightly and the flavours meld.
Adjust seasoning and finish
Taste and adjust salt and spice if needed. For a brighter finish, you can squeeze in a tiny bit of lemon juice or add a pinch of sugar to balance the tartness.
Turn off the heat and garnish with chopped coriander leaves if using.
Serve
Serve the raw mango cashew curry hot with steamed rice or plain jeera rice, and, if you like, a side of papad or raita.

Sales of instant noodles up as former bad-boy snack turns classy



With their bad-taste adverts and laddish branding, instant noodles were once a mainstay for lazy bach-

elors who needed a quick post-pub fix. Now they are back in the lime-light – but with a gourmet makeover

spurred by a social media trend. Supermarket sales and search data show instant noodles are once again becoming a cupboard staple, this time with a few “fancy” additions.

Rather than the Pot Noodles and Super Noodles preferred in the 1990s and early 2000s, ramen noodles are now taking centre stage after being marketed to gen Z as more authentic.

The TikTok trend that has seemingly helped spur the rise in their popularity, is the notion of “making them fancy”: adding extra ingredients which – shock horror – might even add further nutritional benefits.

Sales of instant noodles have risen by 50% year on year on Ocado’s website, while searches for ramen noodles have jumped by 35%.

Searches for ingredients to upgrade the quick meal are also up. Chilli oil searches on Ocado have increased by 48%, crispy onions are up 27% and seaweed about 20% in September this year, in comparison with 2023.

Jonny Forsyth, senior director of Mintel’s food and drink division, said the market for instant noodles had evolved, and brands are now using influencers to push their product.

He said: “In recent years, they have been marketed on TikTok to engage younger audiences through creative and interactive content. Brands are tapping into TikTok’s short-form video format to resonate with gen Z.”

On TikTok, there are more than 22,100 posts under the hashtag #ramenhacks, in which users have added eggs, sesame seeds, spring onions and Kewpie mayonnaise to their dishes.

Jason Holt, a world foods buyer at Ocado, said: “When it comes to a budget-friendly quick-fix for dinner, you can’t get much better than packet noodles, but here, these have often been dismissed as a bit studenty and not very gourmet – I’m happy that’s starting to change.

“As the many TikTok fans will attest, the right toppings – like nori and chilli oil – can elevate even the humblest noodle bowl, adding texture, flavour and extra nutrients.”

But the classic Pot Noodle has also risen in popularity, with sales up 10% year on year. Many of the recipes seen on social media feature the popular South Korean Buldak instant ramen noodles.

“Instant ramen noodles but done a little bit nicer,” one user says as he shows his step-by-step guide to his upgraded noodle recipe, including Buldak ramen noodles, fresh garlic and chilli oil. Others add broccoli, mushroom, peppers and beef to their upgraded noodles.

Some of the new brands are not for the faint-hearted. In June, Denmark’s food agency recalled several of Samyang Foods’s Buldak instant ramen flavours because they were

too spicy. Three of the products were assessed to have dangerous levels of capsaicin, the active component of chilli peppers, “so high that they pose a risk of the consumer developing acute poisoning” and were withdrawn from sale. Two were later allowed back on the shelves, but not the 3X Spicy Hot Chicken flavour.

And this latest trend is not the first time instant noodles have featured in TikTok trending recipes. Last year, carbonara ramen went viral, with videos of the Asian-inspired version of the classic Italian dish amassing millions of views.

In the past, instant noodle brands have often been censured for their offensive ad campaigns, aimed at the snacks traditionally young, male audience.

In 2002, several Pot Noodle adverts using the line “the slag of all snacks”, which showed men used sneaking off to enjoy an illicit Pot Noodle, were banned from appearing on TV after receiving hundreds of complaints.

And Unilever, the owner of Pot Noodle, also landed in hot water in 2013 over the “Hot-Off” ad for its piri piri flavour, which was banned by the Advertising Standards Authority for being crass and degrading. The ad featured a woman posing in her underwear next to a picture of the snack, with a caption asking: “Which one gets you hotter?”.

Move over matcha: how ube cocktails and coffees are hitting the UK’s sweet spot

Bright purple coffees and cocktails made with a root vegetable called ube have hit the high street in the UK after the yam’s striking hue caused a sensation on social media. Many are calling ube the “new matcha”, and it has a nutty, creamy, sweet taste, like a mix between coconut and vanilla. Ube coloured and flavoured drinks became popular in the US last year, after an earlier boom in Australia. Farmers in the Philippines, where the root vegetable is often sourced, have been struggling to meet demand.

Now, the purple drinks have crossed the pond: Starbucks and Costa both launched ube drinks in their UK stores last month. A Starbucks spokesperson said: “With its stunning technicolour, ube is gaining recognition as chefs, bakeries and cafes around the world have re-imagined the ingredient in culinary creations, particularly in drinks and desserts, and the Starbucks Ube range celebrates this growing cultural presence.”

Ube has long been used in east Asian cooking. Noa Wang, who is originally from China, owns the trendy Bar Lotus in Dalston, east London. She has been putting ube in her cocktails – including a white chocolate dessert-style drink with ube-infused double cream, white chocolate liqueur, white rum, vanilla syrup, and egg white – since the bar opened in 2024, and said they were bestsellers. “Ube is a very good ingredient that east Asian people enjoy a lot,” she said. “We have lots of desserts using that in our childhood memories. The colour is beautiful but it also gives a special taste. It provides a subtle sweetness as well as starchy cream mouthfeel, and is always in our top three most popular drinks at the bar.”

While ube is nostalgic for those who grew up with it, it is an exciting new trend for many who haven’t previously encountered it. This has caused a boom on social media, including TikTok, where ube drinks are often featured. Regina Maisievičiūtė-Haydon, food and drink associate principal at the market research firm Mintel, said: “Ube’s vivid purple colour is ‘highly photogenic’ and well suited to social media platforms, where visually appealing foods can go viral. In the UK, social media can directly trigger people to try things: 49% say they have bought a drink after seeing it featured in a social media post. “Ube is positioned as an ‘approachable yet exciting’ innovation because it’s mildly sweet, nutty and creamy, often with vanilla/coconut-like notes – meaning it can feel both new and comforting. Brands have been pairing it with familiar flavours like vanilla to broaden its attraction.”

Bettina Campolucci Bordi, a chef who runs wellness retreats and creates recipes, said she had been using ube for many years, as she travels the world for her work and had encountered it across Asia. She said she had noticed it being asked for more, and that it had become a craze “like matcha was a few years ago”. She uses it in a tiramisu, and said it was “excellent in pancakes, especially if you are making them for kids”. Bordi added: “It’s become popular from social media – it’s the colour, it looks good on videos, it is all over TikTok. It’s something new because we don’t usually see purple drinks or desserts.” With over 7,000 recipes to choose from, the Feast app puts world-class chefs right in your pocket. Plus smart features that make everyday cooking easier: build personalised recipe collections, create a shopping list, search smarter and cook hands-free with cook mode.



