

In Brief

Nagaland government denies LPG, fuel shortage

Kohima: The Department of Food and Civil Supplies, Government of Nagaland, has clarified that there is no shortage of LPG cylinders or petroleum products in the state. The department has appealed to the public to remain calm and not believe in rumours about any disruption in supply. In a press note issued on March 26, the department stated that sufficient stock of both domestic and commercial LPG, along with other petroleum products, is available across Nagaland. It said that Oil Marketing Companies are maintaining adequate supplies and the distribution system is functioning normally in all districts. The clarification came after some unverified information began circulating in certain sections, suggesting a possible shortage of fuel and LPG.

Pradyot confident of Tiprasa people's support for TMP

Agartala: Tipra Motha Party (TMP) founder Pradyot Kishore Manikya Debbarma today said he was confident that Tiprasa people would vote for his party in the forthcoming Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTADC) elections. Polling for 28 seats of the council will be held on April 12, while counting is scheduled for April 17. The TMP had won the tribal council elections in 2021 by securing 18 seats in the 30-member body, while the BJP won nine seats and sat on the opposition bench. The governor nominates two members to the council to ensure representation of all tribes in the state. Addressing reporters at Champahower in Khowai district, Debbarma asserted that “money power will not win” in the upcoming TTADC elections, claiming that “community power will achieve a massive victory” for his party. He further said the electorate had realised that rights outweighed monetary considerations. “Tiprasa people have understood that rights are more important than money. Two years have passed, but the Tiprasa accord, which was signed with the Centre and the state in March 2024, has not been implemented yet,” he said.

Complaint filed against Congress Chief Kharge over remarks in Assam

Guwahati: A complaint has been filed against Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge at Basistha Police Station in Guwahati, following allegations of making objectionable remarks during a political speech in Assam's Sribhumi district. The complaint was lodged by BJP Assam spokesperson Ranjib Kumar Sarmah. According to the complaint, Kharge made the remarks while addressing a public gathering at Nilambazar on April 7. It is alleged that during his speech, he described the ideology of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) as “poisonous” and compared them to a “poisonous snake.” The complaint also claims that Kharge called for the elimination of the BJP during his address. It states that such comments are derogatory and have hurt the sentiments of party members. The complainant has further alleged that the remarks could promote enmity between groups and disturb public peace, especially in Assam's sensitive social and political environment.

Centre assigns frontier highway project to BRO, NHIDCL; Arunachal PWD left out

Itanagar, Apr 08: In a major administrative decision, the Centre has handed over the ambitious Frontier Highway project in Arunachal Pradesh to the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) and the National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL), leaving the state's Public Works Department (PWD) out of the execution process despite its early involvement in the project. The move, initiated by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, marks a shift in the implementation strategy of one of the most significant infrastructure projects planned along India's northern frontier. As per the new arrangement, NHIDCL will be responsible for the eastern stretch of the proposed highway, while BRO will take charge of construction in the western sector. The Frontier Highway, estimated to cost around Rs 42,000 crore, is considered a strategically important project as it runs close to the Indo-Tibet border. The proposed road is expected to improve connectivity in some of the most remote and inaccessible areas of Arunachal Pradesh, while also strengthening strategic mobility along sensitive border regions. However, the decision to exclude the state PWD has reportedly caused disappointment among officials in Arunachal Pradesh. Sources indicate that concerns have already been raised with Chief Minister Pema Khandu, with officials questioning why the department was sidelined despite being associated with the project since its initial stages. While the Centre has not issued any formal explanation for the change, sources suggest that the decision may be linked to ongoing issues related to land compensation in East Kameng district. The matter is currently under investigation, and it is believed that these concerns may have influenced the Centre's choice to entrust the project to central agencies. The development has added a layer of uncertainty to the early phase of the project, even as expectations remain high regarding its long-term impact. Once completed, the Frontier Highway is expected to play a key role in improving road connectivity, boosting local economic activity, and enhancing access to border areas.

Kuki Groups Deny Role in Manipur Attack, Condemn Killing of Civilians

Imphal, Apr 08: Amid rising tensions in Manipur, the United Kuki National Army (UKNA) has categorically denied any involvement in the recent attack on civilians in Tronglaobi in Bishnupur district, calling the allegations “baseless” and an attempt to misattribute blame.

In a clarification issued on April 8, the group stated that it does not condone violence against innocent civilians “under any circumstances,” particularly children. The statement emphasized that its objective remains a political solution within the framework of the Constitution of India. The UKNA further claimed that it has been actively safeguarding buffer zones to prevent escalation of communal tensions and maintain fragile peace in the region. It also asserted that restraint shown during recent provocations demonstrates that Kuki groups were not complicit in the incident. The group also dismissed media reports suggesting that three of its members had been arrested in connection with the attack, terming such claims “entirely baseless and false.” It urged the media to act responsibly and

avoid linking the organisation to incidents without verification. Additionally, the UKNA acknowledged the role of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) in defusing tensions and preventing further escalation.

In a separate statement, the United People's Front (UPF) and Kuki National Organisation (KNO) strongly condemned the incident, in which two children were killed and their mother seriously injured in a bomb explosion at Tronglaobi on April 7. The organisations urged the media to refrain from attributing blame to any particular community without verified information, warning that such reporting could worsen tensions in an already volatile environment. UPF and KNO expressed heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families and called for restraint and responsible reporting. The twin statements came at a time when Manipur continues to witness fragile peace amid ethnic tensions. Authorities are closely monitoring the situation to prevent further escalation and ensure stability in sensitive areas.

Mizoram: Union Minister Raj Bhushan Choudhary Inspects Development Initiatives Across Saitual District

Saitual, April 8: The Union Minister of State for Jal Shakti, Dr. Raj Bhushan Choudhary paid an official visit to Saitual District, where he reviewed developmental activities and interacted with government officials and local leaders. During his visit, the Minister held a meeting with officials from various departments and local leaders, who highlighted their needs and the challenges faced in the district. In his address, Dr. Choudhary assured full support from the Government of India and reiterated his commitment to facilitating the district's progress across multiple sectors. The meeting was chaired by the Deputy Commissioner, Srinivas Sadi, who delivered a detailed presentation on departmental activities and achievements using PowerPoint.

As part of his visit, the Minister, accompanied by the Deputy Commissioner, Srinivas Sadi, and the



Superintendent of Police, Gaurav Tyagi, inspected the water reservoir at Sihfa village constructed under the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM). He was received by Er. Lalpektluanga, Senior Executive Engineer

(PHED), and Er. Lalzuala, Sub-Divisional Officer (PHED). Dr. Choudhary also visited the District Hospital, where he reviewed healthcare services and infrastructure. He was received by Dr. Zothanpa

ri Chhakchhuak, Deputy Chief Medical Officer. The visit underscores the Government's continued focus on strengthening water supply infrastructure and public service delivery in Saitual District.

Nagaland government denies LPG, fuel shortage; urges public not to panic

Kohima, Apr 08: The Department of Food and Civil Supplies, Government of Nagaland, has clarified that there is no shortage of LPG cylinders or petroleum products in the state. The department has appealed to the public to remain calm and not believe in rumours about any disruption in supply. In a press note issued on March 26, the department stated that sufficient stock of both domestic and commercial LPG, along with other petroleum products, is available across Nagaland.

It said that Oil Marketing Companies are maintaining adequate supplies and the distribution system is functioning normally in all districts. The clarification came after some unverified information began circulating in certain sections, suggesting a possible shortage of fuel and LPG. The department expressed concern over such rumours and said that they can create unnecessary panic among people. Officials warned that panic buying or hoarding of LPG cylinders and fuel could disturb the normal supply system. It said that such actions may lead to artificial shortages and affect other consumers who depend on regular supply. The department has advised people to trust only official information issued by



the government and not to forward or act on unverified messages, especially those shared on social media platforms. It said that spreading rumours can create confusion and may also affect public order. To keep the supply system stable, all Deputy Commissioners and district authorities have been asked to closely monitor the situation. Officials have also been directed to prevent hoarding and black marketing and to ensure that fuel is sold at the prescribed rates. Reassuring the public, the department said there is no reason to worry as enough stock is available. It appealed to citizens to cooperate with authorities so that smooth and fair distribution can continue.

EC tightens poll arrangements with webcasting, CAPF deployment for Assam elections



Guwahati, Apr 08: The Election Commission of India has completed preparations for the Assam Legislative Assembly Elections 2026, which will be held in a single phase on April 9. Officials said all steps have been taken to ensure that polling is conducted in a free, fair and peaceful manner across all 126 constituencies. Chief Electoral Officer Anurag Goel said administrative and logistical arrangements are in place. Central observers have already been deployed to moni-

tor law and order, along with election expenditure during the polling process. A total of 2,50,54,463 voters will cast their votes to decide the fate of 722 candidates. The electorate includes 1,25,31,552 male voters, 1,25,22,593 female voters and 318 voters under the ‘others’ category. In addition, there are 63,423 service voters. To increase transparency, the Commission has introduced webcasting at all polling stations. The state has 31,490 polling

stations, including 31,486 main booths and 4 auxiliary booths. Each station will be monitored live from the offices of District Election Officers, the Chief Electoral Officer and the Commission. Security has been strengthened with the deployment of Central Armed Police Forces to ensure peaceful voting. Authorities have also arranged basic facilities at polling stations, including drinking water, toilets, waiting areas and wheelchair access for persons with disabilities.

For smooth conduct of polling, 1,51,132 personnel have been deployed. The Commission has kept 41,320 ballot units, 43,975 control units and 43,997 VVPAT machines ready, including reserves. The voter list includes 6,42,314 first-time voters aged 18–19, 2,50,006 voters above 80 years and 2,05,085 persons with disabilities. Postal ballot facility has been provided to senior citizens above 85 and eligible persons with disabilities, with thousands already using the option.

UKC writes to CPO, highlights historical ties and seeks dialogue on jurisdiction issue

Imphal, Apr 08: The United Kuki Council (UKC) has issued a detailed communication to the Chakhroma Public Organization (CPO), expressing appreciation for long-standing community ties while also placing on record its position on historical and jurisdiction-related concerns. In a letter dated April 8, 2026, the UKC acknowledged receipt of CPO's earlier communication regarding jurisdiction and agreements, and responded by underlining the importance of maintaining mutual respect and understanding between communities. The council began by appreciating the role of the CPO and the Angami community in maintaining peace and stability in the region. It described the relationship between the Kuki and Angami communities as one rooted in shared history, trust, and cooperation. The UKC also recalled the support extended by Angami and other Naga groups during the 1995 vi-

olence, when many Kukis were affected and displaced. It said this support remains an important and respected part of their shared past. At the same time, the UKC raised concerns over what it termed as “misconceptions” in some public narratives. It clarified that the presence of Kuki communities in the Naga Hills is not recent, and pointed to colonial-era records to support its claim. The letter cited British administrative records, ethnographic works, and census data to argue that Kuki settlements existed in the region well before Indian independence. According to details mentioned in the document, colonial records from the late 19th and early 20th centuries, including writings by J.H. Hutton and administrative reports by J.P. Mills, refer to Kuki villages in the Naga Hills. It also stated that at least 26 Kuki villages were recorded in the region before 1947, and the 1881 Census document-

ed a Kuki population of around 15,000 in the area. The UKC said these references show that the Kuki presence in the region has historical continuity and should not be viewed only in the context of events after 1995. It stressed that the violence during that period affected already settled communities rather than marking the beginning of their presence. The organisation further said that such clarifications were being made to prevent misunderstandings and to ensure that public discourse remains based on historical facts. It emphasised that maintaining harmony between communities should remain a priority. The council also called for dialogue and constructive engagement to resolve any differences. It stated that issues related to jurisdiction or agreements should be handled through mutual understanding and respect, rather than confrontation.

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of all tribes in the state. Addressing reporters at Champahower in Khowai district, Debbarma asserted that “money power will not win” in the upcoming TTADC elections, claiming that “community power will achieve a massive victory” for his party. He further said the electorate had realised that rights outweighed monetary considerations. “Tiprasa people have understood that rights are more important than money. Two years have passed, but the Tiprasa accord, which was signed with the Centre and the state in March 2024, has not been implemented yet,” he said.

Arunachal Pradesh Inaugurates Upgraded Sessa Mini Hydel Project

Itanagar, Apr 08: Arunachal Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister on Wednesday inaugurated the renovation and modernisation of Sessa Mini Hydel Station (3×500 kW) at Sessa in West Kameng district in the presence of MLA Thrizino-Buragaon, Tenzing Nyima Glow. Originally commissioned in 1992 and non-operational for several years due to ageing infrastructure, the project has now been successfully revived with modern electromechanical systems and upgraded civil works. With an installed capacity of 3×500 kW and upgraded 33 kV grid connectivity, the plant will now deliver reliable and efficient power supply to over 1,500 households across Sessa, Tippi, Bhalukpong and nearby villages.

IGNOU Kma grants degrees to 801

Guwahati, Apr 08: Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) Regional Centre Kohima held its 39th Convocation on Tuesday at the State Academy Hall, marking a significant academic milestone for learners across Nagaland.

During the convocation, 801 learners were declared eligible for various qualifications, including 583 Master's degrees, 151 Bachelor's degrees, 25 diplomas and 14 certificates. Around 240 graduates were present to receive their certificates during the ceremony.

Director General of Police, Rupin Sharma, who graced the occasion as guest of honour, reminded graduates that learning did not end with the attainment of a degree but continued throughout life. He urged them to remain intellectually curious and adaptable in an ever-evolving world, while stressing that education was central to both individual advancement and the progress of societies. Highlighting the transformative power of knowledge, Sharma noted that access to learning, documentation and exchange of ideas had historically distinguished developed societies. He encouraged graduates to embrace diverse avenues of learning, including experience, dialogue and exposure to different perspectives. He further lauded the role of open and distance learning systems like IGNOU in democratising education by

reaching learners who might otherwise face barriers due to geography, financial constraints or personal circumstances.

Earlier, assistant regional director Dr. Mayonmi Shimray welcomed the gathering and informed that the convocation was conducted simultaneously with the main ceremony at IGNOU headquarters in New Delhi, where C.P. Radhakrishnan attended as chief guest. He stated that a total of 2,99,092 learners across the country and abroad were awarded degrees, diplomas and certificates.

Regional director highlighted IGNOU's academic standing, noting its A++ accreditation from NAAC and its ranking among top open universities under the National Institutional Ranking Framework. IGNOU currently offers over 333 programmes through 21 Schools of Studies, supported by an extensive network of regional and learner support centres. He also referred to digital initiatives such as e-Gyankosh and the university's role in coordinating SWAYAM and SWAYAM Prabha platforms. The programme included the rendition of the IGNOU Kulgeet, sharing session by learners, conferring of degrees by the guest of honour, and concluded with a vote of thanks by assistant registrar R.V. Tetso followed by the National Anthem.

5 dead in Manipur as violence spirals



Imphal, Apr 08: At least five persons, including two minors, were killed in fresh violence in Manipur's Bishnupur district on Tuesday, after a bomb attack triggered protests that later turned violent, prompting Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel to open fire on a mob.

According to officials, the violence began early in the day when suspected militants hurled a bomb at a house in Tronglaobi Awang Leikai area around 1 a.m. The blast killed a five-year-old boy and a six-month-old girl, while their mother sustained injuries and was admitted to hospital.

The incident sparked widespread protests in the area, with demonstrators blocking the Imphal-Tidim Road and setting several trucks ablaze.

As tensions escalated, a mob stormed a CRPF camp near Gelmol, a few hundred metres from the blast site, allegedly attempted to snatch weapons, torched vehicles and vandalised property. In response, CRPF personnel opened fire, killing three protesters and injuring several others.

In the wake of the violence, the Manipur government imposed an indefinite curfew across five valley districts. District magistrates issued prohibitory orders restricting movement of people outside their residences with immediate effect from April 7 until further notice, ex-

empting government agencies engaged in law and order, essential and emergency services.

The state government also suspended internet and mobile data services, including broadband, VSATs and VPN, for three days in the five valley districts to contain the situation. Meanwhile, the government decided to hand over the investigation into the bomb blast to the National Investigation Agency (NIA).

Condemning the attack, chief minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh said the act appeared to be the handiwork of individuals or groups with vested interests in disturbing the prevailing peace in the state.

He said the decision to transfer the case to the NIA was taken after discussions with the state home minister and other MLAs.

The chief minister informed that a massive search operation was underway, involving combined forces of the state police, Assam Rifles and CRPF, supported by helicopter surveillance.

"The culprits will be caught at the earliest," he assured, while appealing to the public not to give in to emotions and to cooperate with security forces.

Officials said the situation remained tense as security forces intensified operations to restore normalcy in the affected areas.

Election material distribution begins in Dibrugarh

Itanagar, Apr 08: The distribution of election materials for the six assembly constituencies in Dibrugarh district began today from Dibrugarh Polytechnic at Lahowal, ahead of the Assam Assembly elections scheduled for April 9.

Polling officials, along with presiding officers, have started departing for their respective polling stations with necessary election materials under tight security arrangements to ensure smooth and peaceful voting. A total of 10,46,031 electors will exercise their franchise across six constituencies—Dibrugarh, Chabua-Lahowal, Khowang, Duliajan, Tingkhong, and Naharkatia. Further strengthening security, 13 Quick Response Teams (QRTs) and three Strike Response Teams have been kept on standby. Home Guards, police personnel, and CAPF jawans have been deployed at every polling station.

