

Congress has no support at grassroots level, claims union minister Sonowal

Dibrugarh, Feb 18: Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal has described the Opposition Congress in Assam as an “exhausted party” with no support at the grassroots level. “The Congress is now exhausted. The party does not have any support at the grassroots level. Their leaders are merely making statements with the help of the media. The party is not committed to the society,” Sonowal claimed during a media conference in Dibrugarh, while ruling out the possibility of the Congress to return to power in Assam. On the contrary, Sonowal said that the incumbent BJP-led government has consistently taken steps against illegal immigration in the state. He claimed that people from various communities, including STs, SCs and OBCs, feel secure under the BJP-led government in Assam. “Through the NDA government in Assam, the party has ensured protection of land, property, dignity and heritage,” he asserted. He added that people, particularly the youth and students in the Northeast, have faith that more opportunities for growth will be created under BJP rule. “India’s decisive emergence as a global trade power is the direct result of Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s nation-first leadership, contrasting it sharply with what he described as the Congress party’s history of ‘policy paralysis, indecision and obstruction.’ Addressing a media conference in Dibrugarh on Tuesday, Sonowal said that since 2014 India has transitioned from what he termed a “defensive and hesitant trade posture” to a confident, assertive and strategically negotiated global engagement. Sonowal said nine major free trade agreements finalised in the last six years have secured preferential access to 38 developed nations across Europe, the Gulf, Oceania and North America. “For decades, Congress reduced trade policy to defensive posturing and policy paralysis. They lacked the confidence to believe that Indian industry, Indian farmers and Indian entrepreneurs could compete globally,” Sonowal said. “Under Prime Minister Modi ji’s leadership, India negotiates from a position of strength — expanding markets, securing better tariff terms than competing economies and safeguarding our core interests. That is the difference between narrow political thinking of Congress and nation-first leadership by PM Modi ji,” he added. “This government has shown that you can open global markets without compromising farmers’ welfare. Congress created fear; Modi ji has created opportunity,” Sonowal said. “On the contrary, the Congress party has consistently opposed reforms, infrastructure and transformative trade agreements because its politics thrives on pessimism. From their ‘thread and blanket’ politics, our government has emboldened Assam’s tea industry and its trade prospect with this agreement with US,” Sonowal said.

Cataract camp brings new hope to elderly in Pherzawl

Imphal, Feb 18: In a significant step toward improving elderly healthcare, the District Administration of Pherzawl organised a Special Cataract Detection and Surgery Camp for senior citizens at the District Hospital, Churachandpur, under the Atal Vayo Abhyuday Yojana (AVYAY). The initiative was spearheaded by the Department of Social Welfare in collaboration with the District Health Society, Pherzawl, National Programme for Control of Blindness & Visual Impairment (NPCB&VI), Churachandpur and the Medical Superintendent of District Hospital, Churachandpur.

The surgical camp began today and will continue through February 20 and 21. Prior to the surgeries, extensive screening programmes were held in Senvon, Parbung and Pherzawl from January 22 to 24 to identify elderly persons suffering from cataract and other age-related vision impairments.

A total of 37 senior citizens were found eligible for free surgical intervention, of whom 30 consented to undergo the procedure. Many elderly patients expressed heartfelt gratitude to the district administration, stating that the initiative has restored not only their vision but also renewed their confidence. The special drive underscored the administration’s commitment to inclusive healthcare and the welfare of senior citizens in the district.

Training programme for census 2027 underway in Bishnupur

Imphal, Feb 18: A three-day district level training programme for Census 2027 Phase-I on Houselisting and Housing Census, HLO began yesterday at Mini Secretariat Complex, Bishnupur. The training jointly organised by the Directorate of Census Operations, Manipur and the District Administration Bishnupur under the overall supervision of the Principal Census Officer, PCO Bishnupur will end tomorrow i.e February 19. Deputy Commissioner and Principal Census Officer, Pooja Elangbam, emphasised the importance of the training, stating that its primary aim is to equip Census functionaries with a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. She

encouraged participants to utilize the opportunity to clarify doubts and maximize their learning, enabling them to perform their duties effectively. The training led by Kh. Ramewshwor Singh, Deputy Director, Yengkham Monica Devi and Huidrom Rajesh Singh focuses on the process of Houselisting and housing census, concepts and definitions of the related terms, understanding of all features of the Census management and Monitoring System Web Application, Houselisting Block Creator Web Application and HLO Mobile App for smooth execution of different activities. The activities to be taken up by the Census Functionaries includes registration of filed trainers,



AICC holds Sangathan Srijan Abhiyan in Noney

Imphal, Feb 18: All India Congress Committee (AICC) organised Sangathan Srijan Abhiyan program today at the multipurpose hall, Longmai-3 under Noney District Headquarters. Yogesh YC, National Observers INC, Syed Anwar Hussain, State Observers, Gaikhangam Gangmei, CWC member, Samuel Jiandai Ex-MLA and Minister, Tamenglong AC, Kikhonbou Ex-MLA Tamei AC and Social Worker Adai Phaomei attended the programme as special guests. The main highlight of the program was providing of application form for the election of District President, All India Congress Committee. Application forms were distributed to all the willing candidates for the fair election. The Sangathan Srijan Abhiyan involved extensive consultations with



party members and local leaders to identify suitable candidates for DCC president positions. The selected leaders will play a crucial role in rebuilding the party’s organizational structure and improving its electoral prospects. The meeting aimed at strengthening

the Congress party in near future. Congress leaders, several politicians, social worker, former ADC members from Tamenglong & Noney districts and leaders from surrounding villages numbering around 150 were present at the event.

Assam Cong suffers further setback as suspended legislator joins raijor dal

In Assam, ahead of the Assembly elections, suspended Congress MLA Sherman Ali Ahmed joined the Raijor Dal, marking the second defection from the Congress within two days.

Guwahati, Feb 18: In yet another blow to the Opposition in Assam ahead of the Assembly elections, suspended Congress MLA Sherman Ali Ahmed on Tuesday joined the Akhil Gogoi-led Raijor Dal, becoming the second legislator from Assam’s principal Opposition party to switch sides within two days.

A three-time MLA from the Baghor constituency, Ahmed was formally welcomed into the party fold by Raijor Dal president Akhil Gogoi and other senior leaders at a programme held in Kalagachia in Barpeta district.

Earlier this week, another three-time

Congress MLA, Abdur Rashid Mandal, jumped ship to join Raijor Dal.

Addressing the gathering, Ahmed announced that he would seek nomination from the Mandia constituency in the upcoming Assembly elections to be held after the delimitation process.

A former government official, Ahmed was elected to the Assam Legislative Assembly in 2011 as a candidate from the All India United Democratic Front. However, after being expelled from the AIUDF, he joined the Indian National Congress and went on to retain the Baghor seat in the 2016 and 2021 Assembly elections. Ahmed was suspended from the Congress in October 2021 for allegedly violating party discipline. Prior to his suspension, he had been arrested over alleged provocative remarks related to an eviction drive in Darrang district.

Assam Govt launches portal for provincialisation of venture institutions

Guwahati, Feb 18: In a major boost to state’s education sector, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday launched the Provincialisation Management System (PMS) portal, a dedicated digital platform that will streamline the provincialisation process of venture institutions and their teaching and non-teaching staff.

Speaking on the occasion, Chief Minister Sarma said the PMS portal has been developed exclusively to facilitate applications for provincialisation from non-provincialised schools and colleges across the state and the staff associated with them.

“I am happy to launch the online portal for provincialisation of venture institutions under the Assam Education (Provincialisation of Services of Teachers and Re-Organisation of Educational Institutions) Act, 2017, as amended in 2025,” he said.

Sarma said that when he was the Education Minister of the state, steps for provincialisation were started in 2011 when services of 21957 teachers of primary schools, 14034 teachers of secondary Schools and the services of 3180 teachers from colleges were provincialised. Thereafter, in the 2017, services of 9897 primary teachers, 5345 secondary teachers and 1746 college teachers were provincialised.

“In the third stage again, initiative of provincialisation has been taken up with the formal launch



of the PMS portal where in all non-provincial academic institutions namely venture LP school, venture UP/ME school, venture high school, venture higher/senior secondary school and venture degree colleges including their teaching and non-teaching staff can apply for provincialisation,” he said.

The Chief Minister said that the base year for the establishment of education institutions under this system has been taken as prior to January 1, 2006. “Therefore, the academic institutions for provincialisation will have to submit permission/recognition/affiliation certificate along with land documents, declaration of pass percentage of last four years and the details of each teaching and non-teaching staff,”

he said.

It may be noted that the PMS is a centralised digital platform developed to streamline, monitor and process applications for provincialisation of venture educational institutions and the services of its teaching and non-teaching staff.

The portal has been designed in view of a centralised database of venture educational institutions and services of personnel associated with the venture schools and colleges.

The portal can be accessed by visiting <https://elementary.assam.gov.in/>, <https://madhyamik.assam.gov.in/>, <https://directorateofhighereducation.assam.gov.in/>.



itoring mechanisms and transparent verification processes will be introduced to prevent similar attempts in the future. The revelation has drawn attention to the importance of

accountability in agricultural subsidy schemes, which play a crucial role in supporting Mizoram’s farming community. Officials noted that the incident under-

scores the need for vigilance and robust checks to ensure that welfare benefits reach the intended beneficiaries. This story stands as Mizoram’s leading state-

wide news today, combining governance, financial integrity, and farmer welfare. Would you like me to condense this into a sharp 9-word headline for tomorrow’sage?

Rajya Sabha polls in Assam on March 16

Guwahati, Feb 18: The Election Commission of India (ECI) has announced the schedule for the biennial Rajya Sabha elections to fill 37 seats across 10 states, including three seats in Assam, as the terms of current members will expire in April 2026.

In Assam, election has been necessitated as the terms of Rajya Sabha MPs of BJP Rameswar Teli and Bhubaneswar Kalita, and Independent member Ajit Kumar Bhuyan are coming to an end.

The date of polling has been scheduled for March 16, with voting hours from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm. Counting of votes will take place on the same day at 5:00 pm.