Bhansali’s film Love & War, starring Ranbir Kapoor, Alia Bhatt, and Vicky Kaushal, has been rescheduled for 2027



Mumbai: Regarding the release date of the Sanjay Leela Bhansali film Love & War, there has been a great deal of uncertainty and conjecture. Originally scheduled for release in 2025, the movie, starring Ranbir Kapoor, Alia Bhatt, and Vicky Kaushal, was first announced in January 2024. Since then, there have been two postponements. With a new announcement on the release date on April

17, Bhansali Productions, the production company, put an end to all rumors. Love & War will now open in theaters on January 21, 2027, which is a few days before the Republic Day timeframe. The movie’s new release date was revealed on Friday by Bhansali Productions’ official Instagram account. Vicky Kaushal, Alia Bhatt, and Ranbir Kapoor play the main parts in Love & War. In the historical romantic drama, Vicky and Ranbir portray Air Force officers. Last year, leaked images of actors Ranbir and Alia from the sets went viral, suggesting that the movie would take place in the 1960s. The plot’s specifics are still unknown. An industry source stated last month that the producers are taking stringent steps to stop leaks from the filming process before it is released. “The team of Love & War is leaving no stone unturned to protect the film’s world and prevent any content from leaking out,” said a person close to the movie. A significant portion of the staff working on the film has appar-

ently been asked to sign stringent NDAs (Non-Disclosure Agreements) by the producers, in addition to the main cast. To prevent information, images, or content from the sets from entering the public domain, more than 500 NDAs have already been signed or are in the process of being signed. Prior to her appearance as a Gucci ambassador at Milan Fashion Week, Alia had discussed working on the movie. “I am currently working on a movie called Love & War,” the actor revealed. Sanjay Leela Bhansali is the director of the movie. Filming is coming to a finish. The experience has been truly fantastic. I am extremely appreciative that I got to work with Sanjay sir because it is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. After 2022’s Gangubai Kathiawadi, for which Alia received a National Award for Best Actress, this is her second film with Bhansali. Additionally, it is Bhansali and Ranbir’s second joint project after Saawariya. Vicky’s first movie with the director is this one.

Shaheen Bhatt, Alia Bhatt’s sister, and her partner Ishaan Mehra became engaged



Mumbai: Mahesh Bhatt and Soni Razdan’s daughter, Shaheen Bhatt, is engaged! Shaheen shared a cute photo of herself and her fiancé Ishaan Mehra on Instagram on Friday, showing off her engagement ring. Sister Alia Bhatt reacted to the news because she was unable to control her excitement. In the first photo, Shaheen Bhatt held Ishaan close while flaunting her engagement ring. She put her head on Ishaan’s shoulder in another photo.

“We may have overdone this whole liking each other thing,” she captioned the photo. Alia shared a post by Shaheen on her Instagram Stories, expressing her emotions with the caption “Currently weeping” alongside crying face emojis. Actor Parineeti Chopra commented, referencing “The Unbreakable Vow,” while filmmaker Zoya Akhtar responded with “Congos and bongos.” Navya Nanda, Shanaya Kapoor, and Ananya Panday also congratulated the couple, with Ananya expressing her happiness with

red heart emojis. The post comes a year after Shaheen made her relationship with fitness coach Ishaan Mehra public on Instagram, sharing intimate moments through photos. Previously, Shaheen had not disclosed Ishaan’s identity when posting pictures together. Their families vacationed in Thailand over New Year, during which Shaheen shared pictures showing affection for Ishaan. Shaheen’s previous relationship was with comedian Rohan Joshi, which ended a couple of years ago. Don’t Be Shy is Shaheen’s latest endeavor! Under the name Eternal Sunshine Productions, she and Alia will co-produce the program. The cast of the coming-of-age romance comedy will be exclusively non-film industry. The film, which was written and directed by Sreeti Mukerji, centers on 20-year-old Shyamili “Shy” Das, who thinks her future is predetermined. When an unforeseen event upends her plans and forces her to face uncertainty in friendship, love, and identity, her meticulously planned life starts to fall apart. In the meantime, Alia will appear in Alpha next.

A month after divorcing Sohael Khatriya, Hansika Motwani speaks out



Mumbai: Hansika has spoken up about the time a month after her breakup with Sohael Khatriya. On March 11, a family court in Bandra, Mumbai, awarded the couple a divorce by mutual consent. Despite the fact that the split attracted a lot of public attention, Hansika has decided to keep the specifics confidential. She stated, “People wanted clickbait, they got it,” in an interview with Hauterrfly. They succeeded in getting the headlines they desired. Since it doesn’t concern me, I have never explained it and I never will. It’s alright. I don’t regret anything. If you boarded the wrong train, it’s better to get off than to suffer. She went on to say that she is in a better emotional state and

is happy with her choice. Hansika talked of her family’s unwavering support throughout one of her most trying times. She revealed that her brother and mother supported her without condition and urged her to put her comfort and wellbeing first. They had witnessed an exceptionally challenging period in her life, which was concerning considering her generally upbeat disposition. She reiterated her desire to keep things private, saying that only the two of them know the specifics of what went wrong and that she thinks it’s best that way because some things are supposed to remain between those involved. Hansika traveled to Japan with her mother

and brother following her divorce. In December 2022, Hansika and Sohael Khatriya were married in a lavish wedding at Jaipur’s Mundota Fort and Palace. Hansika’s Love Shaadi Drama, a 2023 Disney+ Hotstar series, famously featured footage of their wedding. Hansika Motwani’s most recent professional appearance was in the 2024 film Guardian, which was directed by Sabari and Guru Saravanan. The movie, which debuted to mixed reviews, also included Sriman and Suresh Chandra Menon in important parts. Additionally, she served as a judge in the Telugu dance program Dhee Celebrity Special 2. Nasha, a Telugu movie, will shortly feature her.