This includes 5,04,206 male voters, 5,41,815 female voters, and 10 others. Constituency-wise, Chabua-Lahowal has 1,78,397 voters, including 85,736 male voters, 92,660 female voters, and 1 other. Dibrugarh constituency has 1,97,752 voters, with 93,979 males, 1,03,771 females, and 2 others. Khowang has a total of 1,57,768 voters, comprising 76,368 males, 81,397 females, and 3 others. Duliajan registers 1,77,552 voters, including 85,877



males, 91,672 females, and 3 others. Tingkhong has 1,78,201 voters, with 85,960 male voters and 92,241 female voters. Naharkatia accounts for 1,56,361 voters, including 76,286 males, 80,074 females, and 1 other. The district has a total of 1,322 polling stations, divided into 26 zones and 128 sectors. Around 6,082 polling and presiding officers, including reserves, have been deployed. A total of 1,650 EVMs and 1,782 VVPATs, including reserves, have been prepared. Additionally, 300 all-women polling stations have been set up, along with 44 very critical polling stations. One model polling station has been established in each constituency. Special arrangements have been

made for remote areas, with polling teams departing by river transport to five polling stations, three at Dodhia and one each at Charkhalia Chapori and Chakia Sapor under Chabua-Lahowal LAC. Among polling stations, the highest number of voters has been recorded at Bezpathar MV School (1,248 voters) in Khowang, while the lowest is at BVFCL HS School, Namrup Centre No. 2 (144 voters) in Naharkatia. Elaborate security arrangements have been put in place with a three-layer system at booth, sector, and zonal levels. A total of 28 companies of Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) have been deployed for preventive action, area domination, and confidence-building measures.

25 youth trained in steel fabrication

Guwahati, Apr 08: Department of Employment, Skill Development and Entrepreneurship conducted a valedictory programme for a seven-day basic steel fabrication training under the "PACES – Providing Access to Core Employability Skills" initiative at Wokha Village Community Hall on April 7. Y.

A total of 25 trainees from Huntso, Elumyo and Wokha Village participated in the training, which aimed to equip local youth with practical, income-generating skills. Addressing the group, he encouraged youth to explore and appealed to counsellors and officials to identify genuinely interested unemployed youth who lack access to such programmes, assuring his support wherever possible.

Rahul Gandhi slams Himanta Biswa Sarma over 'madman' remarks against Mallikarjun Kharge Rahul Gandhi criticized Assam

Guwahati, Apr 08: A political confrontation arose on Tuesday as Rahul Gandhi criticized Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma for reportedly using derogatory language against Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge. The controversy stems from Sarma's reported comments while responding to allegations raised by Congress leaders, including Pawan Khera, against him and his family. Sarma reportedly questioned Kharge's remarks by saying the senior leader was "speaking like a madman" ("pagal") and asked, "Who is Kharge?" amid an exchange over unverified claims involving passports and related issues.

Rahul Gandhi, Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, responded on social media in the evening. He described Sarma's language as "entirely condemnable, shameful and unacceptable." Kharge ji is a senior and popular Dalit and mass

leader of the country, his experience, stature and reputation are unparalleled. Insulting him is not just an insult to one individual, but also to the crores of people from the SC-ST community in this country," Gandhi stated. Gandhi further alleged that such attacks reflect a "long-standing and well-planned mindset" of the BJP-RSS, citing past instances of alleged insults to Dalit icons like Babasaheb Ambedkar and other SC-ST representatives. He directly questioned Prime Minister Narendra Modi: "Do you support Himanta Sarma's language? Your silence is not helplessness, but consent." Congress leaders, including Jairam Ramesh and KC Venugopal, called for an unconditional apology from Sarma, describing the remarks as an attack on Dalit dignity. They said it reflects a broader pattern when opposition voices raise critical questions. Sarma's office and the BJP



have not issued a detailed response in available reports, although the Chief Minister has previously defended his sharp rebuttals as necessary against what he considers baseless personal allegations. The episode has increased political at-

tention ahead of Assam elections on Thursday, highlighting divisions between the ruling BJP and the Congress. Critics say it lowers the level of public discourse, while Sarma's supporters view it as a response to unverified claims.

Gaurav Gogoi alleges BJP workers from other States entering Assam in large numbers to vote

Guwahati, Apr 08: Gaurav Gogoi, the Assam Congress chief, on Tuesday alleged that BJP workers from other States had entered the State in large numbers to cast votes in the Assembly elections. Talking to reporters during a roadshow in Jorhat, where he is making his Assembly election debut, Gogoi said, "Like I had said earlier, BJP workers from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar are coming to Assam in hundreds. Their names had been included in the electoral rolls, and they will now vote. Will we tolerate it? Will they decide our political future?"

He questioned the state police for allowing outsiders to enter the poll-bound state in hordes "without checking", urging the people to be vigilant in this regard. Polling for the 126-member Assembly will be held on Thursday, with Congress seek-

ing to return to power after a decade of BJP-led NDA's regime in the state. "The BJP government has given away our land, indulging in rampant loot of public money, while our people are made to work as slaves. People have to be vigilant against such people," Gogoi added. Congress' Dispur candidate and state women wing president Mira Borthakur Goswami also raised similar apprehension on social media. In a Facebook post, she wrote, "Buses of Bihar have filled the roads! Request to every conscious citizen to keep a watch on polling centres. It is the duty of the public to stop misdeeds!" The Congress had raised suspicion over the special revision of electoral rolls carried out in the state ahead of the elections. The final rolls published on February 10 at the end of the SR exercise had total of 2.49 crore voters, a decrease of 0.97 per cent from the draft rolls.

Found 'incriminating' material: Assam Police after search at Pawan Khera's residence

Guwahati, Apr 08: The Assam Police on Tuesday claimed to have recovered "incriminating" material from the New Delhi residence of Congress leader Pawan Khera.

An Assam Police team, accompanied by Delhi Police personnel, went to Khera's residence in connection with a case registered with the Crime Branch in Guwahati, but did not find him. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's wife Riniki Bhuyan Sharma had lodged an FIR against the Congress leader following his claims that she possesses passports of three countries, owns luxury properties in Dubai and has investments worth several lakh crore rupees in the United States.

Guwahati Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Debojit Nath, who led the Assam Police team, told media persons outside Khera's residence that the Congress leader was wanted in the case. "A case has been registered with the Crime Branch police station in Guwahati and we wanted Mr Pawan Khera. We searched his house and



found some incriminating material which I cannot disclose right now," Nath said. The Assam Chief Minister claimed that Khera had fled to Hyderabad. "Pawan Khera fled in a 6 am flight on Monday. He reached Hyderabad," Sarma said, adding that till

the day before yesterday, the Congress leader was challenging the Assam Police to arrest him if they had the guts. Minister of State for External Affairs Pabitra Margherita on Tuesday dismissed as "fake and fabricated" Khera's claims that the CM's

wife has passports of three nations. "As the MoS for External Affairs, I want to say that we have come to know through our diplomatic channels and investigation that these are fake and fabricated documents," he told media persons.

Earlier, the Chief Minister dismissed Khera's claims, stating that the "fraud and fabricated" documents that the Congress leader had relied on while making the allegations were "supplied from a Pakistani social media group."

The Congress on Monday filed a complaint with the Election Commission, demanding the cancellation of Sarma's candidature, stating that he deliberately did not mention his wife's alleged offshore assets in his election affidavit.

Sarma is contesting the April 9 elections from Guwahati's Jalukbari. Meanwhile, Minister of State for External Affairs, Pabitra Margherita, on Tuesday dismissed as "fake and fabricated" Khera's claims that Assam CM's wife has passports of three nations.

The union also apprised the DGP of the prevailing law and order situation in Mon district and expressed concern over the rising drug abuse, terming it a serious threat to youth. The union called for a coordinated and result-oriented drug control mechanism.

Konyak Union calls on DGP, raises recruitment, drug menace concerns

Dimapur, Apr 08: The Konyak Union (KU) on Tuesday called on Director General of Police, Rupin Sharma, and raised concerns over police recruitment, infrastructure gaps and the growing drug menace in Mon district. During the interaction, the union conveyed appreciation to the State government and the police department for ensuring fair and transparent recruitment of personnel into Nagaland Police (GD) through a competitive examination system, stating that the initiative reflected merit-based selection and equal opportunity for all eligible aspirants across the state. While appreciating the existing mechanism, KU expressed concern for aspirants with educational qualifications below Class 10, who faced difficulty competing in written examinations with more academically advanced candidates. The union urged the department to devise an inclusive mechanism to ensure

equitable opportunities for candidates from diverse educational backgrounds and marginalised sections.

The union also suggested earmarking a certain percentage of vacancies for sportspersons in police recruitment, in line with practices in other states, to promote sportsmanship among youth. Further, KU reminded the DGP of its appeal submitted to the deputy chief minister (home) on July 12, 2025 for strengthening and upgrading infrastructure under the District Executive Force (DEF), Mon, along with enhancement of manpower. It also stressed the need for construction of a fully functional Tiru Police Station and augmentation of manpower.

Mizoram: Heroin Worth ₹20 Lakh Seized In Champhai, Three Arrested

Champhai, Apr 8: Champhai Police have seized a total of 100 grams of heroin, valued at around ₹20 lakh, in two separate cases earlier this week. In the first operation, on 7 April 2026 at approximately 4:30 PM, police on patrol near Chhungte Village, beyond Chalbawia Junction at Khankawn Check Gate, intercepted a suspicious individual. The person, identified as Lalbuatsaiha (21) of Tlamsam Village, disclosed that he had concealed drugs in a nearby bush. A search in the presence of independent witnesses led to the recovery of 48 grams of suspected heroin, packed in four soap cases inside a black polythene bag. A mobile phone was also seized. Lalbuatsaiha was arrested, and a case was registered under Section 21(b) of the ND&PS Act (C/No. 51/26 dated 07.04.2026).

Further investigation led to the arrest of two accomplices: Lawmna-sanga (40) of Khawhai Village and Lalrinthangi (35) of Tlamsam Village, who were identified as backward link operatives. In the second case, on 6 April 2026 at around 7:00 AM, police conducting routine vehicle checks at Chalbawia Junction intercepted a Sumo vehicle (Regn. No. MZ-02B-0743) traveling from Champhai to Aizawl. Lalpekthuama (30) of Seling (Bethel) was found in illegal possession of 52 grams of suspected heroin, concealed in three soap cases and two plastic containers. A case was registered under Section 21(b) of the ND&PS Act (C/No. 52/26 dated 06.04.2026). Investigations in both cases are ongoing to identify and apprehend other individuals involved.

India news analysis



Foreign Delegation from Poll Bodies Reaches Guwahati

Guwahati, Apr 08: Twelve foreign delegates from Election Management Bodies of several countries, along with three representatives of the Election Commission of India, arrived at Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport in Guwahati on Wednesday.

The delegation has come for a two-day tour under the International Election Visitors Programme (IEVP) for a two-day visit, in connection with the April 9 Assam Legislative Assembly elections, marking a significant step towards global electoral collaboration and observation.

“The visiting team comprises representatives from countries including Angola, Bhutan, Egypt, Portugal, Sri Lanka, Mexico, Benin and Croatia,” a statement issued by the joint chief electoral officer, Assam, said.

The initiative aims to provide an opportunity for international observers to witness and understand India’s electoral processes first-hand.



On April 8, upon arrival, the delegates will participate in briefings by the chief electoral officer, Assam, including visits to dispatch centres and control rooms to observe election preparedness at the field level. On April 9, the delegates will visit multiple polling stations of a few districts of Assam to observe voting procedures, security arrangements and use of election technologies.

Complaint filed against Congress Chief Kharge over remarks in Assam



Guwahati, Apr 08: A complaint has been filed against Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge at Basistha Police Station in Guwahati, following allegations of making objectionable remarks during a political speech in Assam’s Sribhumi district. The complaint was lodged by BJP Assam spokesperson Ranjib Kumar Sarmah. According to the complaint, Kharge made the remarks while addressing a public gathering at Nilambazar on April 7. It is alleged that during his speech, he described the ideology of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Rashtriya Swayam-sevak Sangh (RSS) as “poisonous” and compared them to a “poisonous snake.” The complaint also claims that Kharge called for the elimination of the BJP during his address. It states that such comments are derogatory and have hurt the sentiments of party members. The complainant has further alleged that the remarks could promote enmity between groups and disturb public peace, especially in Assam’s sensitive social and political environment. Based on these allegations, the complainant has urged authorities to take legal action against the Congress leader. Police officials at Basistha Police Station have confirmed that the complaint has been received. They said the matter will be examined and further steps will be taken as per the law.

Pawan Khera files anticipatory bail plea in Gauhati High Court

Guwahati, Apr 08: Congress leader Pawan Khera today filed a petition in the Gauhati High Court seeking anticipatory bail in a case registered against him by the Assam Police.

The court is likely to hear his plea and pass an order in the next couple of days.

The crime branch of Guwahati police had registered the case against Khera after Riniki Bhuyan Sharma, wife of Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma, filed an FIR accusing the Congress leader of using forged document to malign her image.

At a press conference on April 5, Khera had claimed that Riniki Bhuyan Sharma held three foreign passports, undeclared properties in Dubai, and shell companies in the United States.

After she filed the FIR, an Assam police team conducted search at Khera’s New Delhi residence. The police team, however, couldn’t question him as he was not at home. Reports indicate that Khera is in Congress-ruled Telangana, where the Assam police team will need the local police’s permission to carry out an investigation.

You want to frighten us, but we are not the ones who get scared: Pawan Khera to Assam CM

Guwahati, Apr 08: Pawan Khera, Chairman of the Media and Communication Department of the All India Congress Committee (AICC), today released a video message, reiterating his stance on the allegations levelled against the Chief Minister’s wife on the eve of elections. The Congress leader said that presenting publicly available information before the people is not a crime.

Seeking answers from the Chief Minister regarding these allegations, he said, “You have seen what tactics the Assam Police has been adopting for the last two days. Actually, it is not the Assam Police, but the Chief Minister of Assam and perhaps the Home Minister of the country who are using these tactics.” Mentioning that hundreds of policemen searched his small flat in Delhi, Khera said that neither he nor any member of his family was present there at that time. Pawan Khera also alleged that during this operation, the police took away an old phone associated with the memories of his sister who died during the Covid period, a laptop he never used, and an iPad he had not even started using. Furthermore, the Congress leader alleged that the police took away multiple pen drives from the flat. Remaining firm on his stance, Khera challenged the government and asked, “Now, wherever I go or wherever they think I have gone, they send the police there. But why are they sending them? Because the Congress party has only raised questions. Why do you want to shut the mouth of the Congress party? Why do you want to silence me? We have asked questions, give us the answers.” Khera said that after any information or document is presented to the government, it is the government’s responsibility to investigate it. Instead, rather than giving answers, the government is trying to abuse everyone and intimidate them by using the police. He further added, “You are trying to intimidate us. You think we will get scared. Threatening might be your habit, but Mr. Sarma, our habit is not to get scared. Let me tell you the reason—I am a son of Mewar, a Congressman, and a soldier of Rahul Gandhi. How will I be intimidated now? I am not afraid. But yes, since I have things to say and since I have questions to ask, I am certainly avoiding your police.”

In the video message, Khera once again became vocal about the foreign properties and dual citizenship of the Chief Minister’s wife. The senior Congress leader said, “We don’t know why you are so angry. Now some more information has come to our hands. This is information from the official website of the State of Wyoming.” Answering the questions raised by the BJP’s IT cell in this regard, he said that the date of April 6 was actually the day the ‘Non-Disclosure Agreement’ was revoked. Clarifying that this process is mandatory for any private information to become public, Khera questioned the government about the difference between registration and filing. The Congress leader strongly criticized the act of trying to hide the actual information of incorporation or establishment by showing the filing date.

Naga Students’ Federation condemns assault in Manipur, demands immediate action

Kohima, Apr 08: The Naga Students’ Federation (NSF) has strongly condemned an alleged incident of assault, death threat and extortion involving two members of the Naga community in Manipur’s Kangpokpi district, and has urged the authorities to take swift and firm action. In a statement issued on Tuesday, the Federation said the incident took place in the early hours of March 23 between Keithelmanbi and Sapermeina. The two individuals, both from Tseminyu district, were reportedly attacked while they were engaged in their regular livelihood activities. The NSF described the incident as a serious case of physical assault, stating that the victims were not only attacked but were also allegedly threatened with death and subjected to extortion. The organisation expressed concern that such incidents are becoming frequent, particularly affecting people who depend on daily work and travel across districts. The Federation said the incident raises larger concerns about the safety of civilians, especially in transit areas. It pointed out that many people from different communities travel for

work and trade, and such attacks create fear and insecurity among them. Calling for strict action, the NSF demanded that the authorities immediately identify those involved, arrest them, and ensure that they are prosecuted as per law.

It also stressed the need for preventive steps so that such incidents do not happen again in the future. The organisation said that the threats given to the victims are being taken very seriously and described the incident as harmful to efforts aimed at maintaining peace among different communities. It warned that repeated acts of violence could affect the existing balance and mutual understanding between communities. The NSF also expressed solidarity with the victims and extended its support to the Rengma Students’ Union, which has taken up the issue at the local level. Reiterating its stand, the Federation said that Naga communities have always believed in peaceful coexistence. However, it cautioned that continued incidents of this nature could strain relations and create further tensions if not addressed properly.