The EC has also directed that only integrated violet colour sketch pens provided by the Returning Officer will be used for marking preferences on the ballot paper to ensure uniformity and prevent errors. Adequate measures will be taken to closely monitor the election process to ensure free and fair voting.

Timber smuggling foiled in Jiribam

Imphal, Feb 18: Security forces intercepted a truck transporting illegal timber concealed beneath iron scrap along National Highway-37 in Jiribam district. According to an official report submitted to the Forest Range Officer, Jiribam Range, reliable information was received on February 16 around 11:30 pm that a Tata truck was carrying timber from Imphal towards Jiribam. Acting on the input, a joint team comprising personnel from the Special Mobile Patrol Unit, Jiribam, and the Quick Reaction Team (QRT) of 156 CRPF Battalion conducted a frisking and checking operation at Leingangpokpi village along NH-37 under the supervi-

sion of the Additional SP/LO, Jiribam. During the checking, a Tata truck bearing registration number RJ14GN/3247 was stopped. The vehicle was driven by Prem Chand (53), a resident of Jaipur, Rajasthan. The owner of the truck, Narayan Lal Bajya (42), also from Rajasthan, was reportedly present and produced documents claiming that the consignment comprised iron scrap. However, upon thorough inspection, officials discovered 120 beams (fanta) of timber concealed inside the iron scrap load. The truck, along with the timber, was seized after observing necessary formalities at around 9:15 am on February 17.

Nagaland CM Rio calls for expediting Naga political settlement

Dimapur, Feb 18: Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio on February 15 called for expediting the long-pending Naga political settlement, stating that the peace process must move forward without further delay. He was speaking at Ukhrul headquarters after unveiling a commemorative monolith during the Lui-Ngai-Ni celebrations, the seed-sowing festival.Lui-Ngai-Ni marks the onset of spring and the beginning of the agricultural cycle and is regarded by Naga communities as an auspicious period to sow seeds and seek blessings for a good harvest. The festival was declared a State Festival by the Manipur government in 1988 and later recognised by the Union Ministry of Tourism in 1997 as an official tourist festival. Addressing the gathering as chief guest at the event organised by the State Level Organising Committee under the aegis of the United Naga Council, Rio emphasised unity among Naga communities and reiterated the demand for integration of all Naga-inhabited areas under a single administrative framework.Referring to the peace talks, Rio recalled the Framework Agreement signed on August 3, 2015, between the Government of India and Naga political groups, as well as the Agreed Position of November 17, 2017. Despite the passage of nearly eight years since the Agreed Position and more than a decade since the Framework Agreement, a final settlement remains pending. Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio on February 15 called for expediting the long-pending Naga political settlement, stating that the peace process must move forward without further delay. He was speaking at Ukhrul headquarters after unveiling a commemorative monolith during the Lui-Ngai-Ni celebrations, the seed-sowing festival.Lui-Ngai-Ni marks the onset of spring and the beginning of the agricultural cycle and is regarded by Naga communities as an auspicious period to sow seeds and seek blessings for a good harvest. The festival was declared a State Festival by the Manipur government in 1988 and later rec-

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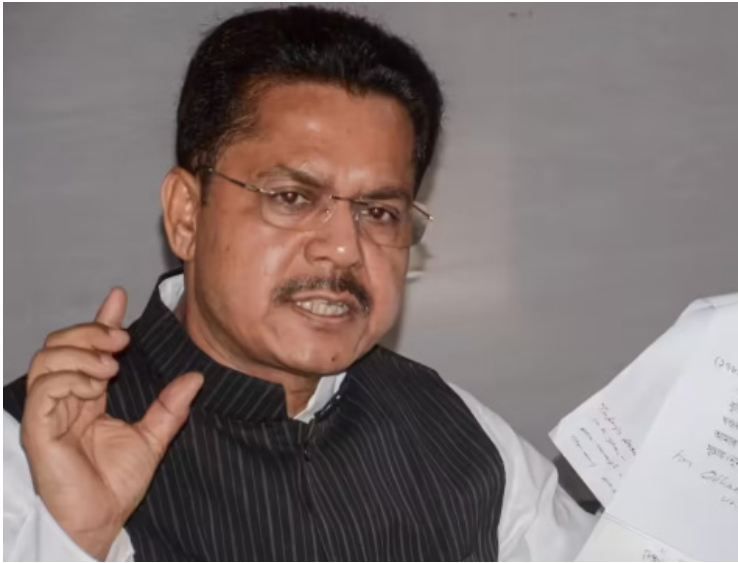


struggles but had emerged stronger. “Those experiences have shaped and strengthened us,” Dikho said, adding that the community now contributes to peace and stability.“We have fought enough in the past. Now, we must commit

ourselves to peace and peace alone,” Dikho added. The event was attended by legislators and representatives of civil society organisations from Nagaland and Manipur.

Bhupen Borah to withdraw resignation if convinced by senior Congress leaders

Guwahati, Feb 18: Former Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) president Bhupen Borah on Tuesday said that he is ready to withdraw his resignation, provided senior party leaders, Pradyut Bordoloi and Debabrata Saikia convince him that the state Congress unit is functioning in its true spirit. Borah had submitted his resignation to the Congress leadership on Monday amid internal party tensions ahead of the Assam Assembly elections. Borah said he had authorised Pradyut Bordoloi, MP from Nagaon, and Debabrata Saikia, the Congress Legislative Party (CLP) leader, to go through his resignation letter and assess whether the APCC is operating as it should. “If these two leaders are convinced that I am wrong, I am ready to withdraw my resig-



nation,” Borah stated.Describing his concerns about the state unit, Borah elaborated, “This morning,

Pradyut Bordoloi called me. I will wait the entire day, and if both he and Debabrata Saikia can convince

me that this is truly the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee, then I will withdraw my resignation. At present, this is not APCC as per my knowledge and conscience. It has become APCC(R), resembling parties like AGP(P), NCP, or TMC. I am not ready to work in APCC(R).”Borah said several Assam Congress leaders had visited him following his resignation announcement to discuss the matter.

The Congress leadership, however, did not formally accept his resignation. According to All India Congress Committee (AICC) state in-charge Jitendra Singh, Borah had retracted his resignation.Jorhat MP Gaurav Gogoi, who also visited Borah, praised him as a “strong Congress leader” and an “asset” to the party amid ongoing internal discussions within the state unit.

Meghalaya Speaker disallows discussion on mine blast

Shillong, Feb 18: Shillong, Meghalaya Assembly Speaker Thomas A Sangma on Tuesday refused to allow a discussion in the House on the illegal coal mine blast that claimed 33 lives earlier this month, citing sub judice provisions under assembly rules. “I have received that this matter is sub judice and is pending in the court of law, and accordingly, I have taken this decision based on Rule 57, sub-clause 6. I stand by my decision, and the Speaker’s decision is final,” Sangma said in the House.He added that Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma had already made a suo motu statement on the incident on Monday. The ruling came following a demand from Voice of the People Party legislator Ardent Basaiawmoit, who argued that the repeated invocation of the sub judice rule by the executive was undermining the legislature’s freedom to deliberate on matters of public concern. ”As a legislature, we have the freedom of speech to discuss issues affecting the people. Even courts themselves have held that legislative discussion is not

barred merely because a matter is pending before them,” Basaiawmoit said.He clarified that members were not seeking to debate questions of guilt or innocence or to interfere with judicial findings, but wanted to examine administrative lapses and policy failures surrounding illegal coal mining.“We know we cannot discuss judicial conclusions, but we can certainly deliberate on administrative failure so that such incidents are prevented in the future. The executive should not hide behind this sub judice provision,” he added, urging the Speaker to allow a structured discussion.Leader of the Opposition in the state assembly, Mukul Sangma, backed the demand, calling Basaiawmoit’s submission “very relevant”, and stressed that legislative oversight was necessary in cases involving public safety and governance. He said the government should consider approaching the court to have the specific incident treated separately instead of being clubbed with a broader public interest litigation.

IPFT hits out at Tripura CM Manik Saha over Kokborok



Guwahati, Feb 18: The Indigenous People’s Front of Tripura (IPFT), a junior ally of the BJP, on Monday criticised Chief Minister Manik Saha over his remarks on the script to be used for Kokborok, saying he should avoid interfering with the mother tongue of a different community.The reaction comes amid widening differences within the ruling alliance, particularly between Tipra Motha and the BJP, over the demand for adoption of the Roman script for the Kokborok language. In recent political speeches, the Chief Minister opposed the use of the Roman script and argued in favour of an Indian-origin script, suggesting that Kokborok speakers could even consider developing a new script instead of adopting what he described as a foreign one.

IPFT General Secretary Swapan Debbarma said the issue of script must be determined by those who speak and use the language regularly. “The Chief Minister’s mother tongue is Bengali. He should refrain from making unnecessary statements on the issue. Which script is better for Kokborok shall be decided by those who practice the language in day-to-day life. Any opinion expressed by someone who is not well-versed in the language should be treated as unnecessary interference. The Chief Minister should also understand that he doesn’t have to have an opinion on everything,” Debbarma said.

Referring to past political developments, Debbarma cautioned the ruling BJP against disregarding sentiments in the hills. “The Left

lost its political grip in the hilly region of the state because it opposed the Roman script without any valid justification. Hence, the ruling party must keep in mind that political power is not permanent,” he said. He further indicated that the Chief Minister’s remarks might reflect a personal view rather than a formal policy position. “It could be the Chief Minister’s personal opinion. He might have his own view on the matter, but neither the BJP nor the government has made any official policy decision in this regard. In the board exams, which are supposed to start in a couple of days from now, the students are at liberty to write their answer sheets in both Roman and Bengali scripts,” Debbarma added.