The shooter who fired at Rohit Shetty’s home was taken into custody

New Delhi: A joint squad from the Mumbai Police Crime Branch and the Uttar Pradesh Special Task Force apprehended the gunman on Thursday. The shooter is accused of firing rounds at filmmaker Rohit Shetty’s Mumbai home two months ago. The offender has been identified as Pradeep Kumar, also known as Gaath, according to a police statement. At 3:56 PM on Thursday, he was taken into custody from the Chhadami Mattha region on the Agra-Etah route within the boundaries of the Bah police station in Agra. On the evening of February 1, 2026, there was a shooting at Rohit Shetty’s residence in the Juhu district of Mumbai. The filmmaker’s home, Shetty Tower, was hit by gunfire that struck the glass railing on his balcony. The infamous Shubham Lonkar gang is said to have ordered the attack in order to extort money and instill fear in the public and film business. The arrest was “the result of technical analysis and intelligence sharing between the Mumbai crime branch and the Uttar Pradesh STF,” according to the police statement. Rakesh, Additional Superintendent of Police, STF Field Unit, Agra, oversaw the operation. The accused, who lives in Ashok Nagar in Agra, chose to target Rohit Shetty after being inspired by the Lonkar gang’s presence on Facebook and Instagram. According to the police, during first interrogation, the accused acknowledged taking part in the crime with colleagues Sunny, Deepu, and Sonu in order to achieve “dominance” in the underworld. The culprit was turned over to the Mumbai Police team at the Bah police station after his arrest. The Mumbai Police filed a complaint in February under the strict Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act, the Arms Act, the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, and the Maharashtra Police Act. The most recent person to be arrested in this well-known case is Pradeep. Eight other suspects were previously apprehended in cooperative operations, including Vishnu Kushwaha, Deepak, and Pradeep Sharma, also known as Golu. One of the most prosperous and well-known directors in Bollywood, the Hindi film business, is Rohit Shetty. In his two-decade career, he has directed a number of popular movies, most notably the Singham and Golmaal franchises. The latter is a component of his Cop Universe, along with Simba and Sooryavanshi. Chennai Express, which was formerly the highest-grossing Hindi film, was also directed by the 52-year-old.

In this horror-comedy, Akshay Kumar never stops making us laugh

Mumbai: Bhooth Bangla, directed by Priyadarshan, is a horror comedy that reunites Akshay Kumar and the filmmaker, recalling their successful collaborations. The plot follows Arjun (Kumar), who travels to India with his sister to prepare a palace she inherited from their grandfather, only to discover that the village has a strange curse where brides go missing due to a supernatural figure known as Vadhusur. The film blends elements reminiscent of earlier hits like Bhool Bhulaiyaa, Stree, and Shaitaan, leveraging nostalgia to engage the audience. While the first half of Bhooth Bangla is rich with classic Priyadarshan aesthetics and captures rustic settings beautifully through Divakar Mani’s cinematography, it suffers from narrative inconsistencies, where characters fade in and out without clear resolution. The film’s pacing falters in the latter half due to its heavier plot, requiring tighter editing to enhance its impact, suggesting that a runtime reduction could have improved audience engagement. Musically, the soundtrack by Pritam is deemed average, with the best track reserved for the credits; however, Ronnie Raphael’s background score successfully elevates several moments in the film. Akshay Kumar delivers a commendable performance, showcasing his range and comedic skills, while veterans like Asrani and Rajpal Yadav provide memorable moments with their performances. In contrast, Wamiqa Gabbi and Tabu’s roles are limited in scope. Overall, Bhooth Bangla may not signify Priyadarshan’s peak, but it retains many charms, with a blend of humor and nostalgia, driven by Kumar’s adept comic timing and a vibrant, chaotic world. Despite not achieving classic status, it provides a fun viewing experience.

After her divorce, Pooja Bhatt describes herself as a free bird

Mumbai: After 11 years of marriage, actor Pooja Bhatt and former VJ Manish Makhija divorced in 2014. The actress, who has never held back when discussing her divorce, recently revealed how much she is relishing her independence. “It is glorious,” Pooja Bhatt said. I’m having fun being single. I’ve probably been in relationships since I was sixteen, and now I’m completely free. I am my own ship’s captain. I make my own decisions. “I have so much love to offer the world,” she went on. I have books, friends, cats, and my craft. I travel frequently as a nomad. I want to be free to grab my luggage and travel anytime



I choose. I started going to the gym when I was fifty years old. My gym is now my temple. Speaking of love, she declared that she would always rejoice in it. “I have a variety of friends, some who have been married for forty years and some who have

been divorced four times,” stated Pooja Bhatt. I’m not losing out on anything. I feel whole for the first time in my life. It has probably taken me a while to realize that being the right person is just as important as finding the perfect person. Pooja Bhatt

has also been very outspoken about her struggle with alcohol. She discussed how she gave it up eight and a half years ago in the most recent interview. “Giving up alcohol was the easy part, but when you do that, you realize what you were running from while that drink was being used as a painkiller,” she stated. Love is no exception. In terms of her career, Pooja Bhatt entered the content industry in 2025 with her podcast, The Pooja Bhatt Show. Her recent acting credits include Bombay Begums (2021) on Netflix and Big Girls Don’t Cry (2025) on Prime Video. She also participated in Sadak 2 in 2020 and is still a producer.

After having birth, Patralekhaa retaliates against the paparazzi for body-shaming her

Mumbai: Actor-producer Patralekhaa criticized photographers on Friday for body-shaming her postpartum appearance after an offensive caption appeared in a video of her. When a paparazzi page posted a video of the actress getting out of her car with the tagline, “What’s happened to her?” with her husband Rajkumar Rao trailing behind, the criticism started. Patralekhaa addressed the realities of a woman’s body after childbirth and vehemently condemned the comment on her Instagram Stories. She advised people to show greater empathy and explained that her bodily changes are a normal part of the postpartum era.

“What has become of me? is that I recently had birth! Yes, I have put on weight, which you all seem to find strange,” she added. Even though she is still struggling to accept it, she went on to say that the weight increase was a normal reaction to pregnancy rather than the result of overeating. She emphasized the emotional and physical obligations she has been juggling in a longer state-



ment. “I just gave birth and produced two films at the same time, which are difficult tasks. I haven’t eaten a lot. I wouldn’t be this way if I could. However, my body has responded to pregnancy in this way. Please learn to be a little kind, for heaven’s sake,” she continued. Discussions on body-shaming and unreasonable demands of women, particularly during the postpartum phase, have been triggered by the occurrence once more. Neha Dhupia, Deepika Padu-

kone, Ranveer Singh, Alia Bhatt, and Ranbir Kapoor are among the celebrities who have previously voiced their disapproval of the invasive or callous actions of photographers. On November 15, 2025, Patralekhaa and Rajkumar Rao welcomed their first child, a daughter. In honor of Rao’s late mother, they gave her the name Parvati Paul Rao. When Rajkumar first saw Patralekhaa in an advertisement, he acknowledged that he was immediately captivated to

her and hoped their paths would eventually meet. They eventually became together while working on Hansal Mehta’s 2014 film CityLights, when their professional cooperation eventually developed into a romantic partnership. In October 2021, after dating for a number of years, Rajkumar asked Patralekhaa to marry him. The following month, in November 2021, the pair got married in a small ceremony that was seen by close friends and relatives.