Manipur govt hands over Tronglaobi blast case to NIA, launches massive operation

Imphal, Apr 08: The Manipur government has handed over the investigation into the deadly Tronglaobi blast to the National Investigation Agency (NIA), even as a large-scale security operation has been launched to track down those responsible for the attack that killed two children. Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh announced the decision during a press conference at his official residence, strongly condemning the incident. He described the blast as a deliberate attempt by certain groups to disturb the fragile peace in the state.

The decision to involve the NIA was taken after discussions with the Home Minister and other elected representatives. The Chief Minister said that the perpetrators have not yet been identified, but security forces have already begun intensive operations. A coordinated combing operation is currently underway, involving the state police, Assam Rifles and the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF). Helicopters have also been deployed to support the search in difficult terrain. He said clear instructions have been issued to all agencies to act swiftly and ensure that those behind the attack are caught at the earliest. A high-level security review meeting was also held with senior officials from the Army, paramilitary forces and state police to assess the situation and plan further action. Appealing to the public, the Chief Minister urged people to remain calm and cooperate with the



authorities. He stressed the need for public support to maintain peace and allow security forces to carry out their operations without disruption. State Home Minister Konhoujam Govindas Singh said such incidents are often carried out by elements trying to derail normalcy when the situation begins to stabilise. He confirmed that security forces have been directed to capture those responsible “dead or alive,” and added that state commandos have been redeployed in hill areas after a long gap, with bulletproof vehicles being used to strengthen operations.

Meanwhile, tensions were also reported in Bishnupur district, where protesters attempted to storm a CRPF camp. Officials said five people suffered bullet injuries during the incident, out of which two later died. Several others sustained minor injuries. The Chief Minister and the Home Minister later visited the injured at Raj Medicity Hospital in Imphal. The Chief Minister also expressed grief over the death of a minor girl at the Akampat relief camp and announced financial assistance and support for the affected families.

Activist seeks CM Pema Khandu’s resignation ahead of proposed CBI probe

Itanagar, Apr 08: A fresh political debate has emerged in Arunachal Pradesh after an anti-corruption activist called for the resignation of Chief Minister Pema Khandu, citing the need for a fair and independent inquiry reportedly linked to a court-monitored investigation. Nabam Tagam, Chairman of the Jan Andolan Anti-Corruption Movement, on Tuesday urged the Chief Minister to step down ahead of a preliminary probe that he claimed has been directed by the Supreme Court of India and is expected to be carried out by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). In a statement, Tagam said that the resignation of the Chief Minister would help ensure that the inquiry is conducted without any form of administrative pressure or perceived influence. He added that such a step would also strengthen public trust in the investigation process and uphold transparency. The Jan Andolan Anti-Corruption Movement has been actively raising the issue over the past few months, drawing attention through a series of public actions. On March 5, 2026, the group organised a 12-hour bandh across the Capital Complex region, which was observed from early morning till evening. According to organisers, the shutdown remained largely peaceful, with no major incidents reported during the protest. Tagam said the movement has consistently focused on demanding accountability and a fair probe into the matter. He noted that while one phase of the agitation was temporarily suspended in January this year following appeals from the administration, the group did not withdraw its core demands. The campaign, however, has not been without controversy. A bandh called by the group in December 2025 was declared unlawful by the administration, which cited concerns over disruption of essential services and inconvenience to the public. Despite this,



the movement has continued to gather support in certain sections. So far, there has been no official response from the Chief Minister’s Office regarding the demand for resignation. Authorities have also not issued any detailed statement on the reported court-monitored CBI inquiry, including its scope or timeline.

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LPGs for commercial use

In a significant policy move shaped by evolving geopolitical developments and long-term energy transition goals, the Government of India has called for an increase in the allocation of commercial LPG from 20 percent to 30 percent across states and union territories, a decision that comes in the backdrop of the ongoing situation in West Asia and reflects a calibrated effort to ensure energy security while simultaneously accelerating the transition towards more sustainable and efficient fuel systems such as piped natural gas (PNG), and in a detailed communication addressed to Chief Secretaries of all states and union territories, Neeraj Mittal, Secretary in the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, emphasized that the increase in allocation at this juncture would not only help manage immediate supply-demand dynamics in the commercial LPG segment but would also act as a strategic lever to drive structural reforms aimed at reducing long-term dependence on LPG and expanding the footprint of City Gas Distribution (CGD) networks across urban and semi-urban areas, thereby aligning with the broader vision of cleaner energy adoption and improved efficiency in fuel consumption, and the letter outlined a series of targeted reforms that states are encouraged to implement in order to qualify for the additional 10 percent allocation of commercial LPG, creating a performance-linked framework that incentivizes proactive policy action and administrative efficiency at the state level, and among the key measures proposed is the provision of a one percent additional allocation linked to the formation of State-level and empowered District-level committees that include representation from local body executives, with the mandate to streamline the approval process for CGD applications and address grievances in a time-bound manner, a step that is expected to significantly reduce bureaucratic delays and improve coordination among stakeholders, thereby facilitating faster rollout of gas infrastructure projects and this is followed by a two percent additional allocation tied to the issuance of orders granting deemed permissions to all pending and new CGD applications, particularly in cases where approvals are not provided within a stipulated timeframe of 24 hours, either through direct administrative action or via state single-window clearance mechanisms, a reform that seeks to introduce predictability and transparency in the regulatory environment while ensuring that infrastructure development is not hindered by procedural bottlenecks, and further strengthening the reform package is a three percent additional allocation linked to the introduction of a Dig and Restore scheme for CGD entities, which would empower these entities to undertake excavation and restoration activities independently, thereby eliminating the need for multiple approvals and reducing associated costs, while also replacing traditional restoration charges with a bank guarantee mechanism capped at Rs 10 lakh per kilometre, ensuring accountability and quality in restoration work without imposing excessive financial burdens on operators, and the final component of the reform framework offers a four percent additional allocation contingent upon states reducing the annual rental or lease charges for laying or operating CGD networks to zero, a move aimed at making gas infrastructure projects more financially viable and attractive for investment, particularly in regions where high operational costs have historically impeded expansion, and taken together, these measures represent a comprehensive and forward-looking approach to energy policy that balances immediate needs with long-term sustainability objectives, and the emphasis on enhancing PNG penetration is particularly noteworthy, as piped natural gas is widely regarded as a cleaner, safer, and more efficient alternative to LPG, especially in urban settings where pipeline infrastructure can be developed at scale, and the push for PNG is also aligned with India’s broader commitments to reducing carbon emissions and promoting cleaner fuels, as part of its climate action strategy and the current initiative is expected to complement ongoing efforts by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas to expand CGD coverage across the country, including in smaller cities and emerging urban centers, thereby ensuring that the benefits of cleaner energy are accessible to a wider population, and the linkage of LPG allocation with reform implementation introduces a novel policy instrument that encourages states to actively participate in the transition process, while also providing them with tangible incentives to undertake necessary administrative and regulatory changes, and the reference to the situation in West Asia underscores the interconnected nature of global energy markets and the need for domestic policy responses that can mitigate external shocks, as fluctuations in international energy supplies and prices often have a direct impact on domestic availability and affordability, particularly in a country like India that relies significantly on energy imports, and by proactively increasing the allocation of commercial LPG while simultaneously promoting a shift towards PNG, the government is seeking to create a more resilient and diversified energy ecosystem that can better withstand global uncertainties, and the involvement of state governments is crucial in this regard, as many of the reforms outlined in the letter require coordinated action at the local level, including changes to regulatory frameworks, administrative processes, and fee structures, and the creation of empowered committees at the state and district levels is expected to play a key role in driving this coordination, ensuring that decisions are taken efficiently and that implementation challenges are addressed promptly, and the introduction of deemed approvals for CGD applications is particularly significant in reducing delays that have traditionally affected infrastructure projects, as it places the onus on authorities to act within a specified timeframe.

Industry loses share as services race ahead in economy

Small businesses and service providers, from retail shops to transport and personal services, are expanding more rapidly than formal manufacturing units, prompting economists to question the sustainability of the country’s long-term growth. Industrial enterprises now account for just under 10 percent of all businesses, down from more than 12 percent two decades ago, according to the 2024 economic census conducted by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS). In contrast, service businesses dominate the economy, making up more than 90 percent of economic units. In absolute terms, industrial units grew by 159 percent between 2001 and 2024, reaching around 11.7 lakh. Service businesses, however, surged by more than 223 percent over the same period, bringing the total number of economic units to 1.17 crore. Employment followed a similar trend. Jobs in industry rose to nearly 94 lakh in 2024, while the service sector absorbed far more workers, with employment reaching over 2.12 crore.



Manufacturing usually drives productivity gains and absorbs labour from agriculture. When services expand faster than industry, the economy grows, but not as efficiently or sustainably,” he said. The economist explained why the distinction between industry and services matters. According to him, moving workers from agriculture to manufacturing increases productivity and incomes more than a direct shift to services. “Services create jobs, yes, but the overall growth impact is smaller,”

said Iqbal. Anwar-ul Alam Chowdhury, president of the Bangladesh Chamber of Industries, said that some local sectors have reached saturation. To sustain both economic growth and employment, the country must become a diversified manufacturing hub with a stronger focus on labour-intensive industries. The business leader said that while Bangladesh’s development has heavily relied on the industrial and RMG sectors, employment growth contin-

ues to come mainly from labour-intensive industries such as RMG and light engineering. He said high-investment sectors, including steel, cement, machinery, and chemicals, generate fewer jobs because of automation, which is increasingly present in garment production as well. The RMG sector alone contributes about 25 percent to manufacturing output, rising to 40 percent if textiles are included. Other industries account for the remaining 60 percent, but automation limits their poten-

tial for employment creation. Image Chowdhury said that even a \$50 million investment in textiles may generate only 500 to 1,000 jobs, whereas the same investment in RMG could employ between 5,000 and 8,000 workers. “Labour-intensive sectors like leather and light engineering are crucial for job creation. Without expanding into these industries, employment growth will remain constrained,” he said. The 2024 census also shows a slowdown in business expan-

sion. Between 2013 and 2024, the total number of economic units rose by 50 percent, lower than the 111 percent growth recorded in the previous decade. Micro and cottage enterprises continue to dominate, comprising 96 percent of all units, and nearly two-thirds of these are located in rural areas. The data point to a deeper structural shift in the economy. Growth in small and informal service businesses is outpacing manufacturing, which limits the country’s capacity to diversify exports and create higher-quality, well-paid jobs. “Ideally, manufacturing should be the engine that absorbs labour from agriculture and drives productivity,” said Iqbal. “But what we are seeing is that services are expanding faster, without industry growing at the pace it should.” The census also identifies financing challenges for businesses. According to it, nearly 86 percent of economic units face capital shortages, making access to finance the most pressing constraint. About a third of businesses reported difficulties obtaining loans. Other common concerns include infrastructure gaps, rising production costs, and shortages of skilled labour. Around 8 percent of businesses struggle with consistent electricity and fuel supply, while smaller shares reported issues with marketing and access to raw materials.

Gerhard Schröder’s mistakes and connections to Putin are forgotten by Germans who yearn for him. The SPD requires a new strategy

The former German chancellor, Gerhard Schröder, is enjoying a curious political revival. Not so long ago, his reputation seemed in tatters. In light of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, many came to regard his longstanding ties to Russia and personal friendship with Vladimir Putin as self-serving. Fellow Social Democrats (SPD) tried to expel him from the party, and as recently as last year the government defunded the ex-chancellor’s office. And yet a veritable Schröder nostalgia is now seeping into German political discourse, a phenomenon that’s less to do with a reappraisal of his chancellorship than with a desperate identity crisis on the centre-left. Schröder’s ears must be burning non-stop at the moment. His name is everywhere. The latest trigger came last week when the current German vice-chancellor and co-chair of the SPD, Lars Klingbeil, spoke about an ambitious package of reforms to “modernise” the country. This included some economically liberal, and therefore rather un-SPD-like, demands, such as reducing state subsidies and increasing incentives for people to work more. The last SPD man to introduce a controversial package of pro-business reforms was Schröder, with his sweeping and highly contentious “Agenda 2010”. So the press ran with the theme. “Klingbeil does a Schröder,” one German newspaper reported. Another wrote that the SPD leader was “channelling Schröder”.

The Financial Times also reported a “Schröder moment”. A journalist from Süddeutsche Zeitung even visited the former chancellor to hear the analogy from the horse’s mouth. “The country now needs a new Agenda policy,” agreed Schröder himself. The alignment seems apt, too. Klingbeil’s political career began when he joined the then-chancellor’s constituency office almost exactly 25 years ago. What’s remarkable about this kind of coverage is its positive tone. It was only last year that the 81-year-old gave up his court battle to retain his publicly funded ex-chancellor’s office. It seemed that his tenure at the helm between 1998 and 2005 was sliding out of Germany’s rearview mirror. That, too, is unusual. Germany traditionally reveres its elder statesmen. Take Helmut Schmidt, SPD chancellor between 1974 and 1982, who remained a prominent public intellectual almost until his death in 2015. By contrast, Schröder became a pariah due to his unrepentant stance on Russia. While in office, Schröder became the architect of the Nord Stream pipelines, shackling Germany’s energy needs to Moscow’s goodwill. Then, just 17 days after his chancellorship had ended, he became chair of the Nord Stream shareholders’ committee, and eventually chair of the board. He also took on leading roles in the Russian companies Gazprom and Rosneft. After Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022, pressure on him intensified. He left the supervisory

board at Rosneft and paused his plans to join the Gazprom board, but continued to defend the Nordstream project. A 2022 poll found that three-quarters of Germans wanted him expelled from the SPD. Among SPD voters, this rose to 79%. And now? “Sure, the friendship with Putin is a real problem,” wrote a reporter who visited Schröder last week, “but now that there is a deep crisis and a great need for reform, there is a certain longing for Schröder among some in the SPD.” What Schröder’s party yearns for most is his popularity. He won the 1998 and 2002 elections with 41% and 39% of the popular vote, respectively. By comparison, the SPD gained just 16% in last year’s federal elections, its lowest result since the 19th century. In the past few weeks, there have been more terrible results in two state elections, and Klingbeil’s SPD is now polling at 15% or below, third behind the CDU and AfD. The party is fighting for its very survival. Viewed in this light, the longing for Schröder is somewhat understandable. The man undoubtedly had charisma. I was a teenager living in Germany when he won the 2002 election, and I vividly remember why. A terrible flood devastated vast parts of central and eastern Germany that year. Chancellor Schröder seemed to be everywhere in his wellies, consoling crying people who had lost everything, listening sympathetically, promising help. He

was the kind of politician who could pull this off authentically. It’s widely accepted that this won him the election. Today, the SPD lacks people like Schröder, who grew up raised by a single mother in impoverished circumstances. This gave him a grounded appeal that served his party well. His earthy charisma also made him unusually popular in the formerly socialist East Germany. Today, nearly 90% of SPD MPs have a university degree, and the far-right AfD has become the most popular party among working-class Germans. But the SPD has no intention of replacing its party functionaries with more charismatic or even more pragmatic figures. Instead, Klingbeil hopes that Agenda 2010-type reforms might save the SPD. In 2003, Schröder tried to shift Germany out of economic malaise with welfare cuts and policies that encouraged flexible, lower-paid work and aimed to make hiring and firing easier. The current SPD leader seems to want to emulate this. One German newspaper claims that “optimists in the SPD already call him ‘Gerhard Klingbeil’”. Undoubtedly, the SPD needs to change course to avoid the electoral abyss, but the focus on Schröder is misguided. After all, he lost the 2005 election, and even some senior figures in the SPD now assume that Agenda 2010 played a part in its subsequent decline – because his policies contributed to the creation of a large low-wage sector, increased the number of the

working poor and broadened income divergence. They may have improved the overall economy, but not the economic security of the party’s core voters. In addition, Germany’s prosperity depended increasingly on fossil fuels from Russia, and on dropping defence spending to below 1.3% of GDP. Both were grave mistakes, and have come to define Schröder’s legacy. That so many in the SPD seem ready to forgive and forget says more about their party’s identity crisis than about a constructive approach to learning from the Schröder years. The SPD should focus on finding present-day solutions to present-day problems. When Schröder was chancellor, the AfD didn’t exist, migration wasn’t the big electoral issue it is now, Russia hadn’t invaded Ukraine, and the US was still a staunch ally for Germany. It was a different world. Klingbeil isn’t even the chancellor. If he really wants to make his mark, he has to work within the parameters of the new order and the realities of the SPD’s position, drawing only selectively and cautiously on the past for inspiration. Of course, the SPD can still learn from Schröder, not least on how important it is to connect with voters on a human level. But Schröder has made too many grave mistakes to deserve a restoration of his place in Germany’s postwar pantheon. Klingbeil isn’t Schröder, and neither should he aim to be.