Woman doctor alleges workplace harassment by GMCH principal Govt orders probe

Guwahati, Feb 18: A senior woman doctor at Gauhati Medical College and Hospital (GMCH) has accused the institution’s principal, Achyut Baishya, of workplace harassment, leading to the registration of an FIR and the formation of a government inquiry committee.The Associate Professor and former Head of the Department of Clinical Psychology submitted a written complaint to the Chief Minister’s Office on February 6. In her representation, she alleged inappropriate remarks, intimidation and prolonged professional harassment during her tenure. According to the complaint, the alleged conduct caused her considerable mental anguish. She stated that, as a widowed woman and a subordinate officer, she felt constrained in responding directly.Apart from the alleged remarks, the doctor accused the principal of administrative victimisation. She claimed that despite the formal creation of the Department of Clinical Psychology, she was initially not assigned charge as Head of Department, requiring intervention from the Director of Medical Education. She also alleged that her proposals to introduce academic courses, recruiting faculty and expanding the department were repeatedly delayed or obstructed. Following her complaint, an FIR was registered at the Panbazar Women Police Station in Guwahati, and a preliminary investigation has begun. The complaint reportedly names



multiple victims.Responding to the allegations, Achyut Baishya said that he had been directed by authorities not to comment publicly at this stage. He said, he had prepared all relevant documents to present before the inquiry committee and added that the department’s takeover in July was carried out in accordance with a government notification. He also noted that the harassment complaint had been filed only recently.

Meanwhile, the Assam Government has constituted a two-member inquiry committee comprising a senior woman advocate and a

woman government officer to examine the allegations and submit its findings.

With both a police investigation and an official inquiry underway, the case has drawn attention to concerns over workplace conduct, institutional accountability and the safety of women professionals.In her complaint, she referred to a remark allegedly made by the principal — “don’t go too fast or you will be derailed”, which she said caused emotional distress. She further alleged that during a discussion on research initiatives, he suggested including his wife

in departmental research projects, which she found inappropriate.The dispute escalated after a notification cancelled the Department of Clinical Psychology and merged it with another department. The doctor said she was not provided a clear explanation for the decision and was later told that colleagues were opposed to her. She maintained that she had independently trained 57 interns and taken steps to expand mental health services before the department was dismantled.In her police complaint, the doctor stated that she had initially received appreciation from the administration after the independent Department of Clinical Psychology was established. However, she claimed that the situation changed when the principal insisted that she meet him alone in his office building, even though routine official matters could be handled within the hospital premises. She said the request made her uncomfortable and that she avoided the meeting, adding that their exchanges were documented through WhatsApp messages.

The doctor further alleged that during a later interaction, the principal asked her to contact him when she was “absolutely free and alone” and made remarks suggesting she could meet him anytime as “the door was always open”. She described the comments as inappropriate and distressing, particularly given the professional hierarchy.

Assam Congress Intensifies Candidate Screening as War of Words Escalates Following Bhupen Bora’s Sudden Exit

Guwahati, Feb 18: Addressing the media, Gaurav Gogoi, President of the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee, said the screening process for candidates is being expedited and, after consultations with the central leadership, the first phase of the Congress candidates’ list is likely by the end of February. He asserted that the Congress is ahead in election preparations and confirmed that alliances with like-minded opposition parties are certain, claiming that parties aligning with Congress grow stronger while those aligning with the Bharatiya Janata Party weaken, citing Asom Gana Parishad and United People’s



Party Liberal as examples. Responding to speculation about Bhupen Bora joining the BJP, Gogoi said even former Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal did not receive due respect in the BJP and questioned what Bora might

gain there. He said Bora’s exit would not affect Congress and added that the party would intensify its campaign over the alleged 12,000 bighas of land linked to the family of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. Gogoi criticised Sarma

for earlier accusing Bora of insulting women and initiating action through the Women’s Commission and police, but now welcoming him as a “Hindu leader.” He remarked sarcastically that people have witnessed the recent “performance” of both leaders. Gogoi said the coming election would be a contest between the “New Congress” and “Fake Congressmen,” alleging that leaders involved in corruption during the 15-year Congress rule later joined the BJP and “hijacked” the party. He accused the Chief Minister of losing the moral authority to certify Hindu leadership, referred to alleged cow syndicates, and challenged him

to a public debate on Hinduism. Gogoi also alleged a prior understanding between Bora and the Chief Minister and the use of “Saam, Daam, Dand, Bhed” tactics to divert attention from public questions about the 12,000 bighas of land, asserting that the people of Assam would continue to seek answers. Meanwhile, former APCC president Bhupen Bora explained his decision to leave Congress after 32 years, saying his loyalty and sacrifices went unrecognised. He recalled suffering a nose injury at a public event in front of Rahul Gandhi and said a resignation warning letter residence and persuaded him.

Priyanka Gandhi reschedules Assam visit

Guwahati, Feb 18: Congress general secretary and MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, who is heading the screening committee for selection of party candidates for Assam Assembly polls, has rescheduled her two-day visit to the state.

She will be now visiting the state on February 19-20 instead of February 18-19, party leaders said.

Priyanka Gandhi, who is the chairperson of the four-member screening committee, will be accompanied by other three-members of the committee Saptagiri Sankar Ulaka, Imran Masood, and Sirivella Prasad.

These three members are tasked with shortlisting candidates and steering internal consultations ahead of polls. Priyanka has put in place a new system where committee members are required to travel extensively in the state to get feedback on probable candidates.

“Generally, the screening committee meets the state election committee (SEC) in Delhi, and senior leaders from the state

are called to the national capital. But what Priyanka Gandhi has done is that she has assigned five districts each to the three members of the committee and has directed them to travel to these districts to gather feedback from local leaders and other stakeholders,” a source said.

Ahead of her visit, an important meeting of the Election Committee of the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) was held on Tuesday in Guwahati under the chairmanship of APCC President Gaurav Gogoi.

The nearly 45-member committee, comprising all Congress Members of Parliament, Members of the Legislative Assembly, and senior leaders of the party in the state, held detailed discussions on the applications received for candidature in various constituencies.

Extensive deliberations took place regarding the nature of the applications and the suitability of prospective candidates for each constituency, a statement issued by the party stated.

Science quiz contest conducted in Kakching

Imphal, Feb 18: A District-Level Science Quiz Contest 2026 on the theme “Fostering Public Trust in Science” for students of Classes IX to XII studying in Government, Government-Aided and Recognised schools under the Zonal Education Office, Kakching was conducted today at the Library and Information Centre, Kakching district. The quiz contest was organised by the Zonal Education Office, Kakching under the Directorate of Education (S).



In the competition, Mayengbam Aditya Singh of Class XI and Yengkhom Sebarson Singh of Class X from Kakching Higher Secondary School secured the first position. Saintcyna Yengkhom and Khumbongmayum Bivarani, both from Class X of Mary Immaculate Catholic School secured the second position. Lanchenba Luwang and Lamjingba Salam, both from Class X of A.D.I. English School, secured the third position. The function was graced by Kh. Binodini Devi (MES), DI of Schools, Zonal Education Office, Kakching as the Chief Guest and M. Rakshesh Singh (MES), Zonal Education Officer, Kakching as the President of the event. The quiz contest was conducted by Ksh. Joykumar Singh, Assistant Professor at KMC, who served as the Quizmaster. Y. Lokendro Singh, AI of School ZEO Kakching and Ksh. Joykumar Singh, Assistant Professor, KMC attended the programme as Science experts.

10-km solar-powered fence operationalised to protect 285 households, cropland

Guwahati, Feb 18: In a significant step towards mitigating human-elephant conflict (HEC) in Assam, leading biodiversity conservation organisation Aaranyak, with support from SBI Foundation, has successfully installed a nearly 10-kilometre-long community-managed solar-powered fence system in Bhangrikuchi village of Baksa district in Assam. The initiative covers 18 hamlets and safeguards the croplands and around 285 households that have long faced conflicts with wild elephants. Bhangrikuchi has been highly vulnerable to frequent encounters with wild elephants, leading to severe damage to agricultural fields and residential property. The newly-installed fence system provides a safe, non-lethal and eco-friendly deterrent to elephants besides discouraging use of illegal and hazardous electric fence to ward off wild elephants. Beyond protection, the initiative fosters community ownership and solidarity. The formation of the Bhangrikuchi Solar-powered Fence Management Committee ensures local stewardship, reinforces long-term sustainability and collective responsibility for maintenance and monitoring of the fence. Prior to installation, Aaranyak conducted extensive community briefings and on-field demonstrations to famil-



iarise villagers with the solar-powered fence mechanism, safety protocols and basic upkeep procedures. Active participation from community members played a pivotal role in ensuring smooth implementation. The initiative was implemented by Aaranyak’s field team -- Abhijit Saikia, Dibakar Nayak, Jiban Chetry, Jaugashar Basumatary, Bikash Tossa, Manav Nayak and Pradip Barman under the guidance of Anjan Baruah, Assistant Manager, Elephant Research and Conservation Division (ERCD), Aaranyak. The solar-powered fence was formally inaugurated on February 4 by the Village Head and officially handed over to the community in the presence

of members of the Fence Management Committee and representatives from the 18 hamlets. Around 50 community members attended the event. Addressing the gathering, Anjan Baruah emphasised collective responsibility, adherence to safety protocols and regular maintenance to ensure that the fence remains effective and sustainable in the long run. The handover programme was facilitated by the Bhangrikuchi Solar Fence Management Committee along with Aaranyak team members Rabiya Daimari, Abhijit Saikia, Dibakar Nayak, Jiban Chetry, Jaugashar Basumatary, Pradip Barman, Imon Abedin and Hemanta Phukan.

BJP urges EC to conduct Assam polls before Rongali Bihu

Guwahati, Feb 18: BJP delegation met the Chief Election Commissioner of India, Gyanesh Kumar, in Guwahati and urged him to hold the Assembly polls in Assam before Rongali Bihu, one of the biggest festivals in the state. On behalf of the BJP, Member of Parliament and Convenor of the State Election Committee Pradan Baruah, former Education Minister and Convenor of the Election Manifesto Committee Siddhartha Bhattacharya, and Convenor of the State Election Cell Dhruvajyoti Dauka urged the Election Commission to conduct the elections prior to Rongali Bihu.

They emphasized that Assam today enjoys vastly improved road infrastructure, enhanced connectivity, and a stable law-and-order environment.

In light of these transformative developments, they appealed to the Commission to complete the electoral process across the entire state within a minimal and consolidated timeframe, stated a press release.