Kangana Ranaut Remembers Being Accused of Black Magic by Her Former Boyfriend

Mumbai: Kangana Ranaut recently revisited the challenges she faced a decade ago when her ex-boyfriend, Adhyayan Suman, accused her of physical and emotional abuse, as well as practicing ‘black magic.’ In a podcast, she recounted the character attacks she endured, where people labeled her a witch, claiming she engaged in sinister practices. This incident occurred after their relationship, which spanned 2008-09, culminated in a legal case filed against her in 2015. Kangana expressed her frustration with the severe public scrutiny at such a young age and emphasized her decision not to conform to industry pressures. During this tumultuous period, she found solace in her professional successes, particularly the acclaim and box office

triumph of her film, Queen, a notable achievement in the Hindi film industry. In a separate statement, Adhyayan later shared his reasons for bringing forth the allegations, disclosing his own struggles with the psychological impact of their relationship and the violence he reportedly suffered. Himachal Pradesh native Kangana Ranaut made her screen debut in Gangster in 2006. She later gave critically lauded roles in Tanu Weds Manu Returns, Fashion, and Queen. Currently serving as a Member of Parliament from Mandi, she has won four National Awards and received the Padma Shri. Her most recent appearance was as former prime minister Indira Gandhi in the movie Emergency, which she also directed.

Amit Shah, Priyanka Gandhi And A Funny “Chanakya” Incident in Parliament



New Delhi, Apr 17: When Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi gave Home Minister Amit Shah a backhanded compliment while grinning, he and several BJP leaders were spotted grinning. Participating in the discussion of the three proposals proposed to change the women’s quota law and establish a delimitation commission, Priyanka Gandhi observed, “He is laughing,” referring to Amit Shah. “Grahmantri ji possesses rahe hain. The Home Minister is smiling.

Poori yojana bana rakhi hai, Chanakya agar jinda hote toh woh bhi chauk jaate aapki rajnitik kutilta par. The entire strategy is in place. In hu-

mor, Priyanka Gandhi questioned the political motivation behind the Women’s Reservation Bill’s timing and framing, saying, “If Chanakya were alive today, he would have also been shocked by your political shrewdness.” “Shah, who came up with the entire scheme, is now chuckling. He concurs with me,” the leader of Congress stated.

The Home Minister smiled at the Chanakya remark, showing no signs of displeasure. According to Priyanka Gandhi, the law calls for expanding the number of Lok Sabha seats to 850, which would be determined by a delimitation body using data from

the 2011 Census. On the surface, this seems acceptable, but when one examines it closely, the true meaning becomes apparent. She changed course and increased the political pressure on the administration, saying, “It smells of politics.” Priyanka Gandhi questioned, “Why can’t reservation for women be granted in these very 543 Lok Sabha seats today?” The country won’t suffer from needless delimitation if this reservation is passed tonight,” she stated.

The Congress leader stated, “The entire House would have supported this historic step if the prime minister had done it with sincerity.” The three members of the delimitation commission will determine the fate of the states and their representation in Parliament, she claimed after reading the fine language. She charged that the administration was undertaking a “big attack on the country’s integrity” and attempting to “dupe” people once more. On the one hand, women’s reservations are a hot topic, and on the other, OBC rights are being violated. She claimed that by diminishing the power of tiny states, a powerful framework is being built for the upcoming elections, destroying democracy.

Robbers gag a worker and take more than Rs 1 lakh from the office

New Delhi, Apr 17: On Thursday, three thieves broke into the “West & Western Union Tours and Travels” office in the Harnamdas Pura neighborhood of Jalandhar, Punjab, and stole Rs 1,08,000. Gurdeep has been recognized as one of the culprits in the CCTV footage of the incident. A female employee is seen serving customers inside the store on the CCTV footage. A young man with a black shirt walks inside the store at this moment. He walks up to the desk, puts a handkerchief over his face, and asks questions about tickets. The female employee is then observed talking on the phone. A second young man, dressed in a face mask and a checked shirt, enters the store shortly after and positions himself inside, but the clerk is still absorbed in her phone call. Then, a third accomplice is positioned outside the store, and the young man in the checked shirt can be seen constantly looking in that direction. Then the two young men inside the store start talking to each other. Now, without the female employee’s awareness, the young man in the black shirt silently places himself behind her. Then he gives his accomplice the signal to assault from behind. The three criminals casually take the money from the safe before leaving the area, while the young man in the black shirt covers the employee’s lips.

I am the recently dismissed deputy leader: Raghav Chadha’s criticism of the AAP in the Rajya Sabha



New Delhi, Apr 17: Raghav Chadha, a Member

of Parliament from the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), publicly criticized his own party during a speech in the Rajya Sabha, highlighting the absence of key party leaders, including the party’s leader Sanjay Singh and newly appointed deputy leader Ashok Kumar Mittal. Chadha, recently removed from his position as deputy leader, acknowledged his presence in the House while expressing hope for a more positive relationship with the newly re-elected deputy chairperson, Harivansh Narayan Singh. Chadha also commended Vice President CP Radhakrishnan for facilitating more speaking opportunities for members during sessions.

In a notable shift, Chadha has faced backlash from AAP leadership after being stripped of his post and accused of being too aligned with the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). His removal was confirmed with an AAP letter to the Rajya Sabha Secretariat on April 2, appointing Ashok Mittal to replace him. Despite the challenges, Chadha conveyed resilience, stating, “Don’t mistake my silence for my

defeat,” in response to the party’s accusations. Furthermore, he seemingly took a jab at the leadership through a social media post featuring the book “The 48 Laws of Power” by Robert Greene, suggesting that the timing of the book’s gift was significant. Tensions heightened as AAP leaders, including Delhi AAP chief Saurabh Bharadwaj and Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, publicly questioned Chadha’s commitment and suitability, with Mann explicitly labeling him as “compromised.” Mann criticized Chadha for raising inconsequential issues like food prices in Parliament instead of addressing significant political matters. Other party leaders pointed out Chadha’s reluctance to support critical opposition initiatives, such as signing an impeachment motion against the Chief Election Commissioner. Chadha has refuted these allegations, framing the accusations against him as orchestrated, and challenged the party to provide concrete examples of his alleged deviations from the party stance.