Artemis II: the light and dark sides of the moon

“Everything we need, Earth provides. And that is somewhat of a miracle, and one that you can’t truly know until you’ve had the perspective of the other.” This is how the US astronaut Christina Koch summed up her experience of travelling to the far side of the moon on Monday. The feeling of a deepened appreciation for home recalls statements by an earlier generation of space travellers. The famous Earthrise photograph, taken on the Apollo 8 mission in 1968, has been credited as one of the drivers behind the environmental movement. Such was the

power of the first images of the “blue planet” captured from space. The hope that such journeys can foster global co-operation and appreciation for life was also the theme of the prize-winning novel Orbital, which is set on a space station among a multinational crew. But if it was ever possible to overlook the darker side of space travel, it definitely isn’t today. In the 1960s, the American and Soviet programmes were projections of the two blocs’ military strength. In the 2020s, the tech billionaires Jeff Bezos and Elon Musk are key players in a dramati-

cally revived US industry, while a post-terrestrial geopolitical battle between the US and China takes shape. Nasa aims to put a nuclear reactor on the moon by 2030. Rather than serving to remind us of Earth’s preciousness, there is a risk that the £100bn Artemis programme is a dangerous distraction from the urgency of finding ways to live within the ecological limits of the world we already have. The US has undertaken its first moon voyage in half a century in the same year that Donald Trump withdrew it from the Paris climate agreement for the second time. Space-f-

ocused techno-optimism shades into moral nihilism when it opts for fantasies of colonising new worlds in preference to policies aimed at protecting the one we already have. But the unquenchable human curiosity and remarkable science that have always underpinned space travel should not be dismissed out of distaste for its darker implications. The Artemis II launch last week only went ahead after a rare bipartisan display of support for Nasa in Congress saw off Mr Trump’s attempts to cut its funding. The credit for the past week’s experiences and

discoveries belongs with the scientists, astronauts and support teams – not the White House. Mr Trump’s murderous bellicosity in recent days has been a horrifying contrast to the wonder of the astronauts. Their voyage to the fabled dark side of the moon will not solve the world’s problems. Much of the research is geared towards future moon landings and the exploitation of natural resources that may be found there, as well as the impact of space travel on astronauts’ health, including the risks from dormant viruses. But there are good rea-

sons why so many people were thrilled to hear the voices of the astronauts from 250,000 miles away and were captivated by the image of the one Canadian and three American astronauts inside the Orion capsule – which is roughly the size of a camper van – taking photographs from the moon’s far side, where contact was cut off from their mission control centre in Houston for 40 minutes. They have seen more of the moon, and travelled further away from Earth, than anyone before them. The adventure of their return and landing in the Pacific Ocean still lies ahead.

Nifty nears 24,000: 5 reasons why the bulls are back after US-Iran ceasefire

Sensex jumps 2,700 pts

New Delhi: The bulls came charging back on Dalal Street this morning after the 2-week US-Iran ceasefire was announced, April 8. After days of volatility, the markets have moved firmly into the green, with the Sensex jumping over 2,700 points and the Nifty climbing above 23,950. From easing geopolitical tension to a sharp fall in crude oil prices, let's take a look at the key factors why markets are up in today's trade. This development comes at a time when tension across West Asia were keeping investors on edge. With this pause, it has reduced fears of further escalation, especially around the Strait of Hormuz – a key route for global oil supply. Meanwhile, IT and Pharma indices are in the green as well, though with relatively modest gains compared to other sectors. Dr. VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Investments, "The 2-week ceasefire between the US and Iran has dramatically altered the near-term market scenario. The crash in Brent crude to \$ 95 following the ceasefire will again turn the market bullish. This ceasefire, particularly the agreed reopening of Hormuz Strait, will embolden the bulls to charge again, aided by the fair market valuations.RBI, aided by the crash in crude, will opt for a hold in rates today. The policy stance will continue to be neu-



tral. The upside risk to inflation and the downside risk to growth can now be managed well. Rupee will strengthen and this may even force the FPIs to turn buyers; at least they will have to cease the sustained selling, which will become irrational in the present context," he added.What it means for investors

The current rally is strong. It is largely driven by external developments As of now, the easing of geopolitical tension and softer crude prices have brought relief. Nilesh Shah, MD Kotak Mahindra AMC advised investors to pay attention to asset allocation,

"Investors should follow their dharma of asset allocation. Don't chase momentum swinging by events. Be a disciplined investor catching a falling knife."

3 Global markets join the rally Apart from the Indian markets, the global markets have also reacted strongly to the ceasefire news.Asian markets too have seen a sharp upmove rising between 4-6%. The Nikkei has jumped 5% while the key South Korean Index soared 6%. The Mainland Chinese and Hing Kong markets are up between 2-3% in intra-day trade as well.4 Crude oil nosedives over 13%

Another major factor adding to the rally is the sharp plunge in crude oil prices.

Financial stocks are seeing strong traction, while Oil & Gas is trading higher by over 2%. Metal and Media stocks are also seeing notable gains.

1 US-Iran ceasefire brings cheer across global markets

Among many factors, one of the biggest is the sudden improvement in global risk sentiment. In the latest move, the United States and Iran have agreed to a temporary two-week ceasefire has helped calm nerves across financial markets.The rally is broad-based, with most sectors participating. The Nifty small and midcap is also trading up over 3.5% each. The sudden surge is not driven by just one factor. Instead, it includes a mix of global and domestic cues has come together to lift markets.Nilesh Shah, MD Kotak Mahindra AMC highlighted that "From India point of view safety of 9 million Indians working in Middle East, Availability of energy with opening of Hormuz strait like pre war, Price of energy nearer to pre war prices and remittance flows from Middle East at the run rate of pre war is critical. Markets will see a relief rally with short covering but will continue to react to events. There could be many slips between cup and the lip."

Sebi grants one-time relaxation for IPO validity, minimum public

Mumbai: Amid the weakness in securities markets, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) has provided one-time relaxation for initial public offering (IPO) validity as well as minimum public shareholdings (MPS) on Tuesday.The regulator has given a temporary relaxation for companies whose initial public offering (IPO) validity are set to expire between April 1 and September 30. The markets regulator has granted a one-time extension of validity till September 30 for such companies, as per a circular issued on Tuesday.

Currently, a public issue must be opened within 12-18 months of getting observation letters from the regulator, as per Sebi's Issue of Capital and Disclosure Requirements (ICDR) Regulations, 2018. 40 issuers will benefit from this decision who are estimated to raise at least ₹43,500 crore altogether, according to data from Prime Database. Among the beneficiaries are Credila Financial Services, Dorf-Ketal Chemicals India, Continuum Green Energy, Hero Fincorp, and Juniper Green Energy whose IPO validity were set to expire between April 15 and August 28. The relief has been provided on the condition that the lead manager to the issue will provide a written undertaking, confirming the compliance with Schedule XVI of the ICDR Regulations while submitting the updated offer document to Sebi. In the backdrop of the geopolitical tensions in West Asia, industry bodies informed Sebi about issuers' difficulties with respect to mobilizing resources and accessing the capital market. "This has led to several issuers to defer, recalibrate or withdraw issuance plans leading to potential lapses in observation letter validity and duplication of regulatory processes," Sebi said.India's primary and secondary markets have been seeing the ripple effect of the aggravated tension in West Asia. Since the beginning of the war at the end of February, the secondary market has fallen 8%. Foreign investors pulled out over \$12 billion, the record monthly outflows the market has ever seen.



Gold Rate Gold is up by 2.49% prices in Mumbai, Chennai

Mumbai: On 8 April 2026, the price of 24K gold at ₹154,070 per 10 grams, reflecting a gain of ₹3,740 compared to its previous close. Meanwhile, 22K gold is at ₹141,231 per 10 grams.Gold prices in India are largely influenced by international spot gold rates, US dollar fluctuations, and import duties on Gold among other things.

Gold prices in India continue to remain higher than in Dubai. On 8 April 2026 the price of 24K gold in India is at ₹154,070 per 10 grams, while in Dubai it is ₹140,560, reflecting a difference of ₹13,510 or 9.61%. Similarly, 22K and 18K gold prices in India were also about 9.61% costlier compared to the price of gold in Dubai, not accounting for fees, duties, and taxes. Gold prices extended sharp gains as Donald Trump agreed on a ceasefire plan with Iran to back off military strikes. The yellow metal gained as oil prices slipped sharply, as Iran confirmed the reopening of the crucial trade route—the Strait of Hormuz, which transits roughly 20% of the global energy flows.The slip in crude oil prices also softened the dollar index, which further boosted sentiment for gold, as a soft dollar makes precious assets like gold less expensive for other currency holders, thereby aiding demand.

However, markets continue to assess the near-term impact of the negotiations between the US and Iran, which will further determine the trajectory for the yellow



metal, which has declined by nearly 25% since the start of the West Asia war. Analysts expect gold prices to extend slight gains in the near term over ceasefire optimism. The reopening of the Hormuz route is likely to help ease inflationary pressures, further boosting demand for the yellow metal. However, markets remain cautious, as the US President has previously changed his stance multiple times over the conflict. Traders currently price in no rate cuts by the US Federal Reserve for this year. "MCX Gold June futures are likely to appreciate to Rs 152,500/10g," said Jigar Trivedi, Senior Research Analyst at Indusind Securities.Retail investors are advised to track not just domestic rates but also international trends before making buying decisions

After crude crashed over 13% on US-Iran ceasefire, Hormuz reopens

RIL, ONGC, IOC: Oil stocks surge

Mumbai: Crude oil prices crashed more than 13% on Wednesday after US President Donald Trump held off on military strikes against Iran and Tehran agreed to a two-week ceasefire, reopening the Strait of Hormuz. This move puts domestic oil & gas companies in the spotlight, ONGC, IOC, BPCL, Oil India, and Hindustan Petroleum are likely to see sharp price action ntra-day.Bharat Petroleum (BPCL) was up about 7.53% and Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) gained 5.85%, while Hindustan Petroleum Corporation (HPCL) rose 0.91%. In contrast, Oil And Natural Gas Corporation declined 1.24% and Oil India slipped 0.34%. Reliance Industries saw a modest uptick of 0.45% in the same snapshot.US crude futures sank 14.7% to \$96.27 a barrel, while Brent crude dropped 14.4% to \$93.48, according to the Associated Press. Both benchmarks remain well above pre-war levels crude had briefly crossed \$117 a barrel during Tuesday's session before settling at \$112.95 but the scale of the single-day drop is the kind of move that directly compresses upstream realizations while offering downstream relief. Late Tuesday, Trump announced he was pulling back from threatened strikes on Iranian bridges, power plants, and civilian infrastructure, contingent on a two-week ceasefire and the reopening of

the Strait of Hormuz. Iran's Supreme National Security Council confirmed its acceptance of the ceasefire, and Iran's foreign minister stated that passage through the strait would be permitted for the next two weeks under Iranian military management, as reported by the Associated Press. The announcement triggered an immediate rally in US equity futures. S&P 500 futures jumped 2.2% and Dow futures rose 930 points, or 2%, as of 8:05 p.m. ET. In Asia, Japan's Nikkei climbed more than 4% and South Korea's Kospi gained 6%.US market action on April 7

Tuesday's regular trading session in the US was anything but calm. The S&P 500 swung as much as 1.2% lower after Trump threatened that a "whole civilization will die tonight, never to be brought back again" if Iran did not meet his 8 p.m. Eastern deadline to open the Strait. The market then reversed sharply after Pakistan's prime minister publicly urged Trump to extend the deadline by two weeks and simultaneously called on Iran to open the strait for the same period, as per Associated Press. For India's oil marketing companies Indian Oil Corporation, BPCL, and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation lower crude is can be positive. These companies import crude, refine it, and sell petroleum products domestically, often at government-ad-



ministered prices. When crude runs hot, their marketing margins get squeezed. A 15% drop in a single session gives them breathing room, and the market will likely price that in quickly.

The oil market had been in a state of sustained anxiety since the conflict across West Asia escalated, with crude making a series of sharp moves briefly above \$117, then settling, now crashing on ceasefire news. Indian oil and gas stocks have been caught in every one of those swings. Wednesday will be no different. The sector opens with a clear directional catalyst, and how stocks like ONGC, Reliance, BPCL, IOC, and Oil India respond will be one of the clearest reads on how the market is thinking about whether this ceasefire holds.

Why Anand Rathi thinks these three metal stocks will do well in Q4

Tata Steel, Lloyds Metals, IMFA:

New Delhi: India's metals and mining companies are seeing stronger pricing, improving demand and better earnings visibility, according to a recent sector note released by Anand Rathi Share and Stock Brokers. The brokerage has identified a handful of companies where the improvement is sharp enough to stand out from the broader pack. Its focus remains on businesses that are benefiting directly from higher steel prices, operating leverage and favourable product mix.The report points to a clear recovery in domestic steel prices after the lows seen in December 2025, alongside steady demand from infrastructure and manufacturing. While raw material costs have also moved higher, Anand Rathi believes the increase in realisations is more than enough to support profitability in the near term. Against this backdrop, the brokerage has called out three names as its top picks, each with a different driver but a



common earnings tailwind.Anand Rathi on Lloyds Metals and Energy "Among our coverage universe, LLOYDSME is expected to deliver the strongest improvement in financial performance," Anand Rathi says in its report.The note further adds that iron ore sales volumes, adjusted for internal consumption, are expected to cross 7.1 million tonnes. This scale-up, combined with pricing support, is likely to sustain margins even as costs move higher across the sector.

Anand Rathi also draws attention to upcoming triggers, including the ramp-up of the newly commissioned copper plant in the Democratic Republic of Congo and progress on pellet plant expansion. These factors could support further earnings growth beyond the current quarter.Anand Rathi on Tata Steel

Tata Steel remains a core pick in the large-cap space, backed by improving domestic pricing and a gradual recovery in its European operations. Anand Rathi expects consolidated sales volumes at around 8.4 million tonnes in Q4 FY26. Earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation per tonne is estimated at Rs 10,938, marking a 38.9% increase on a year-on-year basis.

Anand Rathi places Lloyds Metals and Energy Limited at the top of its preference list, driven by a sharp jump in volumes and a step-up in profitability. The brokerage

expects the company to deliver one of the strongest earnings performances in the sector, supported by its iron ore mining exposure and recent capacity additions. Production volume is estimated to rise to around 9.07 million tonnes in Q4 FY26 from 1.40 million tonnes a year ago, while revenue is projected at Rs 6,969.2 crore and earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation at Rs 2,093.3 crore. This translates into a year-on-year growth of 484% in revenue and 701.7% in earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation, indicating a sharp operating leverage benefit. The brokerage's analysis rests on the company's growing mining contribution, which is now a major profit driver. With iron ore prices firm and volumes scaling up, Lloyds Metals and Energy Limited is positioned differently from most steel producers that depend on external raw materials.

Turnaround in for tunes of IT stocks

New Delhi: After falling sharply for the past few months, shares of information technology (IT) companies are seeing an uptick, primarily driven by expectations of better earnings for the March quarter and ease in valuations. While the conflict in West Asia has been pinching the overall market as well as the sector, experts believe that IT stocks are pricing in worst-case scenarios. The Nifty IT index closed 2.5% higher at 31,403.35 points on Tuesday, extending the winning run to the fourth trading session and gaining 8% during this period. Top tier players such as Infosys, HCL Technologies, Tata Consultancy Services, and Wipro closed 2.6-3.7% higher, which also aided the overall market movement. What do experts say?

Experts said IT stocks are now trading close to the 5-year average. The sector, which earns around half of its revenue from US clients, has been feeling the heat of weak discretionary spends, muted revenue growth, and caution from clients due to US tariffs. What came as a double whammy is the war in West Asia. The geopolitical tension has given rise to the possibility of a spike in inflation in the US as well as India, which consequently opened the door for speculations that central banks may go for rate hikes in the medium term if the issue prolongs. "If the US increases interest

rates by any chance in the future, of course discretionary spends will get pushed back further and IT business segments such as retail also will suffer," an IT analyst at the broking arm of a top Indian private sector bank said. With the earnings season kickstarting this week, the analyst also said tier-1 IT companies will likely guide for a low-to-mid single digit growth for FY27, largely similar to FY26. Deal activities were healthy and there could be margin tailwinds from the depreciation of the rupee.Looking at the IT index

In March, the IT index declined 5% after falling nearly 20% in February which was the biggest monthly fall since September 2008. The selling pressure in the sector eased slightly in March, with them offloading shares worth ₹1,874 crore in March after net selling almost ₹17,000-crore worth of IT stocks a month ago, as per National Securities Depository data. Investors are currently focused on revenue guidance in the context of artificial intelligence-led disruption and the ongoing West Asia crisis, not to mention order book strength and near-term earnings visibility, JM Financial Institutional Securities said in its report. "A key debate remains whether the sector could see further valuation de-rating, particularly in light of the global IT valuations," it said.