During the deliberations, the Chief Election Commissioner was accompanied by Election Commissioner Vivek Joshi and Chief Electoral Officer of Assam Anurag Goel, along with other senior officials of the Commission.

Strategic bridge over Tlawng river inaugurated in Mizoram

Aizawl, Feb 18: Chief Minister Lalduhma has inaugurated the Lengtekai bridge over the Tlawng River, a major infrastructure asset built with the funding from the Ministry of Road Transport & Highways at a cost of Rs 43.83 crore.

Officially named the ‘Faith Bridge’, the structure measures 100 meters in length, 7.5 meters in width and 1.5 meters footpath on both sides is designed to carry loads up to 385 metric tons, significantly improving transport safety and capacity in the region.

Speaking at the inauguration, the Chief Minister recounted the challenges encountered during the bridge launching phase in December 2024, when pulley failure caused a major delay. After months of renewed technical preparation, the launching was attempted again in April 2025 and the structure was successfully positioned without incident. Subsequent finishing works, including approach roads, were completed in September 2025, enabling today’s formal opening.

The Chief Minister emphasized that the bridge replaces older Bailey structures that had limited load capacity and had suffered repeated damage in the past. The new bridge eliminates the need for load restrictions and



vehicle unloading, ensuring uninterrupted and safer traffic flow. He described the project as a symbol of reliability and faith — reflected in its name — and a milestone in strengthening Mizoram’s core infrastructure.

Highlighting the bridge’s strategic value, he noted that it serves as a vital corridor for Mamit district, which is home to around 85,000 people across roughly 90 villages (Census 2011). The district has strong agricultural potential, including rubber cultivation initia-

tives under the state’s Chief Minister Rubber Mission. The route connects Mizoram with Tripura and Bangladesh, supports the transport of locally valued Langkai river sand resources, provides access to Lengpui Airport, and serves institutions such as National Institute of Technology Mizoram. The Mamit-Bairabi corridor, he added, will continue to gain importance as regional connectivity expands. Reiterating the government’s guiding principle of completing works on time

with quality, the Chief Minister observed that Mizoram’s road density — currently about 46.37 km per 100 sq km — remains significantly below the national average. Accelerating infrastructure growth therefore remains a priority.

He expressed appreciation to Union Minister Nitin Gadkari and the central government for their continued cooperation and responsiveness to the state’s needs.

The bridge was constructed by Poddar Infra Tech with design consultancy from Force Structural Engineering Pvt. Ltd., proof consultancy by Indian Institute of Technology Bombay, and safety oversight by Engineering Project Consultants.

Strict quality assurance protocols were maintained throughout the construction. An on-site laboratory conducted continuous testing of materials including aggregates, sand sourced from Assam. The steel bridge components were fabricated in Rourkela and transported in sections for assembly. Specialized carbon steel tension rods manufactured in Thailand were used for the hanger system. Upon completion, comprehensive load testing confirmed the bridge’s operational safety and capacity for all classes of vehicles.

Nagaland gets first women-centric BPO

Kohima, Feb 18: Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio on Wednesday inaugurated a women-centric business process outsourcing (BPO) centre at Dimapur, marking a significant step towards women-focused employment generation. The initiative is a collaborative effort between the Investment and Development Authority of Nagaland (IDAN) and the JSW Foundation. Described as the first-of-its-kind women-centric BPO facility in the Northeast, the centre will initially employ 125 people, with scaling up planned in the future. It is expected to provide IT-enabled employment opportunities to women aged 18 years and above. Addressing a gathering on the occasion, Rio called the launch “a new chapter in Nagaland’s journey towards inclusive and technolo-



gy-driven growth”. “This represents not only a partnership, but also a shared commitment to inclusive growth, skill development, and the empowerment of our women,” Rio said. “I commend IDAN under

the dynamic leadership of Abu Metha for positioning Nagaland as a State that welcomes investment and innovation, and for strengthening Brand Nagaland through partnership, trust, and relent-

less networking,” he said. Assuring full government support to the project, Rio said he is confident that this initiative will create jobs and inspire youth to seize these meaningful opportunities.

Former Assam PCC chief Bhupen Borah to join BJP on Feb 22

Guwahati, Feb 18: In a major boost to the ruling BJP ahead of the all-important Assam Assembly elections, former Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) president Bhupen Kumar Borah has decided to join the BJP on February 22.

The announcement was made before mediapersons by Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, who visited Borah at his Ghoramara residence on Tuesday evening and had a discussion that lasted for over an hour.

The meeting came a day after Borah had tendered his resignation from the Congress, a party he served for 32 years, even as he subsequently sought time to make a final decision after the party’s high command

leadership did not immediately accept his resignation and reportedly attempted to persuade him to reconsider. Borah subsequently sought time from the high command to review his position.

“My old colleague in the Congress, former APCC president and chairman of Congress’ election campaign committee, Bhupen Borah had yesterday resigned from the Congress. Today, I came to meet him and now I am delighted to inform you that Borah will formally join the BJP on February 22. Our state BJP president Dilip Saikia will decide at what time Borah will join our party. With him, many other Congress leaders, workers and members will join in Guwahati as well as in

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Contain price hike during Ramadan

With Ramadan approaching, prices of essential goods have started to rise again. This is happening even though imports have increased in recent months. Traders say the rise is due to goods being stuck at the port, delays in unloading, and higher demand following the election holidays. According to a report in the daily Samakal, a total of 110 ships are stranded on water waiting to unload at Chattogram port. Half of these vessels are loaded with rice, lentils, chickpeas, dates, sugar, edible oil, and other daily necessities. A prolonged work stoppage at the port, followed by the election holidays and restrictions on vehicular movement, has caused severe congestion. Normally, around 5,000 TEU (twenty-foot equivalent unit) containers are cleared daily. During the disruption, that number fell to nearly one-third of the usual volume, and on some days, no containers were cleared at all. As a result, around five million tonnes of goods are now stuck aboard vessels, while container backlogs at the jetties have climbed to over 41,000, making the situation worrying. Importers had reportedly brought in goods early this year, anticipating the proximity of Ramadan and the election. However, many have been unable to release their consignments on time. Even though port authorities say they are prioritising Ramadan goods, traders say that it may take another week, or even longer, to clear the backlog. The impact is already visible in wholesale markets such as Khatunganj. Within a week, prices of onions, garlic, ginger, chickpeas, lentils, and vermicelli have increased. Date prices have risen by Tk 50-100 per kg, chickpeas by Tk 5–10 per kg, garlic by Tk 15, and vermicelli by up to Tk 150 per maund. Onions and lentils have also become more expensive. Together, these increases place significant pressure on household budgets. There are reports that some traders may be deliberately holding back goods or exploiting the port congestion to raise prices. Weak market monitoring during the election period appears to have allowed such practices to go unchecked. If syndicates or unscrupulous traders are manipulating supply to drive up prices, authorities must act quickly to identify and stop them. The government must ensure the uninterrupted clearance of essential commodities at the port. Special logistical arrangements, extended working hours, and coordinated transport support may be necessary to clear the backlog. Equally importantly, market monitoring must be strengthened. Authorities should verify stock levels, enforce transparent price displays at wholesale and retail markets, and take swift action against hoarding or collusive practices. If imports are indeed higher than last year and demand forecasts are clear, there is little justification for excessive price volatility ahead of the holy month of Ramadan.

The government will be stronger with more women at the table

The 2026 election has been touted as one of the most historic in the country, remarkable for many reasons. It is the direct outcome of a bloody mass uprising led by students. It kept Awami League completely out of parliament, allowed Jamaat-e-Islami—a party bearing the unresolved legacy of 1971—to emerge as the main opposition, and brought BNP back to power with a two-thirds majority, giving Tarique Rahman the opportunity to demonstrate that he is the right leader to steer the country towards stability and progress.

Despite all this, what this election has not achieved is a respectable representation of women at the highest levels. Only 85 women contested in the election, including 66 with party nominations and 19 as independent aspirants.

Eventually, only seven made it to parliament, including six from BNP and one formerly attached to BNP politics. It has been disheartening to see that candidates as accomplished and dedicated to public interest as Tasnim Jara, Taslima Akhter, and Manisha Chakraborty, among others, did not secure the required votes. The continued sidelining of women in the country faded into near invisibility by the time the election came. A movement born in the name of justice and equality has eventually resulted in a parliament less representative of half the population than ever before.

Tragically, the interim government, despite being a product of an anti-discrimination movement, ended up discriminating against women’s political participation. This occurred through its overindulgence of parties openly opposed to women’s role in governance or their equal rights in public spaces. Political parties, meanwhile, did not bother to adhere to the minimum 5 percent representation despite pledging to do so by signing the July Na-



tional Charter. The result, therefore, is hardly surprising. A practical starting point would be the women’s reserved seats, which can provide at least some immediate corrective. Ideally, as recommended by the Women’s Affairs Reform Commission—whose proposals, by the way, received zero attention during the Consensus Commission talks—proper representation in elections would have significantly strengthened women’s political participation by giving them a direct mandate from voters. Since that has not happened, a more logical course is available: instead of adhering to the age-old practice of “rewarding” party loyalists by selecting their wives, daughters, or other female relatives, why not fill the reserved seats with competent women already invested in politics? These seats are allocated according to each party’s proportion of

parliamentary seats, a formula that gives parties both responsibility and opportunity.

BNP, because of its parliamentary majority, is in a particularly strong position and can choose more women candidates than other parties. This is an opportunity it should not miss. By selecting honest, competent, qualified women committed to public service, the party can send a powerful message that merit, not patronage, will shape the new chapter of governance. Similarly, despite the general sentiment within Jamaat to keep women out of leadership positions, it could serve the nation, and surprise many, by selecting accomplished professionals for the reserved seats. However, merely allocating reserved seats to capable women will not bring meaningful change unless those seats come with real empowerment. Women MPs must have

resources, visibility, and the mandate to influence decisions in their constituencies. The old practice of treating women MPs from reserved seats with dismissiveness must end. Empowering these 50 women MPs would not dilute but strengthen parliamentary authority. A parliament that fully utilises its members is inherently more effective.