Virender Sehwag Shares the Whole Story of Delhi’s IPL Rejection of Virat Kohli for Pradeep Sangwan

New Delhi: During the first Indian Premier League (IPL) season in 2008, the Delhi Daredevils (now Delhi Capitals) chose Pradeep Sangwan over a young Virat Kohli, according to former India opener Virender Sehwag. He cited team balance and a lack of bowling alternatives at the time. The team’s full top-order batting lineup made it challenging to fit every player in the XI, according to JioStar expert Sehwag, who spoke on JioHotstar. “I recall Shikhar

Dhawan and Tillakaratne Dilshan playing for the Delhi Daredevils during the first IPL season in 2008. They were both openers, but since Gautam and I used to start the innings, we forced them to bat at three and five. Manoj Tiwary was ranked fourth. On JioHotstar’s “Champions Waali Commentary,” Sehwag stated, “We had a lot of top-order batters in the team, and it was becoming difficult to fit all of them into the batting order.” He continued by

saying that although Kohli was also batting in the top order, the team’s roster structure compelled them to give bowling resources priority.

Virat Kohli was batting at number three or four at the moment.

Thus, there was not even room for him to enter. We chose Pradeep Sangwan over Kohli because we didn’t have a bowler,” he stated. The young Kohli was purchased by Royal Challengers Bangalore (now Bengaluru) for

Rs 12 lakh at auction during the first IPL season. After that, Kohli became one of the most prosperous players in the history of the team. In 272 games and 262 innings, Kohli, who plays for the Bengaluru-based team, has amassed 8,889 runs in IPL history. At an average of 39.86, the right-handed hitter has hit eight hundreds and sixty-five half-centuries. With 228 runs in five games, including two fifties, Kohli is the top scorer in the current IPL 2026 season.

Shreyas Iyer is delighted to claim credit for his remarkable catch that gave PBKS a swing

New Delhi: Against the Mumbai Indians’ Jasprit Bumrah-led bowling attack, Punjab Kings maintained their undefeated start to the Indian Premier League 2026 season by easily defeating a 196-run target. Prabhsimran Singh’s 80* and captain Shreyas Iyer’s 66 were crucial in the chase, and the captain thought about how it felt to be at the top of the table once more and what his incredible catch to remove Hardik Pandya had to do with it. “Definitely upbeat and self-assured moving forward. In the post-match interview with the commentators, Shreyas stated, “The way we’ve been playing is phenomenal, at the same time we have our head on our shoulders.” “We are aware that every game we play will be crucial to our success as a team. I’m happy that we achieved a complete victory today. With centuries on Quinton de Kock and Naman Dhir going hard through the middle of the first innings, MI were destined for a huge total. MI’s platform appeared to be set, but MI’s innings was slowed down by Iyer’s extraordinarily acrobatic relay catch to remove Hardik Pandya, his opposite number. The skipper of PBKS was pleased to acknowledge this. “At one point MI were looking for well over 200, what was the key in pulling things back?” queried presenter Ian Bishop. Shreyas grinned in response, pleased to admit that his own contribution to the outcome was his outstanding fielding. “I believe I made my catch. Negate the borders and don’t think too far ahead of the game. We have a propensity to pull things back, as against SRH,” Shreyas said. Punjab witnessed a 128-run partnership between Prabhsimran and Shreyas following two early wickets in the chase. Shreyas himself appears to be utterly unflappable in chases of any kind, amassing runs in the 200-range for fun. However, he praised his younger batting partner for finishing the pursuit undefeated. “His bar has been raised... He has the maturity to complete the game. Shreyas praised Prabhsimran, one of the top openers



in this year’s IPL, saying, “It’s great to see youngsters take responsibility and say I’m going to win the match for the team.” Punjab’s four victories have come from their ability to chase game after game, but sustaining the same level of performance while defending a total may prove to be the next hurdle. Iyer was grateful for their good fortune and the fact that they had plans, but that is still an objective. “We haven’t made a decision regarding totals. The PBKS captain said, “I’ve been fortunate to win tosses so far, and I’m always ready for the challenge of batting first, ready to go out there and express ourselves.” “I think you need to keep improving every game; that’s the recipe we’ve been following so far,” he said in closing.

Devendra Fadnavis on the “deeply concerning” TCS situation in Nashik



New Delhi, Apr 17: Devendra Fadnavis, the chief minister of Maharashtra, declared on Friday that the state government has requested central agencies’ assistance in investigating the alleged instance of forced conversion and sexual exploitation that has surfaced at the Nashik Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) plant. Declaring the situation to be “grave and deeply concerning,” In acknowledging the company’s response, Fadnavis stated that “TCS has taken strong and timely action against those involved.” Strict measures are being taken, he added, and the probe would reach “to the root of the case.” “No one involved will be spared. Nobody will be protected. The incident seems to be a part of a wider organized module, he added. “We have asked central agencies to investigate the matter thoroughly.” A number of female employees at the TCS BPO unit in Nashik, Maharashtra, allegedly experienced forced religious conversion and sexual exploitation. According to the complaints, some team

leaders pressured economically disadvantaged Hindu women to convert, say namaz, and eat beef. Even though the accusations are still being investigated, they have caused a great deal of worry and political backlash. At least nine FIRs have been filed in relation to the issue, and more cases have been lodged thus far. Seven suspects in the investigation have already been taken into custody by the police. Danish Sheikh, Tausif Attar, Raza Memon, Shahrukh Qureshi, Shafi Sheikh, Asif Aftab Ansari, and a female associate have been identified. The primary suspect, a female named Nida Khan, is presently at large. According to reports, she requested anticipatory bail from a Nashik local court. Khan is presently in Mumbai and is expecting her first kid, according to her family. Additionally, investigators are looking into a potential international connection to the case. Officials claim that Imran Khan, a Malaysian, is being investigated, especially in relation to possible illicit finance. The suspected acts may have been funded by foreign financial flows, which the authorities are investigating. A Special Investigation Team (SIT) established by the Nashik Police is already working on the case. Additionally, the investigation has identified a resort where victims have said they were forced to attend.

TCS has started its own internal disciplinary proceedings in the interim. The business said it is completely assisting law enforcement and suspended the employees mentioned in the accusations. According to reports, the claimed crimes took place over a long period of time, from 2022 to 2026. According to victims, the pattern of exploitation went unnoticed for years, which raises concerns about workplace safety procedures and oversight. The case has also made it to the Supreme Court, where a petition has been filed calling it a “systematic conspiracy” and demanding severe punishment for those involved.