Iran promises to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, and the US and Iran agree on a temporary ceasefire

Washington: Following a last-minute diplomatic intervention spearheaded by Pakistan, the United States and Iran agreed to a two-week conditional truce on Tuesday night, which included a temporary reopening of the Strait of Hormuz. This agreement eliminated Donald Trump’s demand that Iran submit or risk widespread destruction. Less than two hours before the US president’s self-imposed deadline of 8 p.m. Eastern time to bomb Iran’s power plants and bridges—a move that legal experts, officials from several nations, and the pope had warned could amount to war crimes—Trump announced the ceasefire agreement. Just hours earlier, Trump had written on Truth Social: “A whole civilization will die tonight, never to be brought back again. I don’t want that to happen, but it probably will.” American B-52 bombers were reported to be en route to Iran before the ceasefire agreement was announced. But by Tuesday evening, Trump announced that a ceasefire agreement had been mediated through Pakistan, whose prime minister, Shehbaz Sharif, had requested the two-week peace in order to “allow diplomacy to run its course”. Trump wrote in a post that “subject to the Islamic Republic of Iran agreeing to the COMPLETE, IMMEDIATE, and SAFE OPENING of the Strait of Hormuz, I agree to suspend the bombing and attack of Iran for a period of two weeks”. In a separate post later, the US president called Tuesday “a big day for world peace” on a social media post, claiming that Iran had “had enough”. He said the US would be “helping with the traffic buildup” in the strait of Hormuz and that “big money will be made” as Iran begins reconstruction. For several hours afterwards, Israel’s position or agreement with the deal was unclear. But just before midnight ET, the prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, said Israel backed the US ceasefire with Iran but that the deal did not cover fighting against Hezbollah in Lebanon. His office said Israel also supported US efforts to ensure Iran no longer posed a nuclear or missile threat. Pakistan’s prime minister had previously said that the agreed



ceasefire covered “everywhere including Lebanon”. The ceasefire process was clouded in uncertainty after Iran released two different versions of the 10-point plan intended to be the basis for negotiations, and which Trump said was a “workable basis on which to negotiate”. In the version released in Farsi, Iran included the phrase “acceptance of enrichment” for its nuclear program. But for reasons that remain unclear, that phrase was missing in English versions shared by Iranian diplomats to journalists. Pakistan has invited the US and Iran to talks in Islamabad on Friday. Tehran said it would attend, but Washington has yet to publicly accept the invitation. In a telephone call with Agence France-Presse, Trump said he believed China had persuaded Iran to negotiate, and said Tehran’s enriched uranium would be “perfectly taken care of”, without providing more detail. In the two-week ceasefire, Trump said, he believed the US and Iran could negotiate over the 10-point proposal that would allow an armistice to be “finalized and consummated”. “This will be a double sided CEASEFIRE!” he continued. “The reason for doing so is that we have already met and exceeded all Military objectives, and are very far along with a definitive Agreement concerning Longterm PEACE with Iran, and PEACE in the Middle

East.” Iran’s foreign minister, Abbas Araghchi, issued a statement shortly after Trump’s announcement saying Iran had agreed to the ceasefire. “For a period of two weeks, safe passage through the Strait of Hormuz will be possible via coordinating with Iran’s Armed Forces,” he wrote. Oil prices dipped, stocks surged and the dollar was knocked back on Wednesday as a two-week Middle East ceasefire sparked a relief rally, fuelled by hopes that oil and gas flows through the strait of Hormuz could resume. Despite the provisional ceasefire, attacks continued across the region in the hours after Trump’s announcement. Before the deadline, airstrikes hit two bridges and a train station in Iran, and the US hit military infrastructure on Kharg Island, a key hub for Iranian oil production. The sudden about-face will allow Trump to step back as the US war in Iran has dragged on for five weeks with little sign that Tehran is ready to surrender or release its hold on the strait, a conduit for a fifth of the global energy supply, where traffic has slowed to a trickle. Trump had earlier rejected the 10-point plan as “not good enough” but the president has set deadlines before and allowed them to pass over the five weeks of the conflict. Yet he insisted on Tuesday the ensuing hours would be “one of the most important moments in the long

and complex history of the World” unless “something revolutionarily wonderful” happened, with “less radicalized minds” in Iran’s leadership. News of the provisional ceasefire deal was welcomed but with a note of caution elsewhere. Iraq’s foreign ministry called for “serious and sustainable dialogue” between the US and Iran “to address the root causes of the disputes”, while the German foreign minister, Johann Wadephul, said the deal “must be the crucial first step towards lasting peace, for the consequences of the war continuing would be incalculable”. In Australia, the government warned that the latest developments would not necessarily mean the fuel crisis is over. Oil prices fell as traders bet that the reopening of the strait of Hormuz would help fuel supply resume, but the energy minister, Chris Bowen, told reporters Australians should “not get ahead of ourselves”. He said: “People shouldn’t take today’s progress and expect prices to fall. We welcome progress, but I don’t think we can say the [strait of Hormuz is] now open.” A spokesperson for New Zealand’s foreign minister, Winston Peters, welcomed the “encouraging news” but noted “there remains significant important work to be done to secure a lasting ceasefire”. Japan said it expected the move to result in a “final agreement” after Washington and Tehran begin talks on Friday. Describing the ceasefire as a “positive move”, the chief cabinet secretary, Minoru Kihara, said Tokyo wanted to see a de-escalation on the ground in the region, adding that the prime minister, Sanae Takaiuchi, was seeking talks with the Iranian president, Masoud Pezeshkian. A temporary end to hostilities will come as a relief to Japan, which depends on the Middle East for about 90% of its crude oil imports, most of which is transported through the strait of Hormuz. South Korea’s ministry of foreign affairs said it hoped “negotiations between the two sides will be successfully concluded and that peace and stability in the Middle East will be restored at an early date”, as well as wishes for “free and safe navigation of all vessels through the strait of Hormuz”.

In England, the practice of landlords evicting tenants before the law goes into effect



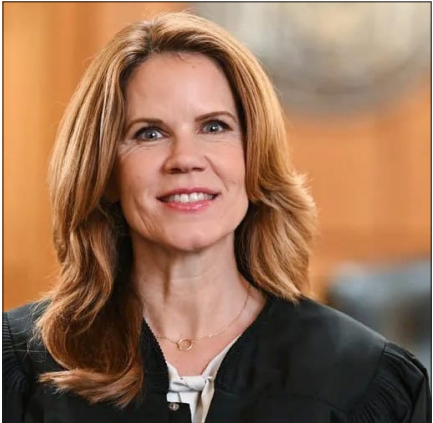
London: According to charity, a growing number of landlords are evicting renters at the last minute before the legislation changes to prohibit the practice in the upcoming month. No-fault evictions accounted for one in five of the reports that the renters’ union Acorn got from members in October, and by January, that number had risen to almost one in three, the group told the Guardian. Section 21 of the current Housing Act, which permits a landlord to evict without giving the court a reason, will be eliminated by the Renters’ Rights Act, which was developed last year and will take effect on May 1, 2026. It’s not a coincidence. According to an Acorn representative, “landlords are obviously rushing to force through last-minute evictions before the ban comes into force.” Tenant organizations around England have expressed similar concerns, especially in crowded cities where tenant competition is fierce. After five years of residing in Lewisham’s Lady Florence Courtyard, Kim Mansell, 36, now checks her letterbox daily for a possession order directing her to go. Ironically, the 999 Club, a London homelessness organization, is the landlord evicting her. “It is utterly demonic.” She uttered those words. “I expressed to them my affection for this place. How much I appreciate that my rent is donated to charity and that I have no family, thus I have no other support system. At the start of last year, while the renters’ rights bill was going through parliament, the charity increased Mansell’s rent by 11%. She tried to negotiate, with no response. Then in June she was served a no-fault eviction notice. Panicked, she contacted the 999 Club to discuss the change, but they told her a meeting “would not be productive or appropriate”. In the months since, the charity has not budged, and while Mansell contemplates the reality of homelessness herself, they have advertised her flat at a price 36% higher than what she is paying. Other tenants confirmed that the charity had always negotiated rent in the past, and could not remember a time that they had evicted in order to achieve a rent hike. Presented with this information, the charity said: “Any enforcement

action is only taken following robust legal advice and in cases where there are significant, persistent issues.” “While we don’t comment on individual tenancies, we have never evicted anyone as a means to increase rents,” it said. Hugh Wilkinson, head of housing at the Central England Law Centre, said he has been receiving a lot of section 21 cases. The lawyer, whose clients are concentrated in Coventry and Birmingham, said he was seeing long-term tenants shocked by unexpected breaks in long-term relationships with their landlords. “It can be quite upsetting for people,” he said. “To think that they’ve been there for a long time and that the length of time doesn’t make any difference. The court won’t take into account the fairness of it.” Isaac Rose, 33, an organizer for the Greater Manchester Tenants Union, was himself served with a section 21 eviction three weeks ago. It came after a dispute around a proposed 29% rent increase. His landlord tried to file a section 13 notice for a rental increase, and when that failed due to incorrect filing, they used a section 21 eviction. “It’s pretty clear that they did that because of the change in the law,” Rose said. “Once section 21 is abolished, it would be a lot harder and slower to get us out.” Meera Chindooray, deputy director for campaigns at the National Residential Landlords Association, said: “Landlords will be looking at their current tenants and considering whether these are tenancies that they are happy to continue with after May, or whether they have concerns about any risks – rent arrears, for example, or issues with antisocial behaviour.” Unions, charities, and other third sector organisations across England said the change could not come soon enough. Many of them campaigned for the law to be introduced, and were consulted as it was written. The housing charity Shelter said: “It’s especially outrageous that some landlords are exploiting this thin window of time to serve no-fault evictions. It just goes to show how vital these new changes are for renters.” Though the law is changing, proceedings initiated before 1 May 2026 will be allowed to continue as before.

The election of Chris Taylor to the Wisconsin state supreme court results in a 5-2 majority of leftist judges

Washington : With Chris Taylor defeating conservative Maria Lazar, Wisconsin voters elected another liberal justice to the state supreme court, giving liberals a 5-2 advantage. Before the next presidential election, when the swing state will undoubtedly witness challenges to election results, liberals have an opportunity to further solidify their dominance on the high court with the retirement of conservative Justice Rebecca Bradley Lazar. Lazar, a former deputy state attorney general and a liberal judge on the state’s court of appeals, was the opponent of Taylor, a former Democratic lawmaker. Liberals now have a 5-2 bloc on the bench thanks to Taylor’s victory. Taylor is perceived as being supportive of the right to vote, whereas Lazar’s opinions were more in line with those of Republicans, advocating for laws that may limit the influence and accessibility of voting. In Wisconsin, Lazar persisted in defending gerrymandered districts that resulted in additional Republican wins; these maps have now been reversed. Bradley authored the court’s ruling outlawing dropboxes, a common target of allegations of mail-in ballot fraud. However, once liberals took control of the court, they reversed that ruling. Since 2015, she has been a member of the state supreme court. Voters should continue to be involved in the court’s composition, according to proponents of voting rights, even though this year’s election has received far less attention than the previous two. According to Victoria Bassetti, a senior counsel at States United Democracy Center, “Wisconsin has been in the crosshairs of extensive litigation in terms of the way the state runs its elections,” she told the news website Bolts. From the standpoint of democracy, this fight for the Supreme Court is anything but low-stakes, despite the fact that it may appear to be a sleeper affair. In Wisconsin, these problems never go away. Though the high court’s justices are officially non-partisan, liberals held a 4-3 majority after flipping the court in 2023 in what was then the most expensive judicial election in US history, according to the Brennan Center. In 2025, Elon Musk got involved, and the supreme court race topped \$100m, with Musk himself throwing in several million and groups he supported spending heavily. Susan Crawford, a liberal, ultimately won. This year’s race was much quieter – and significantly less expensive – than the previous two state supreme court elections. Taylor had the money edge in this year’s race, significantly fundraising more than Lazar. In a sign of the lower profile of this

year’s contest, more than half of voters were still undecided in a March poll by Marquette law school conducted less than a month from election day. Judicial elections function differently depending on the state. In some, like Wisconsin, justices are directly elected. In others, and at the national level, they are appointed by partisan executive office-holders. Some states appoint judges, then hold retention elections where voters can decide whether to keep them in their roles. Overall, judicial elections have become much more expensive in recent years. The race is another gauge of Democrats’ durability in this year’s midterms, particularly in a closely watched swing state, though the November ticket and voter turnout will be much different than a court election. Democratic candidates have recently won upset victories throughout the country in places typically held by Republicans, giving them momentum heading into November. Voters often side against the president in midterm elections. In the final days of campaigning, Lazar attacked Taylor as too partisan for the court, saying at a county Republican party office that “the court is not for sale”, according to Wisconsin Public Radio. “We actually want someone on that court who is extremely law nerdy and boring, and doesn’t care about politics at all, and only cares about the law and the constitution,” Lazar said. Taylor, speaking earlier at the county Democratic headquarters, emphasized the court’s ability to push back against the federal government, WPR reported. “With this election, we have an opportunity to strengthen a pro-democracy majority on our court that will protect our rights and freedoms, our democracy and elections, and that will hold and resist the efforts of the federal government to come into our state and take away and infringe upon our independence as a state,” Taylor stated.



Experts claim that the UK opening new oil and gas fields will jeopardize global climate goals



London: Experts have cautioned that the opening of new oil and gas resources in the North Sea would “send a shock wave around the world,” endangering global climate targets, undermining the UK’s climate leadership, and encouraging emerging nations to take advantage of their own fossil fuel supplies. The oil industry, the Conservatives, Nigel Farage’s Reform UK party, certain trade unions, and portions of the Treasury are putting intense pressure on the UK government to approve new oil and gas fields, even though there is ample evidence that doing so would not lower prices and would have virtually no impact on imports. The licensing system includes two of the largest fields still in the North Sea, which is over 90% depleted and where the remaining pockets are becoming more expensive and energy-intensive to extract. However, studies have indicated that the exploitation of the Rosebank and Jackdaw

deposits would only replace 1% and 2% of the UK’s gas imports, respectively. Drilling new fields would be “dangerous” for international efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and phase out fossil fuels, according to senior experts in climate diplomacy. “New drilling and slowing down climate action would be bad for growth and for energy security in the UK, and a damaging signal for the world,” stated Nicolas Stern, a professor at the London School of Economics. “The UK has been a pioneer in climate action, as the first G7 nation to commit to net zero by 2050, through its work in international institutions and interactions, and through its exemplary climate change legislation,” stated Lord Stern. Its model is important. The world pays attention to what the UK does because it has been a leader and pioneer. Speaking on condition of anonymity, a top African negotiator reacted angrily to the idea that the UK would

offer more fields. Africa stated that it will “reject any proposal for the UK to expand oil drilling” because doing so would “weaken trust with climate-vulnerable nations” and be “fundamentally inconsistent with both the letter and spirit of the Paris agreement.” “New oil exploration by a historic emitter is as paradoxical as it is retrograde at a time when science is clear about the necessity for a swift shift away from fossil fuels. The negotiator added, “It also runs the risk of creating a risky precedent that other nations could follow.” Christiana Figueres, a former executive secretary of the UN framework convention on climate change and a co-founder of the Global Optimism think-tank, said economics as well as the risks of climate breakdown argued against the move. “It’s entirely understandable that in today’s geopolitical context, countries must seek greater energy security and independence,” she said. “But

reaching for solutions of the past – such as expanding oil and gas drilling – risks locking in infrastructure that is increasingly out of step with where the global energy system is heading. True energy independence today lies in scaling clean, domestic energy, not in extending the life of declining industries.” The UK has been one of the main supporters of a global conference taking place in Colombia later this month on the “transition away from fossil fuels” that countries agreed to make three years ago but have so far failed to implement. However, the Guardian has learned that Ed Miliband, the UK’s secretary of state for energy security and net zero, will not attend the gathering of about 50 countries. Rachel Kyte, the government’s climate envoy, will go instead. Campaigners had been calling for the secretary of state to attend as he was widely credited with helping to bring about a last-minute deal at the Cop30 climate summit in Brazil last November. Experts said that if the UK were to licence new fields before the conference, it could undermine progress on encouraging developing countries to forego fossil fuel-based economies and opt for cleaner energy. Mohamed Adow, the director of the Power Shift Africa thinktank in Nairobi, said: “The UK approving new oil and gas projects would send a shock wave around the world that short-term interests are being prioritised over long-term responsibility. I dread to think what example that

would set to the rest of the world.” Many developing countries are considering exploiting their own oil and gas resources instead of opting for renewables. If they were to do so, the world would go far beyond the carbon limits needed to stave off the worst ravages of climate breakdown. Adow said: “Countries across Africa are being asked to leapfrog to clean energy systems, often with limited financial support. We are told, often by European nations, that the future lies in renewables, and increasingly we are proving that it does. When wealthier nations continue to invest in fossil fuels, they undermine this message and diminish their credibility.” A senior development official in an overseas institution said the question was urgent. “What we are hearing already from developing countries is: why shouldn’t we tap into our own fossil fuel resources if the UK is doing so?” they said. “That is a legitimate point. You have to provide leadership.” An ally of Miliband said: “No new exploration licences is a landmark global leadership position – a major, developed, oil and gas producing country proving it can walk what it talks on climate and act in line with what the science clearly says to avoid global warming spiralling to a catastrophic 3 or 4C.” Miliband has taken political heat to protect the position, and the fact that others like [the Green party leader, Zack] Polanski are calling on him to go further is a sign of how far Ed has shifted the Overton window.”