Tarique Rahman has emphasised the importance of creating opportunities for women. In his own life, he has acknowledged the influence of his mother, two-time Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, as well as his wife, a physician, and his daughter, a barrister. Translating that acknowledgment into political action by bringing competent, principled women into parliament and the cabinet would be a strategically wise step. For example, Rumeen Farhana, winner of Brahmanbaria-2 constituency, would be an evident candidate for a cab-

inet role. Vocal throughout her political career, she fought tooth and nail to secure her victory after an unceremonious exclusion from BNP. Such appointments would not be a symbolic gesture, but rather a strategic investment in governance.

The new prime minister can thus begin with women candidates who confronted chauvinism, misogyny, and the entrenched influence of money and muscle. They campaigned on terrain hostile to their very presence. Their clean image, resilience, and steadfastness signal political courage. Tasnim Jara, a physician and former member of the National Citizen Party (NCP), raised campaign funds through crowdfunding and built support by directly engaging ordinary people in her constituency. Her manifesto pledged to ensure improved healthcare and education, public safety, and greater account-

ability of MPs. Her campaign demonstrated organisational skills, public trust, and financial transparency, qualities essential for effective governance.

Manisha Chakraborty, another physician from the Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal (BSD), contested in Barishal-5. A familiar face who had run as a mayoral candidate before, she raised funds through small public donations by distributing clay banks and secured 22,486 votes, which she rightly views as evidence of a growing vote bank seeking change from the “politics of plunder, corruption and communalism.” Her appeal to young, middle-class, and working-class voters suggests the capacity to build broad-based coalitions.

Taslima Akhter, an activist, photographer, president of Garments Workers Solidarity, and member of the NTCC and Labour Reform Commission 2024, ran from Ganosamhati Andolon in Dhaka-12. Her campaign focused on transparency and accountability and advocated for a “citizen council” through which voters could hold representatives responsible. These are just some of the names that immediately come to mind. There are many others who also deserve consideration. It is encouraging that three women MPs have already been given ministerial positions. We hope to see more in the top tiers of the government.

Imagine a parliament and cabinet with a significant number of competent, capable, and honest women members. Such inclusion would not weaken the government; it would make it stronger, more credible, and better equipped to address the developmental and economic challenges ahead. A government born out of the sacrifices and aspirations of ordinary people should reflect the full strength of its people. Empowering qualified women is not charity or concession; it is sound political judgment.

Extortion capitalism and the economics of control

In its idealised form, an economic system such as capitalism—often known for rewarding productivity, risk-taking, and innovation—is one in which profits follow value creation, competition disciplines excess, and institutions protect exchange. Yet across much of the developing world—and in several middle-income economies—what operates under the label of capitalism increasingly functions through coercion rather than production. Markets exist, money circulates, and transactions occur, but the logic animating them has shifted. Value is no longer primarily created; it is extracted. This is not a mere market failure, but a sophisticated, predatory mutation of the system. This phenomenon draws from my ongoing research identifying ten slightly overlapping faces of capitalism, each shaped by institutional design and power relations.

One of these distorted offspring I describe as “extortion capitalism”. It emerges when systematic coercive extraction replaces productive accumulation as the dominant economic logic. In such systems, the pursuit of profit is no longer tethered to efficiency, innovation, or service delivery. It is anchored instead in control over permits, roads, ports, files, licenses, and ultimately, fear. The gatekeeper replaces the entrepreneur; the innovator, by the enforcer. In Bangladesh, extortion is not a marginal deviation or an underground aberration; it is embedded in the

very architecture of everyday economic life. Transport operators, traders, contractors, and small businesses face payments that are neither taxes nor fees, but compulsory extractions enforced through political muscle, bureaucratic discretion, or outright intimidation. Economic survival depends less on entrepreneurship than on compliance with informal toll regimes. The price of doing business is not innovation, but submission. Markets function, but they function as corridors of rent extraction rather than arenas of competition.

The abstraction becomes concrete when one examines mass-contact state institutions. The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics Citizen Perception Survey 2025, as reported by The Daily Star on December 25, 2025, shows that nearly one-third of citizens paid bribes to obtain public services, with the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority and passport offices emerging as the most corruption-prone interfaces. These are not elite gateways; they are universal points of contact that citizens must face repeatedly. When routine access to mobility and legality itself depends on informal payments, coercion ceases to be episodic and becomes structural. The citizen is not paying to break the law, but to access it. Formal compliance costs more than informal negotiation. In such a setting, corruption is not merely a moral failure; it is an economic toll. Citizenship becomes conditional, and a silent lesson is learned:



voice does not work—money does. A closely comparable pattern appears in Nigeria, where police checkpoints, port clearances, fuel distribution, and public procurement operate as layered extraction points. Businesses factor bribes into operating costs much as they would electricity. Political power becomes a mechanism for monetising access to markets rather than regulating them. The distinction between public authority and private predation blurs, producing an economy where compliance is rewarded more reliably than competence.

In Pakistan, the mechanism

is more institutionalised but no less coercive. Access to land records, utilities, and judicial relief frequently requires unofficial payments mediated by politically connected intermediaries. Elections rotate elites and slogans evolve, yet the extraction structure remains remarkably stable. What persists is not ideology but incentive: controlling chokepoints yields higher returns than producing goods. The logic becomes starkly visible in Haiti, where armed groups openly control roads, ports, and fuel depots. Tolls are imposed on movement, trade, and basic survival. While the

institutional form differs from South Asia or West Africa, the economic principle is identical: income is generated through coercive control rather than production. The absence of a functioning state does not eliminate capitalism; it mutates it into a raw system of enforced extraction. In Afghanistan, this system has persisted across radically different regimes. Whether under warlords, transitional governments, or religious authority, trade routes are taxed, and households coerced. The continuity reveals an uncomfortable truth: extortion capitalism is not tied to doctrine. It is

tied to the profitability of coercion. A hybrid version is evident in Myanmar, where businesses face overlapping demands from military-linked firms and informal enforcers. Participation requires continuous payments, crowding out efficiency and innovation. Capital accumulation becomes defensive rather than productive—aimed at survival, not expansion. Even Venezuela, access to foreign exchange and licences has long depended on political loyalty and unofficial payments. As output shrank, the state compensated not by reforming, but by tightening control over remaining

economic arteries. These countries differ in culture and geography, yet they converge on a common pattern. When coercive extraction becomes more profitable than production, capitalism mutates. Markets still exist, prices still signal scarcity, and money still changes hands, but the engine has changed. Value creation gives way to predation. Entrepreneurship narrows into rent-seeking. Innovation withers because its returns are appropriated before they can compound. Labeling this simply as “corruption” understates the problem. Corruption implies deviation from a norm; extortion capitalism is a stable economic equilibrium. Once entrenched, it does not self-correct through market forces because the market itself has been repurposed as an extraction device. Recognising this pattern is essential because policy remedies fail when the diagnosis is wrong. Privatisation, deregulation, and investment incentives cannot work where coercion—not competition—sets the rules. Development strategies premised on market efficiency collapse when the market rewards access over ability. Understanding extortion capitalism is therefore not an academic exercise. It is a prerequisite for meaningful reform—and for distinguishing capitalism’s productive potential from its most corrosive deformation. Until we dismantle the checkpoints of coercion, we are not building markets; we are merely financing their hijackers.

Aye Finance shares climb 6% today post muted listing analysts say

New Delhi: Shares of Aye Finance Ltd rose sharply on Tuesday, a day after making a flat stock market debut. The counter jumped as much as 15.98 per cent to hit an intraday high of Rs 149.50, compared with its initial public offering (IPO) price of Rs 129. At last check, the stock was up 5.69 per cent at Rs 136.25. The non-banking financial company (NBFC), which focuses on lending to micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), had listed at Rs 129 on NSE, matching its issue price.The company’s Rs 1,010 crore initial public offering (IPO) was open for subscription from February 9 to February 11 and was subscribed 0.97 times overall. The Qualified Institutional Buyers (QIBs) category saw relatively better demand, getting subscribed 1.5 times.One market expert indicated that the stock could witness a near-term correction, while another highlighted that support on the counter is likely around Rs 130. Ravi Singh, Chief Research Officer at Mastertrust, said, “

The stock debuted with muted listing gains. During the first session, it saw some early profit booking. Investors are closely watching asset quality and cost of funds in the current rate environment. For fresh investments, investors should wait before entry and existing holders should consider exit for now, as we may see some short-term correction of nearly 8-10 per cent in the stock as the value seems to be over-stretched.” From a technical perspective, Jigar S Patel, Senior Manager – Technical Re-



search at Anand Rathi, said support is seen at Rs 130, while resistance is placed at Rs 140. He added that a decisive move above Rs 140 could push the stock towards Rs 143, with the expected short-term trading range pegged between Rs 130 and Rs 143. company had 586,825 active unique customers across 18 states and three union territories, with assets under management (AUM) of Rs 6,027.62 crore.“On the downside, the Rs 1,300 & Rs 1,280 level is expected to act as an immediate support level. A break

below this level may see the stock touching the Rs 1,200 level,” Gupta said.TCS: The IT bellwether hit a fresh 52-week low of Rs 2,585. “TCS remains under heavy selling pressure after breaching the crucial Rs 3,000 level last week,” Gupta said. Technically, the stock is trading well below its 200-day EMA. While a relief rally is possible, the trend remains bearish unless it reclaims Rs 3,000.“Immediate support is placed at Rs 2,600 and Rs 2,550, while resistance is seen at Rs 2,860 and Rs 3,000,” Gupta added.