Southern states won’t lose seats as a result of delimitation, PM Modi assures

New Delhi, Apr 17: On Thursday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi gave lawmakers assurances that the amendments intended to accelerate the 33% women’s reservation by 2029—which include a 50% increase in the total number of seats in the Lok Sabha and delimitation based on the most recent census, which is essentially the 2011 one—would not discriminate against or treat anyone unfairly. Speaking in the Lok Sabha, the PM attempted to soothe opposition parties’ worries that the laws are being drafted with the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party’s electoral interests in mind and that they will cause the Southern states to lose their relative political power in Parliament. Additionally, he issued a warning, pointing out that parties that previously rejected women’s reservations had to pay a high price for a long time. “Delimitation that occurred earlier, there will be no change in that anupat (ratio),” he declared, guaranteeing that the proportional representation of states in Parliament would not change and that the increase in seats would not alter the relative strengths. The PM went on, “If you need a guarantee, I give you a guarantee; if you need a promise, I make a promise... because if the intention is clear, there is no need for wordplay.” The Opposition has raised concerns about the government’s bill regarding proportional representation and the lack of a provision for a 50% increase in seats. Prime Minister Modi dismissed these issues, emphasizing that the government’s push for a 33% quota for women in Parliament and assemblies is a long-overdue right that has been denied for decades. He urged opposition leaders to unite in support of the constitutional amendment bill, stating it requires a two-thirds majority for passage and serves the greater good of democracy rather than any individual or party. Modi highlighted the importance of women’s involvement in decision-making, asserting that this initiative aligns with the vision of a developed India (Viksit Bharat) that encompasses not only economic growth but also inclusive governance. He noted the political empowerment of women at the grassroots level, who have gained political consciousness and demand representation in legislatures.

Hardik Pandya is advised to “quit and give Rohit Sharma IPL captaincy”

New Delhi: Hardik Pandya, the captain of the Mumbai Indians (MI), has been under fire after the team’s poor IPL 2026 season start. MI sits second from the bottom of the points table with just one victory in five games. The five-time champions suffered their fourth loss of the season on Thursday as Shreyas Iyer’s Punjab Kings (PBKS) easily defeated them at home.

This season, MI’s only triumph came on March 29 at Wankhede Stadium against the Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR). Former India batsman Manoj Tiwary criticized Hardik’s captaincy against PBKS on Cricbuzz, claiming that the all-rounder’s leadership has been subpar since he assumed leadership of the team. Where will ownership originate? One must also examine oneself. You must check your performance. I think that just because you’re not succeeding this year doesn’t indicate that your blunders are exclusive to this year. You must also examine the underlying reason. Rohit Sharma assisted the Mumbai Indians in winning multiple trophies between 2015 and 2023, according to Tiwary. Noting that the seasoned batter guided the team to five titles between 2013 and 2023, Tiwary also encouraged Hardik to give up the captaincy and give it back to Rohit Sharma. There was no award in 2023. There was no award in 2024, and there is a good likelihood that this year will be the same. The captaincy, in my opinion, is lacking. I don’t want to be severe. However, Hardik is not guiding the team in the proper manner. Being proactive is crucial for a captain. If a solution is required, I believe Hardik should relinquish his captaincy and return the reins to Rohit. You did an injustice when you took Rohit out,” he said.

Tiwary criticized Hardik’s tactical decisions during the loss to PBKS, particularly his choice to move up the order ahead of Sherfane Rutherford, in addition to the leadership shift. In addition, he questioned the decision to start the bowling session with Deepak Chahar in spite of the pacer’s previous difficulties. “Hardik’s promotion against the Punjab Kings was inappropriate. On 12 balls, he scored 14 runs. Sherfane Rutherford only received five balls. Rutherford would have struck three or four sixes if he had played as many balls. Hardik Pandya believed he could succeed. He could have done it, indeed. Rutherford ought to have been pushed up by you. Furthermore, if you are not handing Jasprit Bumrah the first over, there is no reason to give him the second. He claimed that Deepak Chahar simply couldn’t swing the ball.

Irfan Pathan explains why Jasprit Bumrah hasn’t picked a wicket in the 2026 IPL

New Delhi: In the current Indian Premier League season, Jasprit Bumrah is still without a wicket. In an IPL 2026 match at the Wankhede Stadium on Thursday, the bowler made a comeback with figures of 0 for 41 against Punjab Kings. In the current season, the star bowler has failed to take a wicket in five straight games. Bumrah has leaked runs at an economy rate of 8.63, which exacerbates the situation. Bumrah’s lean patch was highlighted by Irfan Pathan, who advised the bowler to avoid making too many slower deliveries. “Jasprit Bumrah’s bowling wickets are crucial. His average speed this season has been about 130 kmph, but there isn’t a significant problem with his form. On his YouTube channel, Pathan stated, “He has been using the slower ball about 44% of the time, meaning almost every second ball is a slower one.” Prior to the Mumbai Indians vs. Punjab Kings game on Thursday, the analytical video was posted. “So why is Jasprit Bumrah acting in this way? This deserves a closer examination, in my opinion. There will be results if he bowls more fast deliveries and lowers the percentage of slower balls.

It’s a really easy fix. “The numbers show what is happening, but Bumrah doesn’t need coaching,” he continued. When the squad chased down a 196-run goal in just 16.3 overs against Punjab Kings, Bumrah appeared to be ineffective. Captain Shreyas Iyer hit 66 off 35 balls, while PBKS opener Prabhsimran Singh scored 80 not out off 39 balls. This led to MI’s fourth straight IPL 2026 loss. They have only prevailed in their first game of the season and have lost every subsequent game. He needs to pick up the pace because the balls are 44% slower and his average speed is less than 130 kmph. It goes without saying that your average speed will decrease if you bowl more slow deliveries. However, if you reduce the slower ball percentage to about 35%. Your slower balls will become more successful if you bowl more quickly and maintain it at 30 to 35 percent. Additionally, you may dismiss batters if you have swing and seam,” Pathan said.

Messi Joins Ronaldo as Club Owner After Buying Catalan Side Cornella

New Delhi: Lionel Messi has completed a 100 per cent acquisition of UE Cornella, a Barcelona-based club. The move was confirmed on Thursday, April 16, marking the Argentine star's first major foray into club ownership in Spain. The acquisition places Messi in a similar position to his long-time rival Cristiano Ronaldo, who recently acquired a 25 per cent stake in UD Almeria. Unlike Ronaldo's investment, which is aimed at helping Almeria return to La Liga following their 2023-24 relegation, Messi's takeover focuses on a club famed for its youth development. Based in a working-class neighbourhood of Barcelona, UE Cornella is recognised as one of Spain's most productive academies. The club currently competes in the Tercera RFEF (Spanish fifth division). Despite its modest standing, the club has served as a launchpad for several high-profile international players.