Baroque’s off: my mission to seek out Vienna’s modernist masterpieces

The 20th century was unkind to Vienna. The capital of the Habsburg empire until 1918, it was, by early 1989, a bleak and battered outpost within touching distance of the iron curtain. Now that the city has undeniably recaptured its glory of old (symbolically, its population grew to two million last year, its pre-first world war imperial population), it might seem counterintuitive to visit it for its modernist architecture. But this is a highly rewarding endeavour, especially if one wishes to avoid an overdose of Sachertorte (chocolate cake), horse-drawn carriages, flamboyant churches and palaces, and imperial tat. Viennese Modernism, or Die Wiener Moderne, began much earlier than its European counterparts. As early as 1895, the most prominent architect of the day, Otto Wagner, announced the end of historicist and romanticist architecture, which had dominated the previous decades – there was to be no more neoclassical, neo-baroque, neo-gothic or neo-Renaissance. Two years later, the Vienna Secession emerged. An Austrian version of art nouveau, one of its main proponents was Wagner himself. It is still widely visible, in the form of the Vienna Stadtbahn stations (especially at Karlsplatz), or the colourful Linke Wienzeile Buildings (Nos 38 and 40). Later, in the 1900s, came the splendid Kirche am Steinhof, and the more starkly functional Österreichische Postsparkasse off the Ring. His second villa, Villa Wagner II (14th district), is a paragon of sobriety, built next to his previous, more extravagant, home, the predictably named Villa Wagner I. The first was erected in 1888 and the second in 1913, thus spanning the most important years of his career



and offering a striking contrast between the pre-modern and modern eras. Many of Wagner’s students and proteges became key architects of Vienna Modernism, most notably Joseph Maria Olbrich, the architect of the renowned Secession Building by Karlsplatz. Josef Hoffmann, another founder of the Secession who studied under Wagner, was a prolific architect who came to specialise in villas, which are still dotted around the Viennese landscape: aside from the Villa Skywa-Primavesi in the upmarket 13th district, he built several houses in the even more affluent 19th district, including the Haus Knips, and the Haus Eduard Ast. By the end of the 1920s and in the early 30s, he had turned his attention to social housing, and encouraged young architects such as Le Corbusier. Max Fabiani was another student of Wagner’s who worked on the Stadtbahn and left an



indelible mark on Vienna. Aside from the unmistakable Urania building by the Danube, his beautiful Artaria-Haus on the prestigious Kohlmarkt in the Old Town is a true outlier on the street,

reminiscent of the “Slovene art nouveau” he created and exported to Ljubljana. His Haus Portois & Fix in the 3rd district is without doubt one of the most interesting, avant-garde and original

buildings in Vienna. It is hard to imagine what people made of it at the time, in 1901. As well as Otto Wagner and his followers, the most famous exponent of Vienna modernist archi-

tecture was the Brno-born Adolf Loos, who, having briefly dabbled with the Secession movement, quickly turned his back on it, seeking a less ornate, stripped-down form of architecture (nevertheless concealing rich interiors), which quickly made him controversial and set him apart from his Viennese contemporaries. Most famous for his “scandalous” Looshaus in the Old Town. Loos’s break from the consensus was particularly noticeable in works such as the Haus Steiner (Sankt-Veit-Gasse 10) from 1910, the 1913 Haus Scheu and the little-known Haus Rufer House from 1922, all three in the 13th district, and all three reminiscent of traditional modernist movements elsewhere in Europe. The list is far from exhaustive and walks through the centre, or 13th, 14th and 19th districts in particular will undoubtedly reward admirers of modern architecture.

Rome isn’t all ruins – check out its breathtaking contemporary art and design, too

It’s a controversial opinion, but Rome’s major sites are overrated. Crowded, costly and utterly devoid of charm, the city’s most visited landmarks have been cheapened in the age of mass tourism into little more than a box-ticking – or selfie-taking – exercise. Which isn’t to say you shouldn’t go. Everyone should be accosted by a middle-aged Italian man in a plastic centurion’s costume or shouted at by a Vatican security guard at least once in their life. But there’s a lot more to the Eternal City than its ancient ruins and Renaissance sculptures. The best way to enjoy Rome’s centro storico is on a night-time stroll. The buildings and fountains will be beautifully lit, you’ll often have the views all to yourself, and it frees up time during the day to explore the city’s exciting, contemporary side. First stop is a monumental beaux-arts structure on the north-western side of the Villa Borghese park. It’s a gallery that, in any other city, would be towards the top of everyone’s to-do list, but Rome being Rome, the Galleria Nazionale d’Arte Moderna e Contemporanea doesn’t draw huge crowds, despite having a breathtaking array of works. The collection features most of modern art’s most famous names, important works from Italian masters and a fine selection of pieces from living artists. What’s most enjoyable about it though, is not the quality of the art, but the way it’s displayed, because



the gallery has been dramatically transformed in recent years under the stewardship of outgoing director Cristiana Collu. The result is a space that makes you reconsider a lot of preconceptions about modern art movements. The diverse collection is exhibited with lots of energy and a thematic, rather than chronological, layout that brings a freshness and vitality that large national collections too often lack. A mile and a half north-west, slightly further if you take the scenic route along the river, is a gallery as monumental as anything in the centro

storico. But Zaha Hadid’s boldly designed Maxxi, the National Museum of 21st-Century Art, is worth a visit for more than the architecture. As an example of the variety on show, current exhibitions include retrospectives of Greek arte povera painter and sculptor Jannis Kounellis, Neapolitan designer Riccardo Dalisi, and comic-book artist Benito Jacovitti. There are also several large installations and a contemporary design collection, as well as an extensive permanent collection of drawings, models, photographs and recordings from

Italy’s best-known modern architects. The museum also runs talks, performances, exhibitions and workshops throughout the year. Off the beaten tourist track, east of the Villa Borghese in residential Salario, Macro, the Museum of Contemporary Art of Rome, was once Peroni’s main brewery in the city. It has been transformed into a sleek, postindustrial space that is a popular haunt among Rome’s art fans in the city, but is difficult to define. The museum’s own website calls it both a “container that becomes

content”, and a “polyphonic cultural centre”. Whatever you call it, it’s well worth a visit, and admission is free. Across town to the south, in Rome’s EUR district, the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana is another worthwhile stop for anyone who wants to see the more modern side of Rome. Now the global headquarters of Fendi, the “square colosseum” is a striking example of the neoclassical Italian Rationalist style from the fascist period. The area around it offers an interesting glimpse of what Mussolini’s Italy might have looked like. The building’s unique aesthetic and complicated history make it worth a visit – but don’t miss out on its gallery. It recently featured a gorgeous site-specific exhibition of works by contemporary sculptor Arnaldo Pomodoro, including an extensive assortment of documents and drawings from his archive. This great gallery known for its educational projects and for promoting young artists is in a former pasta factory in the San Lorenzo neighbourhood, not far from Termini station. Five minutes’ walk away, near Porta San Lorenzo, is another little gem of a gallery, known for its promotion of young talent and experimental shows across different mediums. Originally Rome’s first public power plant, this gallery has an extensive collection of ancient sculpture surrounded by diesel engines and enormous alternators. This sense of contrast brings the incredible age of the collection into sharper focus.

When in Rome go where the Romans go, not the tourist crowds

One of the earliest European printed books was a tourist guide to Rome. Ranging from information on ancient ruins, fallen temples and classical bathhouses to the place where an emperor “saw a vision in the sky”, Mirabilia Urbis Romae (Marvels of the City of Rome) was written in Latin in the early 12th century. The popular text was reproduced in dozens of manuscripts and was printed and published in the mid-1470s, a mere two decades after the Gutenberg Bible. As with many a menu in modern-day Rome, English, French, German and Italian versions were available. Later, the Grand Tour brought throngs to the Eternal City of monuments and museums. Beguiled by its beauty, its mixture of terracotta and mocha colours, the galleries of renaissance sculpture and dark chapels full of old masters, many thought it a heaven on Earth. Dickens had mixed feelings. Recollecting the Piazza di Spagna, where artists’ models gathered in public to be hired, he wrote: “They started up before me, in Rome, in the broad day, like so many saddled and bridled nightmares.” James Joyce, another literary genius given nightmares by Rome, lived and worked here as a bank clerk. In a letter to his brother, Stanislaus, he singled out tourism as public enemy number one. The Romans were like “a man who lives by exhibiting to travellers his grandmother’s corpse”, Joyce said, and wished the locals would “let the ruins rot”. Harsh judgments, but even lovers of Rome will admit there are times when you need to find a place of peacefulness. Living there, I found the city’s riot of glories grew lovelier when stepped out of for a while. Once the grand and glorious park attached to a palazzo, the Orto Botanico, the botanic gardens, are now owned by Sapienza university. They’re an extraordinarily restful oasis of rare plants, exotic flowers and almost extinct species of trees, with walkways spreading up into the slopes above Trastevere. Ruined temples, toppled statues, terraced fountains and the calls of wild parrots create an otherworld that is hard to forget. Beneath palm trees, the medicinal herb garden seems a place of ancient secrets and stories. At the summit, a back gate leads to the terrace by the church of San Pietro in Montorio, from which there is a panoramic view of the domes and steeples of Rome. A stroll along the nearby leafy avenues leads to plush-gardened embassies, the American Foundation and the convent where Jews and other refugees were hidden during the Nazi occupation of the city. A grain store nearby was the hideout for escaped Allied prisoners of war. Any view of Rome contains more than it seems. In 1997 an exhibition entitled Le Macchine e gli dei (The Machines and the Gods) was staged at the site of the disused Centrale Montemartini, Rome’s first electrical substation. The show led to a remarkable reimagining of this former industrial building from the fascist era into a classical sculpture gallery like no other. Busts of classical goddesses and stone-eyed Etruscan warriors are placed in boiler rooms among turbines, pumps, pistons and diesel tanks and seem even more beautiful in such a defamiliarising setting, as do the redundant engines and gyroscopes. This hall of machines and gods pays moving homage to both. What for many years was the Protestant Cemetery is now renamed the Non-Catholic Cemetery. A hideaway of tranquillity, shadows and umbrella-like Roman pines, it’s the final resting place of a ghost army of rebels and dreamers, including Shelley, Gregory Corso, Antonio Gramsci and Keats, whose epitaph “Here lies one whose name was writ in water” bows a brow to the indifference of time. In this sanctuary of mausoleums and monuments, statues stare at the sky or sink into stony regret. Street cats, sleek and curious, wander between the tombstones. Over the boundary fence, Rome’s last surviving pyramid, the tomb of Cestius, adds to the otherworldly restfulness of a place that seems a field of dreams. Some of Rome’s museums have been in business for hundreds of years, a long time to build up popularity. Palazzo Altemps is a relative newcomer. Built in the 15th century by the Riario family and refurbished a century later under the orders of Cardinal Marco Sittico Altemps, the Altemps opened its doors to the public in 1997 as part of the National Museum of Rome. It is only a few steps away from the gobsmacking Piazza Navona but somehow escapes the fleets of tourist coaches, armies of buskers and living statues dressed as centurions or emperors. Instead, this small and lovely palazzo offers leafy peacefulness and spacious halls of statuary. The most beautifully organised museum in Rome, the Altemps’s airy old rooms are uncrowded, its treasures given space. Glance down a long corridor and a marble huntsman stares back, his elegant chalk-coloured hands stretching his invisible bow and arrow. You can walk right up to the exhibits, see delicate chisel marks on a torso, incredibly subtle carvings of musculature or hair. Several rooms are given over to the story of the collector Evan Gorga, who amassed two house-loads of archaeological finds and bequeathed them to the state. A remarkable man, he was a gifted tenor and sang the role of Rodolfo in the original production of La Bohème in 1896. Faded murals in the backstreets add to the sense of the past’s closeness. In Palazzo Altemps, absence becomes presence. Running parallel to the river near the Ponte Sisto, Via Giulia is one of the oldest streets in an ancient city and was a pilgrimage route for centuries. The via is a mere kilometre in length, yet you could spend a week exploring the shadowy back streets and cobbled lanes. Antique shops and restaurants have appeared in recent years, but blink and there’s a cowed monk stepping slowly from a doorway, head bowed. Fountains chuckle slyly. An engraved skeleton adorns the front of a crumbling church. One of Michelangelo’s doomed dreams was a bridge commissioned by Pope Paul III to cross the Tiber, connecting Palazzo Farnese and Villa Farnesina. Building began but was abandoned due to the fantastic expense. You can still see the haunting unfinished structure of the Arco dei Farnesi high above Via Giulia, swathed in encroaching ivy. Francis Darcy Osborne, British ambassador to the Vatican during the Nazi occupation, a war hero who helped to save thousands of fugitives, retired to an apartment in an old palazzo on this street and often walked the riverbank nearby. A close friend of the Queen Mother, Osborne was a brilliant diarist, a cunning activist, a lover of Rome and an inveterate art collector. He appears as a character in my novels My Father’s House and The Ghosts of Rome. Via Giulia was his favourite Roman street. The basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore, once known as Our Lady of the Snows, is less frequently visited than the great if somewhat forbidding bastion of St Peter’s but in many ways is more impressive and charming. One of its delights, viewable by private tour for only a couple of euros, is the Loggia, the arched balcony adorning the basilica’s facade, home of the mosaic of the miracle of the snow.

ENTERTAINMENT

Rajinikanth expresses worry about children being hurt when they run behind actors

Mumbai: At a time when the number of young people who follow movie stars in politics is increasing, Rajinikanth has sent a powerful message to the younger generation. On Wednesday, the actor was seen speaking to a number of reporters outside the Chennai airport, telling them to “think seriously” about their lives and futures. Rajinikanth responded, “The youth should think seriously about their education and future,” when asked if he had any advice for young people who are following actors and hurting themselves.

Children should exercise caution because it’s their loss if they get hurt.They should maintain their health and concentrate on their education. Please avoid developing a drug or alcohol addiction. Not only may life become terrible for you, but it can also become terrible for your parents and other loved ones. Don’t approach



any of your buddies who are utilizing them.Five of the actor-politician Vijay’s admirers were hurt last month when their cars crashed into one another when they were pursuing him.

During Vijay’s rally in the Karur region last year, a mob crush resulted in at least 41 fatalities and about 100 injuries. Next, Rajinikanth was questioned about the

postponement of the release of Vijay’s lead part in Jana Nayagan. He immediately said, “I don’t want to comment on that.”As a farewell party for Vijay’s supporters before he enters politics, the movie was scheduled to open in theaters on January 9 during Pongal. KVN Productions, the film’s producers, actively promoted the movie and then claimed in

court that a delay would cost them more than ₹100 crore. Nevertheless, the Central Board of Film Certification’s (CBFC) certification problems caused the distribution to be delayed. There is currently no definite release date.

The last film Rajinikanth appeared in was Coolie, directed by Lokesh Kanagaraj. His upcoming films include Jailer 2 and a movie in which he co-stars with Kamal Haasan.

The action-comedy Jailer 2 is a follow-up to Nelson’s popular 2023 film Jailer. Ramya portrays his wife, Vijaya “Viji” Pandian, while Rajinikanth makes a comeback as “Tiger” Muthuvel Pandian. Jailer examines how Tiger’s kid disappears while looking into a smuggling case, forcing him to come out of retirement when his family’s safety is in jeopardy. How Jailer 2 advances the plot is still to be seen.

Actor Siddharth Shaw of Chiraiya on receiving criticism for his role in the show

Mumbai: In the online series Chiraiya, actor Siddharth Shaw portrayed Arun, a newlywed husband who frequently rapes his wife, Prasanna Bisht. He acknowledges that he is receiving a lot of hate because of the portrayal, but he finds that enjoyable. “I just lately learned that they want to put me in a blue drum.

He refers to the horrific murder case in Meerut in March 2025, where a man’s mutilated body was discovered sealed inside a blue plastic barrel. “That is from the women’s perspective,” he continues. “From the men’s perspective, the hate which I’m getting is mostly expletives which are coming up,” he continues. Then there are these films, emails, or reels where people express how good things were going, and the male community as a whole is silent. I’m thrilled to see so much hate because, for me, it originates from a place of love. I’ve done a good job because this guy is so despised. The actor claims that he experienced a great deal of emotional anguish while filming the private moments. “I literally howled for five minutes at the first take on the first day we shot intimacy for Suhagrat. I was crying there when



we ended shooting. Everyone was merely attempting to reassure me that everything would be well. I had been under so much stress and anxiety that my lower back had frozen totally. “I used to limp when I was shooting,” he recalls.According to Siddharth Shaw, the psychological effects were fairly severe.

“I was extremely anxious for six months because this was a rape sequence rather than a lovemaking intimate session. Thus, the dynamics in that area were entirely altered. I had a panic attack immediately after filming the honeymoon scene. My family was unable to watch the sequence

when I watched it,” he adds.Speaking about the public debate surrounding the performance, in which some have referred to it as “anti-men propaganda,” Siddharth states, “I think it is our duty as artists and filmmakers to start a conversation about whatever is going on in society, whether it be good, bad, evil, or ugly.” Therefore, I believe that our work is done when I speak with people about Chiraiya and the kind of discussion that it has created today both online and in drawing room discussions. I think it’s fantastic that others are expressing similar opinions. The audience responds to those who believe this to be propaganda.

Badshah apologizes for the Tateeree song to the National Commission for Women



Mumbai: Rapper-singer Aditya Prateek Singh Sisodia, better known by his stage as Badshah, caused a stir when his latest single, Tateeree, was released. The artist apologized and revealed that the song had been removed from all platforms as the criticism grew. Due to obscenity and vulgarity, Badshah and the creators of the Haryanvi tune Tateeree were summoned by the National Commission for Women in March. According to the most recent information, Badshah apologized to the National Commission for Women (NCW) for his song Tateeree and promised to support women’s empowerment by funding the education of fifty girls from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. In relation to a suo motu case involving the song, he appeared before the commission. Producer Hiten and filmmakers Joban Sandhu and Mahavir Singh were

also present during the hearing. NCW Chairperson Vijaya Rahatkar presided over the hearing and said that the song’s lyrics and presentation violated women’s decency and dignity. Rahatkar expressed grave concern about the harm done to women’s dignity and urged all involved to make sure that similar occurrences don’t happen again. Everyone in attendance expressed regret for the harm done to society and presented unequivocal written apologies to the commission.Within four months, Badshah promised the commission that he will write a song about women’s empowerment and work to improve society and women.I’ll strive to improve society and women. He informed the commission, “I will not be involved in any such activity in the future and will present a positive song on women’s empowerment within four

months.”Additionally, he promised to support the education of fifty females from underprivileged backgrounds.According to the commission, all parties promised to abstain from such actions going forward. Rapper-singer Badshah and vocalist Simran Jaglan performed the Haryanvi hip-hop hit Tateeree, which was released on March 1, 2026. Badshah wrote the song’s lyrics, while Hiten composed and produced the music. Mahi and Joban Sandhu directed the original music video for the song, which combines aspects of modern rap with local characteristics. Following the criticism, Badshah apologized on Instagram, stating that he had no intention of offending anyone. Additionally, the Haryana Police increased its efforts against the contentious song Tateeree by removing hundreds of links from various social media sites.