EPFO may retain interest rate at 8.25% for FY26 ahead of CBT

New Delhi: For the third consecutive year, subscribers of the Employees’ Provident Fund Organisation are likely to earn 8.25% interest on their retirement savings. According to sources, the EPFO is likely to retain the interest rate on provident fund deposits at 8.25% for the current fiscal year. A decision to this effect is likely to be taken at the meeting of the Central Board of Trustees of the EPFO on March 2. Sources indicated that the EPFO would have adequate surpluses from its investments to meet the interest rate this fiscal but would have to consider newer investment avenues in the coming years or lower returns from the next fiscal.The EPFO has a corpus of a little over Rs 28 lakh crore. It invests 45-65% of fresh inflows to its corpus to government securities, 20-45% to other debt instruments, 5-15% in equities via ETFs, and up to 5% in short-term debt.The EPFO is also working on an interest stabilisation reserve fund that would provide a stable and consistent interest rate to subscribers, irrespective of any volatility.The CBT, which is the apex decision making body of the EPFO and is headed by Labour and Employment Minister Mansukh Mandaviya had last met on October 15, 2025, when it had announced several reforms for easier withdrawal of PF funds. According to sources, this time as well, the CBT is likely to go ahead with more reforms aimed at ensuring smoothening transactions for the EPFO’s subscribers, which could include a tech upgrade of its website and also faster withdrawals



and settlement of claims. The agenda for the upcoming meeting of the CBT is however, yet to be circulated. The Employees’ Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) is expected to maintain the interest rate on provident fund deposits at 8.25% for the financial year 2025-26 (FY26), marking the third consecutive year at this rate. The decision will be finalized in the upcoming Central Board of Trustees (CBT) meeting, likely in early March 2026.

Despite some discussions on potential marginal reductions to secure long-term sustainability, reports suggest the 8.25% rate will likely be maintained. CBT Meeting: The 239th meeting of the CBT, the apex decision-making body, will make the final recommendation in March 2026. Investment Strategy: To support this rate, the EPFO is focusing on higher equity investments and a robust income .

Govt tells officers to attend AI Summit, submit



Mumbai: The government has discovered the future. And it comes with a two-page note. The cabinet secretariat has issued an office memorandum directing senior officers across ministries to step out of their files and into the future at the India AI Impact Summit. The secretaries , in turn, will compile these brainwaves into a consolidated report and send it back to the cabinet secretariat by February 27. Ten days to distil the wisdom of a national AI jamboree into something actionable. The memorandum, in classic sarkari prose, underlines that the instructions are to be adhered to strictly by all concerned. So for five days at Bharat Mandapam, India’s top bureaucrats will trade corridor conversations for code talk, policy notes for prompt engineering, and perhaps discover that the future does not wait for file notings.According to the memorandum dated February 16, every officer of the rank of deputy secretary and above must attend the summit, walk the exhibition floors, sit through presentations,

inspect demos, and absorb the buzzwords — machine learning, generative AI, predictive analytics, digital twins, and whatever else the future throws up between coffee breaks. But this is not a sightseeing tour of shiny dashboards and humanoid robots. The directive makes it clear: look closely, think harder. And then comes the part every civil servant understands: write it down. Each officer must submit a crisp note — not exceeding two pages — to their secretary. The brief? List the most promising AI innovations spotted at the summit and propose specific, workable applications for their domain. Agriculture must think beyond rainfall; Railways beyond timetables; Health beyond hospital beds. AI, apparently, is now everyone’s business.Officers have been asked to identify “significant ideas, innovations and practical applications” of artificial intelligence that could actually work in their respective ministries and departments. In other words, no returning with just tote bags and selfies — return with use cases.

Infosys, Anthropic join forces to build AI agents

Mumbai: Information technology (IT) giant Infosys on Tuesday announced a strategic collaboration with artificial intelligence (AI) firm Anthropic to build and deliver advanced AI solutions to enterprises across industries, including telecom, financial services, manufacturing and software development. Shares of the IT major closed nearly 2% higher on the BSE after the announcement.The latest partnership comes days after the stocks of domestic IT services firms took a beating on investor concerns over AI tools disrupting their traditional business models. The sell-off was partly triggered by the release of an AI tool by Anthropic.Telecom first as Infosys, Anthropic plan AI agents via new CoE The collaboration of Infosys and the AI firm will start with the telecom segment, with a dedicated Anthropic Center of Excellence being launched to build and deploy specialised AI agents. The tie-up aims to refresh the evolving enterprise operating models for clients by combining deep industry expertise, frontier AI and engineering scale in a single approach.“There’s a big gap between

an AI model that works in a demo and one that works in a regulated industry – and if you want to close that gap, you need domain expertise. Infosys has exactly that kind of expertise across important industries. Their developers are already using Claude Code to accelerate their work and create AI agents for industries that demand precision, compliance and deep domain knowledge,” Anthropic CEO and co-founder Dario Amodei said. “From modernising financial services with intelligent risk management and compliance to enabling engineering businesses to lead with AI-driven design and manufacturing, the goal is to leverage the joint expertise of Infosys and Anthropic to accelerate AI value realisation for global enterprises,” Infosys CEO Salil Parekh said “From modernising financial services with intelligent risk management and compliance to enabling engineering businesses to lead with AI-driven design and manufacturing, the goal is to leverage the joint expertise of Infosys and Anthropic to accelerate AI value realisation for global enterprises,” Infosys CEO Salil Parekh said.

HDFC Bank vs. The underdogs: 5 private banks trading at a massive valuation South Indian Bank

Mumbai: The volatility in IT stocks over the last few days on Dalal Street has made investors increasingly evaluate alternative sectors, and bank stocks have gained in popularity. The return on average assets (not annualised) was 0.48% in the December 2025 quarter for both banks, and on annualising it for FY26 it would be nearly 1.92%. Growth outlook and investors The RBI had recently announced a plan to inject Rs 2 lakh crore in the banking system via different instruments and in phases. The above measure should give a further boost to lending in the broader banking system and also help lower the cost of loans / credit.Investors will be closely monitoring Karnataka Bank, South Indian Bank, Dhanlaxmi Bankand DCB Bank along with other leading banks to grow their loan book over the next few quarters as well as manage the pressure on NIMs and other key operational parameters India has also entered into trade agreements with several countries and it will create new lending opportunities for mid-sized banks.Investors can add mid-sized banks to their watch list for 2026 on account of growth prospects and very reasonable valuations.Banks benefit from higher GDP growth as that drives demand for credit. Additionally, the RBI has taken several steps to lower the cost of credit and boost lending in the economy, and this should further help banks grow their loan books over the next few quarters.Investors are also increasingly looking beyond the well-known private sector banks – HDFC Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank and Axis Bank, amongst others, while allocating funds to stocks in this sector.Analyzing the ‘Big 5’ Low-Valuation Picks We looked at private sector banks with some of the lowest valuations, on the preferred matrix, price to (standalone) book value. We also looked at the performance of these private sector banks with some of the lowest valuations. Karnataka Bank rose 0.9% in late Tuesday trade to Rs 207, and not too far from its 52-week high of Rs 220.4 that was reached on 27 November, 2025. Similarly, South Indian Bank gained 1% in late Tuesday trade to Rs 40.7, and not too far from its 52-week high of Rs 46.9 that was reached on 22 January, 2026. Its asset quality showed some deterioration – it’s % of net NPA was 1.1% in Q3FY26 as against 0.86% a year earlier. Its advances grew 18.5% y-o-y to Rs 56,600 crore in Q3FY26, and that was thanks to a 21.8% growth in tractor loans and 34.6% rise in gold loans. For the Mumbai-based bank, its NIM was stable – it was 3.27% in Q3FY26 as against 3.3% a year earlier.Asset quality of the bank was also fairly stable – its % of net NPAs to net advance was 1.1% in December 2025 quarter as against 1.18% a year earlier. Strong growth in loans helped its net profit rise 22% y-o-y to Rs 184.7 crore in Q3FY26 Efficiency Check: Can Mid-Sized Banks Match Industry Leaders? Karnataka Bank’s return on assets (annualised) was 0.92% in the December 2025 quarterDhanlaxmi Bank’s return on assets (annualised) was 0.47% in Q3FY26, while South Indian Bank’s



return on assets (annualised) was 1.09% in the quarter under review.DCB’s return on net assets (annualised) was 0.9% in the quarter under review.Meanwhile, HDFC Bank and Kotak Mahindra Bank have one of the highest RoA in the banking industry, over the past several quarters. In fact, both the banks enjoyed identical return on assets (RoA) in the third quarter of FY26.A higher net interest income helped the bank’s net profit rise 20% y-o-y to Rs 23.9 crore in Q3FY26. South Indian Bank – NIM pressure despite auto and gold loans growthKerala-based South Indian Bank’s NIM was 2.86% in the December 2025 quarter as against 3.19% a year earlier. Its advances grew 12.2% y-o-y to Rs 94,712.6 crore in Q3FY26, and that was owing to a 23% y-o-y growth in auto loans coupled with a 26% growth in gold loans.Asset quality was also good – its % of net NPA to net advance was 0.45% in Q3FY26 as against 1.25% a year earlier.Strong retail loans helped the bank’s standalone net profit rise 9.4% y-o-y to Rs 374.3 crore in the December 2025 quarter.Tamilnad Mercantile Bank also gained 3% in late Tuesday trade to Rs 675.5, and not too far from its 52-week high of Rs 708.5 that was reached on 10 February, 2026. DCB Bank gained 1.4% to Rs 195.4 in late Tuesday trade, and its 52-week high of Rs 203.6 was reached on 29 January, 2026.In contrast, Dhanlaxmi Bank gained 0.5% in late Tuesday trade to Rs 24.1, and not too from its 52-week low of Rs 22.1 that was reached on 4 March, 2025. Smaller private sector banks are characterised by the concentration of activities in a few states / regions. Also, these banks have benefited from strong growth in re-

tail loans like gold loans along with SME loans. Its provisions and contingencies grew on a small base – Rs 94.9 crore in Q3FY26 as against Rs 83.8 crore a year earlier. The Mangaluru-based bank has highlighted provision coverage ratio of 80.9% in Q3FY26 as against 81% a year earlier.Asset quality of the bank was also stable – it%of net NPA was 1.3% in Q3FY26 as against 1.39% a year earlier.And higher NIM helped its standalone net profit rise 2.5% y-o-y to Rs 290.8 crore in the quarter under review. Kerala-based Dhanlaxmi Bank’s advances grew 25.7% y-o-y to Rs 13,912 crore in Q3FY26, and that was also owing to a 50.9% surge in gold loans and a 27.7% rise in SME loans in the quarter.The bank has not given its NIM – another related operational parameter, net interest income, grew 20.2% y-o-y to Rs 154.3 crore in the December 2025 quarter. The RBI had cut repo rates in December 2025 and it has also taken several steps to boost lending. For banks, retail loans / credit along with loans to SMEs helps them to earn higher interest as compared to top-level corporates, and to deal with the temporary pressure on net interest margin (NIM). Mangaluru-based Karnataka Bank’s NIM has broadly improved – it was 2.92% in Q3FY26 as against 2.82% a year earlier.With regard to another key operational parameter, its advances were Rs 75,699 crore in the December 2025 quarter, a decline of nearly 1% from a year earlier. To the bank’s credit, its gold loans were Rs 3,904 crore in Q3FY26, a rise of 41.4% y-o-y, and it helped the bank grow its NIM in the quarter under review.