The club's youth system produced Messi's former Inter Miami teammate Jordi Alba, Arsenal goalkeeper David Raya, and Andre Onana, who is currently on loan at Trabzonspor. According to market data, these three alumni alone reached combined peak market values exceeding 1,240 Cr. Messi's acquisition ensures direct



control over a pipeline that has consistently funneled talent into Europe's top leagues. The club announced the deal without disclosing specific financial figures but emphasized a long-term strategic plan. The project aims to combine the club's scouting heritage with a sustainable financial model. "Leo Messi's arrival marks the beginning of a new chapter in the club's history," UE Cornella said in an official statement. "The project is guided by a long-term vision and a strategic plan that combines ambition, sustainability, and a strong connection to its local roots." At 38 years old, Messi is currently playing for Inter Miami and is could lead Argentina in the 2026 FIFA World Cup

this summer. By acquiring Cornella, he secures a permanent professional link to Catalonia, the region where he spent the majority of his career with FC Barcelona. Cristiano Ronaldo has acquired a 25 percent stake in UD Almeria, marking a significant step in his post-playing career ambitions. The investment comes as the club seeks promotion to Spain's top division, following their relegation from La Liga after the 2023-24 season.

Almeria, currently competing in Spain's Segunda Division, is positioned third in the league and is striving to secure promotion. The club underwent a change in ownership in May 2025, when Saudi investment consortium SMC Group,

led by Mohammed Al-Khereiji, took control from Turki Al-Sheikh. Ronaldo's investment was made through the newly established CR7 Sports Investments. Details regarding the financial terms of the acquisition have not been disclosed. "It has been a long-held ambition of mine to contribute to football, beyond just on the pitch. UD Almeria is a Spanish club with strong foundations and clear potential for growth. I look forward to working alongside the leadership team to support the next phase of the club's growth," Ronaldo said in the statement.

We are very pleased that Cristiano has chosen our club to invest in," Al-Khereiji said in the statement. "He is regarded as the greatest player ever to play the game. He knows the Spanish leagues very well and he understands the potential of what we are building here both in terms of the team and the academy." Almeria's third-place standing in the Segunda Division positions them as strong contenders for promotion, with the club aiming to return to La Liga after only one season in the lower tier. The club's ownership group believes Ronaldo's expertise can be crucial in their push. Becoming a co-owner is a move he future.

Ricky Ponting Reveals Formula Behind PBKS' Winning Mindset After Beating MI

Mumbai: Punjab Kings (PBKS) head coach Ricky Ponting outlined the key elements behind building a winning mindset after his side cruised to a dominant seven-wicket win over the Mumbai Indians in the Indian Premier League (IPL) at the Wankhede Stadium on Thursday. PBKS clinched their fourth win of the IPL 2026 season. They are the only team that has yet to be defeated. In five matches, they have won four, while one match was abandoned due to rain. Speaking on JioHotstar, Ponting said that building a winning team starts with creating a supportive environment where players feel valued and aligned.

He emphasised that his role as a coach is to guide and challenge rather than control, and to accept failure as part of the game. For me, it starts with creating the right environment where every player feels valued and on the same page. As a coach, I'm there to support and challenge them, not to control them. Even when they fail, they need to know that's part of the game," he said. The former Australian cricketer added that suc-



cess in T20 cricket depends on a few players stepping up, so having clearly defined roles and the right team culture is crucial.

He also noted that backing players like Prabhsimran Singh and Shashank Singh has helped them deliver strong performances, which in turn drives the team's success. "In T20 cricket, you only need a few players to step up on any given day. So, it's about building a strong group with clearly defined roles. That was a big part of our auction strategy as well, getting the right people in to shape the culture. When players feel backed, like someone like Prabhsimran or Shashank, they respond with performances, and that's what ultimately drives results," he said. Coming to

the match, Punjab Kings put a complete performance on display against Mumbai Indians. Batting first, MI posted 195/6, powered by Quinton de Kock's brilliant 112* off 60 balls and a crucial 122-run partnership with Naman Dhir, who scored a quick 50. Arshdeep Singh led PBKS' bowling effort with the Player of the Match-winning figures of 3/22 in 4 overs. "In T20 cricket, you only need a few players to step up on any given day. So, it's about building a strong group with clearly defined roles. That was a big part of our auction strategy as well, getting the right people in to shape the culture. When players feel backed, like someone like Prabhsimran or Shashank, they respond with performances, and that's what ultimately drives results.

ICC Probes Cricket Canada For Alleged Corruption During 2026 T20 World Cup



New Delhi: The International Cricket Council (ICC) has launched an investigation into Cricket Canada over alleged breaches of its anti-corruption code, including scrutiny of Canada's T20 World Cup match against New Zealand in Chennai on February 17.

The game at the MA Chidambaram Stadium, which Canada lost by eight wickets, has come under the scanner of the ICC's Anti-Corruption Unit (ACU) following allegations raised in a recently aired documentary. Canada, after opting to bat, posted a competitive 173/4. However,

New Zealand chased down the target comfortably in just 15.1 overs, powered by unbeaten knocks from Glenn Phillips (59 off 39) and Rachin Ravindra (76 off 36), sealing their place in the Super Eight stage. According to a report by ESPNcricinfo, the ACU is currently examining multiple allegations linked to Cricket Canada, including "two active investigations" spanning both international fixtures and domestic cricket.

The allegations were brought to light in a 43-minute documentary titled Corruption, Crime and Cricket, pro-

duced by Canadian investigative programme the fifth estate and aired by CBC. The film outlines wide-ranging claims related to corruption and governance issues within Canadian cricket. One of the focal points of the investigation is the fifth over of New Zealand's chase, bowled by Canada captain Dilpreet Bajwa. Appointed skipper just three weeks before the tournament, Bajwa conceded 15 runs in the over, which included a no-ball and a wide, after coming on with New Zealand at 35/2. Responding to the developments, Andrew Ephgrave, interim

general manager of the ICC's Integrity Unit, said the ACU could not comment on the substance of the allegations. Consistent with its established operating procedures, the ACU is not in a position to comment on the substance of any allegations," Ephgrave said. "The unit operates across intelligence, prevention, education and investigation, and acts wherever there is a credible risk to the integrity of the sport." A second line of investigation relates to a leaked phone recording involving former Canada coach Khurram Chohan, in which he allegedly claims that senior board members pressured him to select certain players. The recording also includes claims of attempted match-fixing, though these remain difficult to corroborate. Former head coach Pubudu Dassanayake has also made similar allegations, stating that he faced pressure over team selection ahead of the 2024 T20 World Cup. Dassanayake is currently suing Cricket Canada for wrongful dismissal. The controversy comes amid ongoing administrative instability within Cricket Canada.