The year-long romance between Sanya Malhotra and Rishab Sharma comes to an end

Mumbai: After a discreet partnership lasting more than a year, Sanya Malhotra and famous sitarist Rishab Rikhiram Sharma are said to have ended their relationship. The pair has successfully navigated their shift from partners to independent persons despite the prominent nature of their different occupations.

According to Hindustan Times, although the two were thought to have started dating in early 2025, trustworthy sources now indicate that the breakup happened some time ago, with both sides prioritizing a low-key exit from the relationship.

Notably, the ex-couple has stopped following one another on social media. Subsequent reports indicate that Rishab Rikhiram Shar-



ma may have already moved on, with insiders stating he is already dating someone new while keeping a strictly “hush-hush” approach to his current romantic life.

Sanya and Rishab famously avoid-

ed a “hard launch” of their romance during their time together, often avoiding official combined appearances or public demonstrations of affection.When astute Reddit users posted a number of candid photos

that showed Sanya and Rishab in the same private circles in January 2025, the relationship’s digital footprint first emerged.

The first visual proof that they were spending a lot of time together came from a particularly telling picture that showed the two of them standing together while the sitarist stopped to take a picture with a fan.

Another fan’s Reddit post claiming to have seen the couple together as early as December 2024 served as further fuel for the fire. These “breadcrumb crumbs” left by fan encounters and social media sleuthing eventually formed the basis of the public’s belief in their year-long relationship, despite their best attempts to keep a low profile and avoid official joint appearances.

Gaurav Gera Shares the Dhurandhar Audition Scene That Got Him the Aalam Bhai Part

Mumbai: In Aditya Dhar’s Dhurandhar, Gaurav Gera’s portrayal of Muhammad Aalam, also called Aalam Bhai, won over the audience. He is an Indian intelligence handler who keeps his identity as an undercover spy working in Karachi, Pakistan, by pretending to be a juice vendor in Lyari. One of the most important sequences in Dhurandhar: The Revenge, in which Aalam Bhai persuades Hamza (Ranveer Singh) to let him bear the burden of Pinda’s (Udaybir Sandhu) killing, has won him praise. Even though this scene was in the second part, Gaurav Gera disclosed that it was the one he tried out for in order to land his part in the Dhurandhar franchise. “I was auditioned for that intense and heavy scene only,” Gaurav Gera said. I was instructed to do it after being summoned to Mukesh Chhabra’s office. Therefore, this scene wasn’t surprising in any way.“Later, when the narration occurred, I understood where it is placed in the film,” he added. Aisa kuch liye shock nahi tha. I was aware that it would

be a well-liked character and Hamza’s sole source of support in the movie. I therefore realized it was a unique function.The famous lyric “Darling, Darling dil kyu toda, peelo peelo Aalam dhoodh soda” from Aalam Bhai has gained a lot of attention on the internet. “Bohot saare messages to you are like ‘beloved, darling dil tod diya’.” Gaurav Gera said, “It’s been too busy and I’ve been around people, but haan ye ek common response aaya hai mere paas.” Casting director Mukesh Chhabra had previously invited Gaurav Gera to try out for an Aditya Dhar movie. The office of Mukesh Chhabra called me to try out for the part. The film was directed by Aditya Dhar. I was called previously about another movie with him, but it didn’t work out. I managed to land the part, and whoa. It’s absurd. Something seemed correct while the movie was being shot. “But it all depends on the audience. I thought the script was spot on when I first heard it. However, a lot relies on filming and editing. However, the way it was filmed, edited, and com-



posed beyond my expectations. It’s of the highest caliber, and even if I hadn’t been a part of it, I would still have enjoyed it,” he continued.

Saurabh Shukla claims that Shah Rukh Khan treats Suhana “like a colleague” on King sets

New Delhi: Superstar Shah Rukh Khan and his daughter Suhana Khan will co-star in the film King, which has already generated a lot of excitement. Actor Saurabh Shukla, who appears in the movie, has now talked candidly about their friendship on the set, pointing out that the father-daughter pair remained quite professional the entire while.In an interview with Siddharth Kannan, Saurabh talked about rejoining with Shah Rukh on King and thought back to his early days working with him. In Badshah, I collaborated with him. Back then, he was a rising star. I didn’t spend much time with him at that time; our interactions were limited. I’ve had a variety of encounters with Shah Rukh throughout the years. Shah Rukh has superb business understanding and is undoubtedly a very skilled businessman. Otherwise, it would be impossible to establish and maintain such an empire on one’s own. There is an army of people now, of course, but he is the one who built it. Saurabh stat-

ed, “He has a lot of support from his family.

The actor also talked about how, while shooting on King, in which he co-stars with his daughter Suhana Khan, he saw Shah Rukh in an entirely different light—as a father. Shah Rukh is a highly astute father. Although he is watchful, I believe he gives his kids plenty of independence because they have a voice of their own. He is neither excessively protective nor possessive. A parent will naturally be protective, but he is amazing. He was Suhana’s coworker and co-actor on the set.

Like any co-actor, he was practicing and making suggestions, according to Saurabh. In addition to SRK, important parts are played by Suhana Khan, Deepika Padukone, Abhishek Bachchan, Arshad Warsi, and Jaideep Ahlawat. After making her screen debut in the 2024 Netflix film The Archies, Suhana Khan is making her theatrical debut in this movie. Shah Rukh discussed his role



in King at a fan meeting, saying, “The character of King is very interesting.” It was composed with much love by Siddharth and Sujoy Ghosh. It also contains a great deal of evil. He is a murderer. He murders people. However, it’s crucial for storytelling that heroes like myself take on a variety of roles, including romantic, humorous, and inspirational. I’m currently

attempting to achieve that.Every year or every two years, I work on a major film because I am aware of how challenging filmmaking has become.

In order to avoid disappointing people, movies should be made with care. King, which is produced by Red Chillies Entertainment and Marflix Pictures, is slated to open in theaters on December 24, 2026.

In an astounding first look at Atlee’s AA22 X A6, Allu Arjun grows bald and sporting animal claws

Mumbai: On Wednesday, the actor’s birthday, the title and poster for the eagerly anticipated Allu Arjun and Atlee collaboration were finally revealed. The official title of the movie is Raaka. The movie’s studio, Sun Pictures, revealed the title poster at 11 AM, exactly as they had hinted at the day before. Deepika Padukone plays the lead in the movie as well.Arjun appears on the title poster for the movie, which is called Raaka. He is shown on the poster as a bald, kohl-eyed character who is peering into the camera and has the animal claws seen in yesterday’s teaser release. There are also some markings on the actor’s forehead that resemble Viking tattoos. Not much is known about the movie, not even the genre or the characters, other from its appearance. The gorgeous new appearance has received excellent feedback from fans;



many have described it as “jaw-dropping.”The picture, which is tentatively dubbed AA22 x A6 (meaning Arjun’s 22nd and Atlee’s 6th film), was initially shown on Tuesday by Sun Pictures. They wrote, “Brace for the BIAAst. Title Poster - Tomorrow 11 AM.” The claw of an unidentified fuzzy monster was intriguingly portrayed on the movie’s original poster. The film’s specifics were kept under wraps by the producers until Wednesday’s big presentation. They hinted at its

size in a video they released last year. In order to meet the animation and visual effects crew, producer Kalanithi Maran traveled to Los Angeles with Arjun and Atlee for the video. The script for AA 22 x A 6 was regarded as “unlike anything I’ve ever read” by VFX supervisors who worked on movies like Iron Man 2 and Transformers. In 2027, the movie is anticipated to be released. When Atlee directed Ranveer Singh in an advertisement in October of last year, the actor discussed the movie with the media. “It’s always great hanging out with him and working with him and his super-duper awesome team,” he remarked. My wife was filming with him, so I had the opportunity to see him on the set of his latest movie. He is producing something you have never seen or experienced in Indian cinema, even if you may already know this.

A five-year-old boy from Bihar was fatally stabbed in school, Family Claims Sexual Abuse



Jehanabad, Apr 08: A mother dropped off her five-year-old son at a Bihar school hostel on April 1. The kid was pronounced dead on April 6, five days later. Now, the mother looks to those who took her child's life for answers about what happened to him. She is currently battling for justice after sending him to study at a Gurukul in Jehanabad, which is around 50 kilometers from Patna, the state capital. The boy allegedly suffered major cuts all over his body as a result of being sexually abused and battered with sharp weapons. Ajay Kumar Sharma, the child's father, filed a formal complaint stating that Tarun Kumar, the principal and director of the Gurukul Hostel and School, called him at approximately 5:20 am on April 6 to let him know that

group rape. Rishu, Ashu's older brother, resided on a different level but attended the same school and dorm. He revealed to his family that Kumar had brought Ashu to his room to sleep with him the night of the tragedy. After Ajay brought his son's body back to the hostel, the family and the locals organized a large-scale demonstration, shutting the Patna-Gaya National Highway-22 entirely and calling for the execution of those responsible. There was a huge traffic jam that stretched for several kilometers as a result of the hours-long traffic disruptions. The family thinks that other people contributed to their son's demise.

Tarun Kumar, the principal of the school, is the main suspect and has been taken into custody. After being questioned, an instructor and two female employees were also freed from custody. The security guard at the school is also being questioned by police. Murder, gang rape, and rape by an authority figure have all been reported. Additionally, a sexual assault case has been filed under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offenses (POCSO) Act, 2012.

According to a report, MS Dhoni would miss more IPL 2026 matches for CSK

New Delhi: The Chennai Super Kings are having difficulty winning their first IPL 2026 match. The five-time winners are currently wallowing at the bottom of the points table after suffering three straight losses under Ruturaj Gaikwad's leadership. CSK's performance has continued to deteriorate in 2019 IPL after coming last in 2025. The absence of their previous captain and legendary player, MS Dhoni, is another significant reason harming CSK in addition to the top-order failures. Due to a calf issue, the 44-year-old wicketkeeper-batter has missed the opening three games of the season. Fans are looking forward to seeing Dhoni play again, but they have some bad news. Dhoni is virtually certainly going to miss CSK's next IPL 2026 match against Delhi Capitals, according to a report from Cricbuzz. The game is set to take place on April 11 at Chennai's MA Chidambaram Stadium. According to the source, Dhoni will need at least another week to get to full match fitness while he recovers from his ailment. According to the article, CSK hopes to have



him back in the team for their April 18 matchup with Kolkata Knight Riders. In addition to Dhoni, CSK's South African batsman Dewald Brevis is also coping with an injury setback. But according to CSK CEO Kasi Viswanathan, Brevis' health is getting better. Rehab for MS will take some time. We're not sure how long it will take," Kasi remarked. "We hope that Brevis will be able to play in the upcoming game, but that will depend on how he develops. The next game is

in a few days," he continued. Brevis is anticipated to play against DC, according to earlier statements made by CSK head coach Stephen Fleming. "We're hoping he'll be fit for the upcoming game.

The next game is in five days. We have been cautious, and if all goes according to plan over the next five days, he will be prepared to depart. After CSK's loss to RCB, Fleming stated, "It's a big loss but we are looking forward to getting him back."

Satpura wants a new protection force as the number of tiger deaths in Madhya Pradesh rises

Bhopal, Apr 08: Madhya Pradesh is referred to be India's "Tiger State." Beneath that victorious phrase, however, a much more terrifying tale is now taking place in its forests: dead tigers, poisoned tigers, electrocuted tigers, mauled kittens, and a government that suddenly seems to think that the outdated protection system is insufficient. This situation has now prompted a major action in Satpura Tiger Reserve: the creation of a new Tiger Protection Force, a reserve-specific protection unit designed to improve local animal security. In 2025, Madhya Pradesh experienced 54 tiger deaths, the highest number since the start of Project Tiger. According to estimates, the state had already lost about 16 tigers by the first week of April this year, and after another carcass turned up in Umaria, that number rose to



18. The increasing number of deaths has prompted the Madhya Pradesh High Court to intervene, demonstrating the gravity of the situation. Satpura is now one of the most unsettling flashpoints. In one recent instance, a guy attempting to hide an illicit opium field is accused of poisoning a tiger and then killing it with electric wire. Another occurrence involved the discovery of a dead four-month-old cub in the reserve following indica-

tions of a violent encounter. In the Madhai range, tourists also witnessed a vicious altercation between two adult males, which heightened concerns that the reserve is facing severe ecological and territorial strain. The new Tiger Protection Force has been proposed in this climate of fear and failure. What distinguishes the planned Tiger Protection Force from the current Tiger Strike Force is the crucial question. Role and design hold the key to

the solution. There are currently five Regional Tiger Strike Forces and a State Tiger Strike Force in Madhya Pradesh. In essence, those units are response and enforcement tools designed to attack, raid, pursue, look into, and react to crimes involving animals. They are the offensive weapon of the system. However, it seems that the new Tiger Protection Force is more defensive and localized. It is being developed as a reserve-specific, specially trained ground unit for Satpura based on the official letter and training request. Its purpose is not just to respond to crimes but also to maintain a continuous protective grid within a tiger-prone area. To put it simply, the proposed Tiger Protection Force is intended to be a preventive force, while the Tiger Strike Force is a reactive unit. When danger arises, the Strike Force

takes action. Where danger is growing, the Protection Force is supposed to remain embedded. The training blueprint for the Tiger Striking Force highlights its seriousness, encompassing a comprehensive syllabus that includes both indoor and outdoor modules. Indoor training covers topics such as administration, coordination, welfare schemes, the Wildlife Protection Act, and criminal investigation, while outdoor training includes physical fitness, weapon training, and practical field assessments. Running for 30 days, this quasi-tactical security curriculum is tailored for hostile terrains. Senior IPS officer Raja Babu Singh noted that Satpura requested customized training for the Tiger Protection Force, marking a formal first for seeking such specific training from police establishments.

Being a member of a backward group does not grant one preference in government employment

New Delhi, Apr 08: The Supreme Court has emphasized that a candidate's membership in a backward community cannot alone tip the scales in their favor, ruling that public employment cannot be granted only on social background or sympathy. If a fair and level playing field is to be guaranteed for all candidates, "grace, charity or compassion ought to stay at a distance" in matters of public employment, according to a bench of Justices Dipankar Datta and Satish Chandra Sharma. In its ruling published on April 4, the bench found that "belonging to the backward community alone cannot be the decisive factor for tilting the scales."

The Delhi Police filed an appeal against the Central Administrative Tribunal's (CAT) and the Delhi High Court's directives to grant a second chance to an applicant who had failed to show up for a critical stage of the hiring process. The court made these observations while granting the appeal. In January 2024, an applicant who had passed the first round of recruiting for the position of constable failed to show up for the Physical Endurance and Measurement Test (PE&MT), citing illness. In spite of this, the Delhi Police were ordered by the CAT to permit him to take the test with a later batch; the Delhi High Court subsequent-



ly upheld this ruling in September 2025. However, the Supreme Court deemed the strategy unworkable. The bench described the case as a "classic example" of carelessness, pointing out that the candidate had "frittered away a golden opportunity" by failing to show up on the appointed day. The court emphasized that notified conditions must be rigorously adhered to during

recruiting processes, particularly those involving large-scale public employment.

The court emphasized that loosening standards for one candidate would compromise the integrity of the entire selection process, saying, "When chances are rare, one needs to grab them with both hands." The bench observed that out of about a lakh candidates, the respondent was the only one requesting a re-schedule.

The court determined that the nature of the candidate's condition did not call for any special treatment, even if the candidate's arguments for deferment were accepted.

Hardik Pandya is the true winner after making a gesture for Vaibhav Sooryavanshi



New Delhi: In Tuesday's IPL 2026 encounter between the Mumbai Indians (MI) and Rajasthan Royals (RR), the 15-year-old phenom Vaibhav Sooryavanshi defeated the speed genius with two sixes in one over in their much anticipated clash. In the rain-shortened 11 overs per side encounter,

Sooryavanshi blasted 39 off 14 balls as RR scored 50 runs in just 2.4 overs. Hardik Pandya, the captain of MI, was among the many who were amazed by Sooryavanshi. Following the game, he took a moment to applaud Sooryavanshi with a unique gesture. "Watching a 17 or 16-year-old boy play the way he did is really intriguing. In reference to Sooryavanshi, Pandya remarked following the game, "At the same time, we discussed so much about him in the preparation leading up to the game." So, it's incredible to watch how he bats, how fearless he is, and what kind of shots he makes. "I hope he has the best possible future," he continued. Speaking of the game, Yashasvi Jaiswal and Vaibhav Sooryavanshi made a rain-shortened IPL match into a spectacular display as the Rajasthan Royals defeated the Mumbai Indians by a dominating 27 runs on Tuesday.

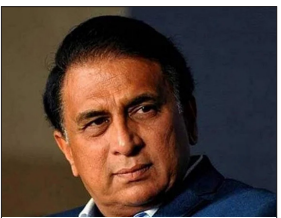
After being brought in to bat, Jaiswal's undefeated 32-ball 77 and Sooryavanshi's explosive 39 helped Rajasthan collect an impressive 150 for 3 in 11 overs. With a quick 80-run partnership and a bar-

rage of hits, including nine sixes between them, the opening combination set the stage. With ten fours and four sixes, Jaiswal dominated the innings from the start by combining grace and force. The Mumbai Indians were then held to 123 for 9 by their bowlers' methodical effort. Mumbai was under pressure to score more than 13 runs per over, but their chase never really took off.