AOC and Secretary of State Rubio Offer Competing Visions of U.S. Foreign Policy at Munich Security Conference

Garmany: Democratic Congressmember Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio offered contrasting visions of America’s role in the world at the Munich Security Conference in Germany over the weekend. Congressmember Ocasio-Cortez sharply criticized U.S. foreign policy and tied rising income inequality to authoritarianism around the world.

Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez: “They are looking to withdraw the United States from the entire world so that we can turn into an age of authoritarianisms — of authoritarians that can carve out the world where Donald Trump can command the Western Hemisphere and Latin America as his personal sandbox, where Putin can saber-rattle around Europe and — and try to bully around our own allies there, and for, essentially, authoritarians to have their own geographic domains.”

Meanwhile, Secretary of State Marco Rubio cast immigration as an existential threat to both Europe and the U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio: “In the pursuit of a world without borders, we opened our doors to an unprecedented wave of mass migration that threatens the cohesion of our societies, the continuity of our culture and the future of our people. We made these mistakes together. And now, together, we owe it to our people to face those facts and to move forward to rebuild.” he

U.S. military is planning for possible strikes on Iran that could last for weeks, if President Trump orders the attack. That’s according to two U.S. officials speaking to Reuters. It comes amid a CBS News report that President Trump informed Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu during a meeting at Mar-a-Lago in December that the U.S. would back Israeli strikes against Iran’s ballistic missile program if the U.S. couldn’t reach a deal with Iran. Meanwhile, in an interview with the BBC, Iran’s Deputy Foreign Minister Majid Takht-Ravanchi said that his country is willing to make compromises to reach a nuclear deal with the U.S. in exchange for the lifting of sanctions. On Saturday, 250,000 people rallied in Germany on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference, protesting against Iran’s government following a call from Iran’s exiled Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi. At the conference, Republican Senator Lindsey Graham called for regime change in Iran.

In the occupied West Bank, the Oscar-winning Palestinian director of “No Other Land” says his family has been attacked again by Israeli settlers, leaving his brother hospitalized and four members of his family arrested by the Israeli army. Hamdan Ballal says the violence began on Sunday when Israeli settlers began attacking his family’s home in the village of Susya. Ballal says the

settlers’ raid was led by the same man who previously attacked him last March, injuring his head and stomach, after Ballal’s film made global headlines for winning an Academy Award. Ballal says his brother called police, only to have soldiers from the Israeli army raid the home, attacking everyone inside. The violence came hours after Israel’s government approved a plan to allow land registration in the West Bank for the first time since 1967, paving the way for Israel to annex Palestinian lands. Israeli human rights groups warn the land registration process will facilitate the dispossession and displacement of Palestinians, in violation of international law. Sen. Lindsey Graham: “If we back out now, it’ll be the biggest mistake we’ve made, far worse than the Syrian red line, far worse than Afghanistan. You can’t say, ‘Keep protesting. We got your back. Help’s on the way,’ and nothing happened. That’s why I’m confident that President Trump will get an outcome consistent with those three statements through diplomacy or military force.” Israeli forces have killed at least 11 Palestinians in Gaza over the past 24 hours. Since the U.S.-brokered ceasefire last October, Israel has killed over 600 Palestinians and wounded over 1,600, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry. This is Alyan Al-Bayouk, whose son was killed in Israeli airstrikes. Alyan Al-Bayouk: “Do you believe

there is a Board of Peace? Do you believe that Trump will come to help us or defend us? The one who’s supplying Israel with all sorts of deadly weapons, supplying it with money, with political support, with protection and with an international umbrella? Do you believe that there is peace that Trump or someone else would provide for us?” On Sunday, President Trump announced that members of his so-called Board of Peace have pledged \$5 billion toward rebuilding Gaza. Indonesia’s military said that it was committing up to 8,000 troops to be deployed in Gaza by the end of June. Meanwhile, Doctors Without Borders, also known as MSF, has halted some of its non-essential medical operations at Nasser Hospital in Gaza after staff and patients reported seeing armed men inside the facility. Since the October 10 ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, the organization says, “MSF teams have reported a pattern of unacceptable acts, including the presence of armed men, intimidation, arbitrary arrests of patients, and a recent situation of suspicion of movement of weapons.” Last month, Israel ordered MSF and 30 other international organizations to cease operations in Gaza and the occupied West Bank if they did not agree to new rules that include sharing information about staff. MSF says it did not submit a list of its staffers in Gaza since Israel could not guarantee their safety.

Reuters: U.S. Military Preparing for Possible Strikes on Iran If Trump Orders Attack

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U.S. Military Strikes Boat in the Caribbean

London: A U.S. military strike killed three people and blew up a boat in the Caribbean on Friday, according to the U.S. Southern Command. The U.S. military said the boat was allegedly following “drug trafficking routes,” without providing any evidence. Since September, the Pentagon has conducted 39 strikes against boats allegedly smuggling drugs in the Caribbean and eastern Pacific, killing at least 133 people. On Sunday, the Pentagon announced that U.S. forces raided a sanctioned oil tanker in the Indian Ocean after tracking the vessel in the Caribbean in an effort to target oil shipped from Venezuela. The Trump administration has been seizing tankers in order to take control of Venezuela’s oil. It comes as The Wall Street Journal reports that the Pentagon used Anthropic’s artificial intelligence tool Claude

in its operation to abduct Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro. The Pentagon was able to use Claude through Anthropic’s partnership with the data company Palantir. A spokesperson for Anthropic told The Wall Street Journal that the company is “committed to using frontier AI in support of U.S. national security.” he BBC, Iran’s Deputy Foreign Minister Majid Takht-Ravanchi said that his country is willing to make compromises to reach a nuclear deal with the U.S. in exchange for the lifting of sanctions. On Saturday, 250,000 people rallied in Germany on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference, protesting against Iran’s government following a call from Iran’s exiled Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi. At the conference, Republican Senator Lindsey Graham called for regime change in Iran.

Mine collapses in eastern Congo



Garmany: A landslide earlier this week collapsed several mines at a major coltan mining site in eastern Congo, leaving at least 200 people dead, rebel authorities said Saturday. The collapse took place Wednesday at the Rubaya mines, which are controlled by the M23 rebels, Lumumba Kambere Muyisa, the spokesperson of the rebel-appointed governor of North-Kivu province told The Associated Press. He said the landslide was caused by heavy rains. In May 2024, M23 seized the town and took control of its mines. According to a U.N. report, since seizing Rubaya, the rebels have imposed taxes on the trade and transport of coltan, generating at least \$800,000 a month. Eastern Congo has been in and out of crisis for decades. Various conflicts have created one of the world’s largest humanitarian crises with more than 7 million people displaced, including more than 300,000 who have fled their homes since December. Despite the signing of a deal between the Congolese and Rwandan governments brokered by the U.S. and ongoing negotiations between rebels and Congo, fighting continues on several fronts in eastern Congo, continuing to claim numerous civilian and military casualties. The deal between Congo and Rwanda also opens up access to critical minerals for the U.S. government and American companies. “For now, there are more than 200 dead, some of whom are still in the mud and have not yet been recovered,” Muyisa said. He added that several others were injured and taken to three health facilities in the town of Rubaya, while ambulances were expected to transfer the wounded Saturday to Goma, the nearest city around 30 miles away. The rebel-appointed governor of North Kivu has temporarily halted artisanal mining on the site and ordered the relocation of residents who had built shelters near the mine, Muyisa said. Congo’s government in a statement on X expressed solidarity with the victims’ families and accused the rebels of illegally and unsafely exploiting the region’s natural resources. A former miner at the site told The Associated Press there have been repeated landslides because the tunnels are dug by hand, poorly constructed, and left without maintenance. “People dig everywhere, without control or safety measures. In a single pit, there can be as many as 500 miners, and because the tunnels run parallel, one collapse can affect many pits at once,” armed groups, including the Rwanda-backed M23, whose recent resurgence has escalated the conflict, worsening an already acute humanitarian crisis. Congo is a major supplier of coltan, a black metallic ore that contains the rare metal tantalum, a key component in the production of smartphones, computers and aircraft engines.

The country produced about 40 percent of the world’s coltan in 2023, according to the U.S. Geological Survey, with Australia, Canada and Brazil being other big suppliers. Over 15% of the world’s supply of tantalum from Rubaya’s mines.

ICE Agents Face Criminal Probe over Lying to a Jury After Shooting a Venezuelan Immigrant

Garmany: In Minnesota, two ICE agents have been suspended and face a criminal investigation into whether they lied to a jury about the shooting of a Venezuelan immigrant last month. The officers claimed Julio Cesar Sosa-Celis and his cousin Alfredo Alejandro Aljorna attacked them with a snow shovel and a broom after a traffic stop on January 14, and said one of the officers fired in self-defense. Shortly after the shooting, Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem described it as “an attempted murder of federal law enforcement.” But video evidence directly contradicts claims the men attacked federal agents. Sosa-Celis says he had retreated into his home and was shot in the leg while in the process of closing and locking the door. On Thursday, a federal judge dismissed felony assault charges against the cousins, after the U.S. attorney in Minneapolis said newly discovered evidence had contradicted the officers’ testimony and after ICE admitted the federal agents made false statements under oath.