GT vs KKR: Gujarat Eyes More Misery For Kolkata Amid Rahane's Spin Test

KKR Face Spin Test Against Formidable Titans

Ahmedabad: Kolkata Knight Riders travel to Ahmedabad in search of their first win in the Indian Premier League. Ajinkya Rahane's side have had their worst start in the history of the tournament, failing to win a single game in their first five matches. They have lost four and have had one of their games washed away by rain at the Eden Gardens. KKR's batters have been the talking point in the first five games, playing some terrible cricket outside of the powerplay. Against spin, KKR have looked like deer caught in the headlights, failing to provide any impetus in the middle overs.

The problem compounded for KKR in the match against Chennai Super Kings, where their openers scored just 36 runs in the powerplay in a modest chase of 193 runs in Chennai. The fans did not take long to lash out at captain Ajinkya Rahane, who has



totally failed to inspire in any of the matches this season. It is perhaps here that it needs to be pointed out that KKR bought Ajinkya Rahane in the IPL 2025 auction after letting go of Shreyas Iyer, under whom the franchise won their third title. Unsold in the first call, Rahane found himself bought at the base price of Rs 1.5 crore by KKR in the second round of the auction. For some inexplicable reason, KKR ended up handing the captaincy to a player they thought was not the right fit for them in the first round of the players being sold. And then, a full season of failure

later, here we are. Kolkata Knight Riders are at the bottom of the points table, searching for solutions to their problems in the Indian Premier League.

But how many problems can they solve at a given time? KKR need to fix their batting line-up. KKR need to find a strong hitter in the middle order. The franchise needs to better their death bowling to capitalise on their spin block. With issues aplenty, KKR will be facing an in-form bowling attack of Gujarat Titans, who wreaked havoc in their previous match against Lucknow Super Giants. Prasidh

Krishna already has 10 wickets from four games, while Rashid Khan's spell helped GT beat Delhi Capitals in a thriller earlier in the season. And that does not bode well for KKR at all. Kolkata Knight Riders captain Ajinkya Rahane had said after their loss against CSK that the team will go back to the drawing board and find new combinations. But finding new combinations would likely mean that Rahane or Angkrish Raghuvanshi might need to be sacrificed from the batting line-up. Are KKR bold enough to make that call? That is one aspect that we will need to watch out for on Friday. Gujarat Titans are coming off two back-to-back wins after a slow start to the season. Their team combination might be well suited to playing KKR, as they can bowl out their spinners against a stuttering KKR middle order on Friday. Rashid Khan, Glenn Phillips, And Washington.

Four Teams Remain as Contrasting Styles Shape Semi-Final Matchups



chandigarh: Bayern Munich and Atletico Madrid came through dramatic, high-intensity quarter-finals, where margins were thin and moments decisive. Bayern's 6-4 aggregate win over Real Madrid was defined by late goals and a crucial red card, while Atletico edged Barcelona 3-2 across two legs shaped heavily by VAR decisions and discipline. In contrast, Paris Saint-Germain and Arsenal progressed with

far greater control. PSG dismantled Liverpool 4-0 on aggregate, and Arsenal got past Sporting CP with efficiency rather than flair. That contrast now defines the semi-finals. Bayern against PSG feels like a meeting of two teams built to attack. Bayern have been relentless going forward, scoring 22 goals in the league phase and carrying that form into the knockouts. Harry Kane has been central to that consistency,

while players like Michael Olise and Luis Diaz have added pace and unpredictability in wide areas. PSG, meanwhile, have grown into the competition. The push-back from FIFA comes after New Jersey governor Mikie Sherrill raised concerns over the rising cost of transportation for fans travelling to matches, with reports suggesting that return journeys to stadiums could cost close to \$100 (Rs 9,325.80).

Arshdeep Singh Claims Viral Social Media Reels Are Rapidly Boosting the Punjab Kings Fanbase

New Delhi: The fans are increasing for Punjab Kings in the IPL and Arshdeep Singh believes he has played a role in it with his social media game. Arshdeep keeps himself as a funny character on social media with his reels, with fellow cricketers already becoming famous. Apart from this, he also posts a lot about his personal life, which has created a bond with the fans. During the match against the Mumbai Indians, the Punjab franchise received a lot of vocal support as they continued their winning streak in the competition. Speaking at post-match presentation, Arshdeep said that the fans like his reels, and he will continue making videos for them. Arshdeep revealed how a simple chat with Ricky Ponting helped him regain his best form during the IPL 2026 season.

Arshdeep was at his best as he wrecked the Mumbai Indians' top order with a blistering spell before coming at the end and ensuring the hosts were restricted at the Wankhede Stadium. The left-arm pacer ended with Figures of 3 for 22 in his four overs as MI were restricted



to 195 in their 20 overs. PBKS ended up winning the match by seven wickets to move to the top of the table. Speaking after the win, Arshdeep said that he had a candid chat with the PBKS coach, where he told him that the ball wasn't coming out of his hand well. The Indian pacer said that Ponting gave him a clear mindset. "It goes back to having a chat with Ricky. I told him the ball isn't coming out of my Hand really well. He gave me a clear mindset. Even yesterday I had a nice spot bowling session and found the ball is coming nice out of my hand. I

got it swinging and the control was there," said Arshdeep. The PBKS star said that there was nothing technical being discussed with Ponting and the Aussie tactician told him to stick to his basics. "Nothing technical. It was keeping myself fresh mentally. I was expecting a lot from myself. He told me you are coming out of a high winning the World Cup and it's never easy.

He told me to stick to the basics," said Arshdeep. PBKS will face LSG in their next game on Sunday, April 19 at New Chandigarh. Arshdeep Singh has boosted the Punjab Kings

fanbase during the IPL 2026 season primarily through his active and humorous presence on social media. The left-arm pacer credits his viral reels and posts about his personal life for creating a strong emotional bond with followers and increasing the franchise's digital engagement. During a post-match presentation following a victory against the Mumbai Indians, the bowler noted that fans frequently express their appreciation for his video content. He stated that he intends to continue producing these videos to maintain the vocal support the team has received during their winning streak. Beyond his social media influence, his on-field performance has been revitalized through a clear mindset provided by coach Ricky Ponting, helping the team climb to the top of the table. Chakravarthy's struggles date back to India's T20 World Cup campaign. The top-ranked T20 bowler began the tournament strongly, picking up nine wickets in the first four matches at an impressive economy rate of 5.17. However, his form dipped thereafter, and he finished the tournament of 9.25.