They lost their top order. MI was left reeling at 23 for 3 in the first three overs after Ryan Rickelton (8), Rohit Sharma (5), and Suryakumar Yadav (6) all went cheaply.

With a few boundaries, captain Hardik Pandya (9) and Tilak Varma (14) tried to rebuild, but Rajasthan's spinners controlled the game by keeping tight lines and striking frequently. Sherfane Rutherford took advantage of a few misfields and missed opportunities during a brief field lapse to score a quick twenty-five off eight balls. But Rajasthan soon reclaimed the lead thanks to a spectacular low grab by Sandeep Sharma, who lunged forward to eliminate Rutherford.

In a vicious tirade, Sunil Gavaskar criticizes foreign players for their IPL availability and calls out the "fragile body" justification



New Delhi: In a direct appraisal of foreign players' availability in the Indian Premier League (IPL), former India captain Sunil Gavaskar questioned their commitment and fitness claims. Additionally, he urged the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) to step in and impose stronger regulations on players who fail to fulfill their assigned responsibilities. Gavaskar derided worries over workload and rejected the "informed before" argument in his Sportstar piece, arguing that bowling four overs a match is hardly taxing. It's not a good justification to claim that the franchise was "informed before." What does it mean to be "informed before" the tournament's open-

ing day? Although playing for the nation is of utmost importance and takes precedence over franchise cricket, don't the teams deserve complete dedication as they give players and frequently their families not just their money but also their hearts? It's also important to keep in mind that a bowler can only bowl four overs during a match. What is preventing them from bowling a comparable number of deliveries in the game if they have done it without any problems in practice? Over the course of two months, you are expected to bowl 56 overs in 14 league games. If your team advances to the final, you may also be required to bowl 12 additional overs in two or three more games. Come on, that's nothing at all for a generation that constantly brags about how fit they are. Is playing four overs in a match—and not all at once—too taxing on the body? Man, isn't it best to give the body two more months of rest if it

is that delicate? He penned. Gavaskar's comments coincide with the Kolkata Knight Riders' bowler shortage, as Australia's Cameron Green is currently recuperating from an injury. The all-rounder has been practicing his bowling fitness in the KKR nets after Cricket Australia notified the team, but Gavaskar was not happy about the scenario. It's not limited to KKR. Pat Cummins, the captain of Sunrisers Hyderabad, has been sidelined for at least the first half of the season, and it is unclear when he will return. Interestingly, both teams are in the bottom half of the points table, and their bowling attacks have suffered. Additionally, Gavaskar made the case that players ought to be more accountable to the teams that make significant investments in them by pointing out how international cricket boards profit monetarily from IPL contracts. "The IPL has been a money maker for both foreign players and their boards. Is the

typical Indian fan aware that Cricket Boards receive 10% of the money paid for a player from their nation? It's unclear who pays this commission for issuing the No Objection Certificate—the franchise or the BCCI. He used statistics to support his claims: Australia provides the most players (16) at a total worth of ₹121.65 crore, followed by South Africa (17) at ₹77 crore, England (12) at ₹68 crore, the West Indies at ₹69 crore, and New Zealand (12) at ₹33 crore. "The boards of international players receive no compensation from any other T20 league in the world. Not even The Hundred, which just had its inaugural auction. Why not take advantage of the fact that four of the six clubs have Indian owners? In addition, Gavaskar demanded that players who "are not available from the first game of the tournament unless they are on national duty" be banned for "two years" by the BCCI

Amid the selection debate, Mohammad Shami makes a significant statement



New Delhi: Mohammed Shami, a bowler for the Lucknow Super Giants, comes to his "home" venue, Eden Gardens, to take on the Kolkata Knight Riders after winning the game against Sunrisers Hyderabad, giving the opposition a subtle warning. On Thursday, the struggling Kolkata Knight Riders will play their third consecutive home game against the Lucknow Super Giants after going winless in their previous three games. "You always have that home advantage playing at Eden Gardens," Shami remarked on Tuesday at the Bengal Pro T20 League's third season presentation alongside captain Ajinkya Rahane of the Kolkata Knight Riders and his deputy Rinku Singh. "You've played there for a long time and spent a lot of time on that field, so you are familiar with the circumstances and the behavior of the pitch. "So that benefit is always there.

If I come here and play against KKR, there will be some

advantage for me being a 'local'." In their most recent game in Hyderabad, the Rishabh Pant-led team defeated Sunrisers Hyderabad by five wickets thanks to the fast bowler's incredible 2/9, which included eighteen dot balls. Shami has not been included in the national team despite his steady performances for Bengal after recovering from injury. In the just finished Ranji Trophy, he was one of the top six wicket-takers, taking 37 wickets at a remarkable average of 16.72. Even though Bengal lost to champions Jammu & Kashmir after gaining a lead in the first innings, Shami's outstanding 8/90 effort was crucial to the team's passage to the semifinals. Shami joked, "Hum mazdoor aadmi hain, humein bas ball daalni hai (we are like laborers, we just have to keep bowling)." Life will be full of ups and downs, including injuries, but you should never lose sight of your hard work at the ground level. "You grow weak if you pursue too many 'fancy things'. Everyone is chasing social media these days. The bowler, who was born in Uttar Pradesh, emphasized that his passion for the game has not diminished and reaffirmed his strong bond with Bengal, referring to it as his "karm bhoomi." "I haven't strayed from my roots; I was born into a farming family.

I still have that hunger as a player. You need to have that motivation if you want to play at that level once more. Domestic cricket is just as important to me as any other format. Bengal is my "karm bhoomi," despite the fact that I was born in Uttar Pradesh. I always prioritize domestic cricket. "Jab tak mere andar khelne ke liye jaan hai mein Bengal ke liye kheloonga (as long as I have the strength and motivation in me, I will keep playing for Bengal)," he said.

Beyond Cricket's Billions: Why Hockey's El Dorado Lies In Its Speed, Not In Sprawl



New Delhi: In a world where sport and its financial power, aka glamour, are permanent bedfellows, the very idea that Royal Challengers Bengaluru and Rajasthan Royals could fetch close to two billion dollars each at the turnstile is orgasmic. In terms of valuations and broadcast rights, it's almost unbelievable for a sport to reach that value in just 18 years; the 2026 edition represents the 19th year

of the league. In ways more than one can imagine, the IPL has upended every sport in the country and on the continent. It now clearly ranks as the second-richest league in the world, surpassed only by the NFL in revenue per match. That's when the inevitable contrast settles over the fast-expanding Indian sporting landscape. In one corner, the national pulse throbs for a hyper-capitalist powerhouse

that overturned a flannelled game into a Wall Street of glitz, data, and tons of wealth. At the other end of the ring sits Indian hockey: storied, arguably the most Indian of pursuits, currently surviving on cylinders of state-sponsored oxygen while fans grow nostalgic, playing vinyl discs that echo notes of a golden past. For decades before the IPL arrived, our romance was bound to the wrist: the subtle moves and wizardry of Dhyan Chand and Balbir Singh, much later, of Mohammed Shahid and Dhanraj Pillay. We loved the intricate patterns they weaved on grass and, eventually, astro-turf. But grass gave way to urban sprawl, and the sport was boxed into elite stadiums as the bond slowly frayed at the edges. For hockey, the it is staying relevant.

Hockey India Names Twenty-Four Member Women's Squad For The Argentina Tour



New Delhi: Hockey India has announced a 24-member Indian Women's Hockey Team squad for the upcoming tour of Argentina, scheduled from April 13 to 17, 2026, in Buenos Aires. The four-match exposure tour against the world-class Argentine side comes at a pivotal moment in India's international calendar, with the FIH Hockey World Cup Belgium & Netherlands 2026

And the Asian Games firmly on the horizon, according to a press release. The squad is a blend of seasoned experience and exciting emerging talent, reflecting both the depth Indian women's hockey has built in recent years and the high standards head coach Sjoerd Marijne continues to demand. For the players, this tour is more than a preparatory exercise; it is a statement of intent. Seasoned midfield-

er Salima Tete continues her captaincy of the side, bringing composure, intelligence and dynamism to the heart of India's midfield. Perhaps the most eagerly anticipated return to the squad is that of forward Deepika, who makes her comeback after a period of rehabilitation. In her absence, players like Navneet Kaur, Manisha Chauhan, Udita, and Annu stepped up admirably. Notably, Annu

Vintage Neuer Denies Real Madrid As Bayern Secure Vital Champions League Away Win

New Delhi: Bayern Munich emerged as 2-1 victors against European rivals Real Madrid in the first leg of their UEFA Champions League quarterfinal at the Bernabeu. However, it was Bayern's 40-year-old captain and goalkeeper, Manuel Neuer, who stole the limelight among a host of stars on display in Madrid. Neuer, who delivered a Player-of-the-Match performance, pulled off nine crucial saves, helping his side maintain their advantage despite Bayern dominating much of the game.



The German giants registered an expected goal (xG) of 2.92 but squandered chances to effectively put the tie beyond Madrid's reach in the first leg itself. Goals from Luis Daz and Harry Kane gave Bayern the lead, while Kylian Mbappe managed to find the net for Madrid, his effort awarded after goal-line technology confirmed it had crossed the line,

Kompany when asked if Neuer was the greatest goalkeeper ever. What truly stood out was Neuer's use of experience, particularly at the Bernabeu, as he delivered a masterclass at the mere age of 40. Even Madrid players reportedly acknowledged him as the best player on the pitch. One defining moment came when

he denied Vincius Jr. in a one-on-one situation. As Dayot Upamecano misjudged a long ball, Vincius broke through on goal. Neuer reacted instantly, positioning himself outside the box and subtly forcing the Brazilian wide, narrowing the angle and making the chance far more difficult. "It's a shame it didn't end 2-0, honestly. You know how dangerous Real Madrid are. We saw that today. They had a few chances and left some opportunities behind. We're happy with the win here, but it will still be a tough and challenging task," Neuer told Amazon Prime after the match. Neuer even managed to get a hand on Mbapp's goal, which was later awarded after crossing the line. "Was it really in? That's outrageous. In that case, it's a goalkeeping error," he joked. Heading into the second leg in Munich next week, both teams will carry mixed emotions.

Badminton Asia Championships: Dhruv And Tanisha Lead India's Charge Forward With An Opening Win

Ningbo: India's top mixed doubles pair, Dhruv Kapila and Tanisha Crasto, made a strong start to their campaign on Day 1 of the Badminton Asia Championships at the Ningbo Olympic Sports Centre in China. Facing Thailand's Phuwanat Horbanluekit and Benyapa Aimsaard, the Indian duo claimed the opening game 21-14. The Thai pair responded with a dominant 21-11 win in the second to force a decider. Regaining their early momentum, Dhruv and Tanisha closed out the match 21-15 in the final game, as per a press release from the Badminton Association of India (BAI). The Indians now face a challenging Round of 16 clash against Malaysia's Cheng Tang Jie and Toh Ee Wei, who currently hold a 2-0 head-to-head advantage.



In other mixed doubles results, Ashith Surya and Amrutha Pramuthesh were defeated by Malaysia's Wong Tien Ci and Lim Chiew Sien, while Rohan Kapoor and Gadde Ruthvika Shivani bowed out against eighth seeds Goh Soon Huat and Lai Shevon Jemie. The continental meet, being held in Ningbo for the third consecutive time, features a strong Indian contingent across categories. India's best-ever performances at the Badminton Asia Championships include two gold medals -- Dinesh

Khanna in men's singles (1965) and the Satwik-Chirag duo in men's doubles (2023). India's rising star Ayush Shetty delivered a statement performance, upsetting World No. 7 and Hong Kong Open 2025 champion Li Shi Feng of China in straight games, 21-13, 21-16 in the Badminton Asian Championship. Three young Indian squash players, Anika Dubey from Pune, Akanksha Gupta from Thane, and Vasundhara Nangare from Kalamb, have successfully cleared the SRFI Selection Round for the 33rd Asian Junior Individual Squash Championships, scheduled to be held in Panzhihua, China, in May 2026. According to a release, The

MI Coach Jayawardene Praises Evolution Of Rajasthan Royals Wonderkid Sooryavanshi

Jayawardene Praises Sooryavanshi's Fearless Knock Against MI

Guwahati: Mahela Jayawardene heaped praise on Vaibhav Sooryavanshi after the 15-year-old's fearless knock against Mumbai Indians, saying the youngster's evolution will be exciting to watch. The MI head coach admitted that Sooryavanshi's intent, especially against Jasprit Bumrah, caught everyone's attention. The teenage sensation once again lit up IPL 2026, smashing 39 off just 14 balls in a rain-shortened clash in Guwahati. Speaking after the match, Jayawardene acknowledged the youngster's growing confidence and ability to take on top-quality bowling. No, I think we all knew he is a great talent from the way he performed last year. We managed to control him last season, but every match is a challenge. He has really good skills, and for us, it's about executing our skills.



Bumrah probably missed his length by a little bit, and he was ready for it. So, yeah, it'll be fascinating to see how he evolves. He really took our bowlers down," Jayawardene said in the post-match press conference. "And don't forget, Jaiswal was key today. The way he batted in the first three overs, he took it on and played some really good cricketing shots. He batted through the innings for them, and that

made a huge difference as well. So I think we have to understand what went wrong and then work on that," he added. Sooryavanshi's innings was once again built on pure intent. Facing Bumrah for the first time, the 15-year-old showed no hesitation, launching him for two towering sixes in his opening over. It set the tone for what turned into a one-sided powerplay, with Rajasthan Royals racing ahead early. The youngster has been one of the standout performers of IPL 2026 so far, scoring 122 runs in three matches at an average of over 40 and an explosive strike rate. His campaign had already taken off with a stunning 15-ball half-century earlier in the season, and this knock only added to the growing buzz

around him. The match, delayed by rain and reduced to 11 overs per side, quickly turned into a batting blitz from Rajasthan Royals. Openers Sooryavanshi and Yashasvi Jaiswal came out with clear intent and never allowed MI to settle. The pair added 80 runs in just five overs, dismantling the bowling attack and effectively taking the game away within the powerplay. RR had already raced to 50 in just 2.4 overs, leaving MI chasing the game from the start. While Sooryavanshi provided the fireworks with his 39 off 14, Jaiswal anchored the innings with a composed yet aggressive 77 not out off 32 balls, ensuring there was no slowdown. In reply, Mumbai Indians never really recovered. Early wickets dented

their chase, and despite a few moments of resistance, they were restricted to 123 for 9, falling short by 27 runs. For Rajasthan, it was another statement performance that took them to the top of the table. For Sooryavanshi, it was yet another reminder that this is not just a break-out phase, but the beginning of something much bigger. During the IPL 2026 match between the Rajasthan Royals and Mumbai Indians, coach Mahela Jayawardene was stunned by the fearless 39-run innings from 15-year-old Vaibhav Sooryavanshi. The teenage sensation reached this total in just 14 balls during a rain-shortened 11-over-a-side contest in Guwahati. Jayawardene specifically noted that the youngster's intent against premier

Badminton Asia Championships: Lakshya Sen Crashes Out Early While PV Sindhu Advances



New Delhi: India's medal hope in the men's singles competition, Lakshya Sen, crashed out of the Badminton Asia Championships in the first round on Wednesday, April 8. Up against Hong Kong China's Lee Cheuk Yiu at the Olympic Sports Center, Lakshya went down in straight games, 12-21, 19-21, in 41 minutes. Coming in on the back of a strong showing at the All England Badminton Championships, Lakshya's straight-games defeat to the lower-ranked Lee came as a surprise for Indian fans. The Indian struggled to find rhythm for large parts of the opening game, and although he showed greater resistance in the second, Lee's control in the rallies and ability to close out crucial points proved decisive.

While Lakshya bowed out early, star shuttler PV Sindhu managed to negotiate a tricky opening-round test. Sindhu was pushed to the limit in a strenuous one hour and seven minute contest against Malaysia's Wong Ling Ching, eventually prevailing 15-21, 21-11, 21-19 in a three-game battle. After conceding the opening game, Sindhu recalibrated well, using her experience to dictate the tempo in the second. The decider turned into a tight, back-and-forth contest, with long rallies and momentum swings defining the closing stages. Sindhu held her nerve at 19-19, stringing together the final two points to seal progression. India's best result of the day, however, came through Ayush Shetty. The rising Indian delivered a statement performance, upsetting World No. 7 and Hong Kong Open 2025 champion Li Shi Feng of China in straight games, 21-13, 21-16, at the Badminton Asia Championships to advance to the pre-quarter-

finals. Despite the former World No. 3 Li's strong starts in both games, Ayush dominated the latter stages with composure beyond his years. In the opening game, he fought back early to level at 4-4, with Li holding a slight edge until 7-7. From there, the US Open 2025 champion wrested control of the rallies, increasing the pace and precision of his attacking play to overpower the home favourite and take the game 21-13. The second game followed a similar pattern, with Li applying early pressure and leading into the mid-phase. Ayush, however, drew level multiple times before shifting gears at 13-13. The youngster surged ahead with six consecutive points, showcasing sharp net play and controlled aggression, to close out the match 21-16 in 51 minutes. Ayush will next face Chinese Taipei's Chi Yu Jen in the pre-quarterfinals.