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istan. You can’t say, ‘Keep protesting. We got your back. Help’s on the way,’ and nothing happened. That’s why I’m confident that President Trump will get an outcome consistent with those three statements through diplomacy or military force. Israeli forces have killed at least 11 Palestinians in Gaza over the past 24 hours. Since the U.S.-brokered ceasefire last October, Israel has killed over 600 Palestinians and wounded over 1,600, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry. This is Alyan Al-Bayouk, whose son was killed in Israeli airstrikes. Alyan Al-Bayouk: “Do you believe there is a Board of Peace? Do you believe that Trump will come to help us or defend us? The one who’s supplying Israel with all sorts of deadly weapons, supplying it with money, with political support, with protection and with an international umbrella? Do you believe that there is peace that Trump or someone else would provide for us?” On Sunday, President Trump announced that members of his so-called Board of

Peace have pledged \$5 billion toward rebuilding Gaza. Indonesia’s military said that it was committing up to 8,000 troops to be deployed in Gaza by the end of June. Meanwhile, Doctors Without Borders, also known as MSF, has halted some of its nonessential medical operations at Nasser Hospital in Gaza after staff and patients reported seeing armed men inside the facility. Since the October 10 ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, the organization says, “MSF teams have reported a pattern of unacceptable acts, including the presence of armed men, intimidation, arbitrary arrests of patients, and a recent situation of suspicion of movement of weapons.” Last month, Israel ordered MSF and 30 other international organizations to cease operations in Gaza and the occupied West Bank if they did not agree to new rules that include sharing information about staff. MSF says it did not submit a list of its staffers in Gaza since Israel could not guarantee their safety. In the occupied West Bank, the Oscar-winning Palestinian director of

“No Other Land” says his family has been attacked again by Israeli settlers, leaving his brother hospitalized and four members of his family arrested by the Israeli army. Hamdan Ballal says the violence began on Sunday when Israeli settlers began attacking his family’s home in the village of Susya. Ballal says the settlers’ raid was led by the same man who previously attacked him last March, injuring his head and stomach, after Ballal’s film made global headlines for winning an Academy Award. Ballal says his brother called police, only to have soldiers from the Israeli army raid the home, attacking everyone inside.

The violence came hours after Israel’s government approved a plan to allow land registration in the West Bank for the first time since 1967, paving the way for Israel to annex Palestinian lands. Israeli human rights groups warn the land registration process will facilitate the dispossession and displacement of Palestinians, in violation of international law.

Falling Sick Repeatedly Despite Normal Immunity Tests? Doctors Explain Why

Every now and then, we come across family members, friends, or colleagues who seem to fall sick multiple times a year despite having normal immune test results. It can be confusing, if the reports are normal, shouldn't immunity be strong?"We often become overly dependent on routine tests and assume that if the reports are normal, everything is fine," says Dr Ravi Kesari, MBBS, MD (General Medicine), Apollo Spectra, Bangalore – Koramangala. "But test results alone do not provide a complete assessment of immune system health."According to Dr Kesari, the body's ability to fight infections depends on multiple factors, including daily habits, environmental exposure, genetic predisposition, and overall health status. Laboratory values may appear normal, yet functional immunity can still be compromised.

The Role of Nutrition and Vitamin Deficiencies

"The immune system

depends heavily on proper nutrition," explains Dr Ravi Kesari. "It requires a balanced intake of proteins, vitamins, minerals, and healthy fats to function optimally." Diets high in sugar and processed foods can disrupt gut health and weaken immune responses. One of the most common deficiencies observed in clinical practice is vitamin D deficiency, which is associated with an increased risk of respiratory infections such as influenza and viral illnesses. "Low vitamin D levels can also worsen autoimmune conditions like rheumatoid arthritis and multiple sclerosis," notes Dr Kesari.

Sleep, Hydration, and Hygiene Matter

Sleep is not optional when it comes to immune resilience. "People who consistently sleep less than six hours a night are at higher risk of infections," says Dr. Ravi Kesari. "Their bodies also tend to produce fewer antibodies after vaccination."Hydration plays an

equally important role. Water helps transport nutrients, remove toxins, and maintain mucosal barriers that defend against pathogens."Even simple measures like proper hand hygiene significantly reduce infection risk," Dr. Kesari adds. "Basic preventive habits remain powerful tools."Gut Health and Antibiotic Overuse

Nearly 70 percent of immune activity originates in the gut. The balance of beneficial bacteria plays a crucial role in regulating immune responses."

Frequent antibiotic use, chronic stress, processed diets, and irregular eating patterns can disrupt gut microbiota," explains Dr. Ravi Kesari. "While antibiotics are essential in certain medical conditions, their overuse or misuse can increase susceptibility to future infections."

When gut health deteriorates, immune efficiency declines, even if standard blood tests appear normal.

Other Hidden Factors

Recurrent infections may also stem from:

Genetic predisposition

Structural defects in certain organs

Underlying conditions such as multiple myeloma

Chronic stress

Obesity

Prolonged exposure to air pollution

"Immunity is influenced by a combination of internal and external factors," says Dr Kesari. "It cannot be evaluated through a single test."The Bigger Picture

A strong immune system develops through a holistic approach to health rather than focusing on one isolated factor."Repeated sickness is often a signal that lifestyle adjustments are needed," Dr Kesari emphasises. "Balanced nutrition, adequate sleep, stress management, and timely medical guidance can significantly strengthen the body's natural defence mechanisms."In other words, normal lab results do not always mean optimal immunity. True immune health is built daily through consistent, mindful choices that support the body from within.



‘It’s the most urgent public health issue’: Dr Rangan Chatterjee on screen time, mental health – and banning social media

A16-year-old boy and his mum went to see their GP, Dr Rangan Chatterjee, on a busy Monday afternoon. That weekend, the boy had been at A&E after an attempt at self-harm, and in his notes the hospital doctor had recommended the teenager be prescribed antidepressants. "I thought: 'Wait a minute, I can't just start a 16-year-old on antidepressants,'" says Chatterjee. He wanted to understand what was going on in the boy's life. They talked for a while, and Chatterjee asked him about his screen use, which turned out to be high. "I said: 'I think your screen use, particularly in the evenings, might be impacting your mental well-being.'" Chatterjee helped the boy and his mother set up a routine where digital devices and social media went off an hour before bed, gradually extending the screen-free period over six weeks. After two months, he says the boy stopped needing to see him. A few months after that, his mother wrote Chatterjee a note to say her son had been transformed – he was engaging with his friends and trying new activities. He was, she said, like a different boy from the one who had ended up in hospital.Chatterjee believes that "the widespread adoption of screens into our children's lives is the most urgent public health issue of our time". He was never very political, he says. He is the affable host of a successful health podcast, Feel Better, Live More, and his books strike an optimistic, inspiring tone – but on this issue he is passionate, his frustration obvious. "I think successive governments have been very weak here, and they are failing a whole generation of children. I think they've already failed a generation of children." Chatterjee saw that young patient more than 10 years ago, and since then children's screen use has soared. To clinicians, he says, the harm "has been obvious for over a decade". This has led to a swell of action, from Australia's social media ban for under-16s to Spain's just-announced plans for one. In the UK, grassroots parents' organisations such as Smartphone Free Childhood and SafeScreens want the UK to follow suit. Chatterjee, who is involved with campaign organisation Close Screens Open Minds over the proliferation of "ed tech" in schools, believes the legal age for using social media should be 18, as with gambling and access to pornography. "As a society, we have safeguards in place to protect children," Chatterjee says. "At the moment, we are in the middle of a widespread experiment that no one consciously signed up to."Tech bosses, he says, have had too much influence over deciding "what's best for our children. If we're expecting Elon Musk or Mark Zuckerberg to regulate technology better for our children's wellbeing, we're being, frankly, delusional. Their whole business model wants more people on their devices for longer." Adults struggle with screen use, he points out. "Our children have got no chance. Their prefrontal cortex, the part of the brain where we exercise rational decision-making, is not fully developed till the age of 25." He rattles off the harms, which include the effect on children's mental health and anxiety. "We know it's affecting their sleep." It is affecting posture, and causes neck and shoulder pain. For younger children, it causes language delay. "There's research coming out now saying it's affecting their eyesight. Every additional hour of screen time increases the risk of myopia by 21% and in children already diagnosed with myopia, an extra hour in-



creases risk of progression by 54%. I think we're raising a generation of children who have low self-worth, who don't know how to conduct conversations. The content children have been exposed to is really alarming – 10% of nine-year-olds have seen pornography, and 27% of 11-year-olds." He adds that there is a strong chance that the first time someone goes on a pornographic website, they will be served images of violence: one French study found that up to 90% of online porn featured verbal, physical and sexual violence against women.We're speaking over video call, Chatterjee at his home studio where he makes his podcast. He barely stops for breath. He is warm and likable, and seems to have the supreme self-assurance that all successful podcasters develop. But he stresses that he doesn't blame parents (or teachers, who are dealing with the encroachment of "ed tech", the increased use of devices and software, in schools). Screen use is higher in children in lower socioeconomic groups. "People are living stressed-out lives. There are a lot of families who are struggling with the cost of living." Screens are, he says, "an easy babysitter. And I say it with compassion, I get that." Chatterjee's own children are 13 and 15. They have smartphones, but with almost all apps, including the internet browser, disabled. They are not allowed to access social media. "I'm not judging other parents, because I do understand the pressures. For me, because I've seen so many suicidal, depressed, anxious teenagers – and I could directly see a correlation between that and their screen and social media use – I thought I cannot allow my children on to these platforms."He and his wife have always had open conversations with their children and he says: "So far, it's been fine. But I think they may be the only two kids in their school not on social media. It's very hard for most parents to do that." Chatterjee has already complained to the headteacher about screen-based homework, which "should be abolished immediately". Bright light from screens in the evening, he says, is wreaking havoc on teenagers' sleep. He

is always turning down the screen brightness on his kids' laptops when they're doing homework, and screens have to go off at least an hour before bed.Chatterjee stopped practising as a GP nearly two years ago. He misses it, he says, but he realised he could reach many more people with his broadcasting work than he could with 10-minute appointments at his surgery (he is also visiting professor of health education and communication at the University of Chester). His broadcasting career took off after he made the 2015 BBC series Doctor in the House, and now his podcast has had more than 350m listens, with 1.3 million subscribers to his YouTube channel.

He is a big advocate of lifestyle change, which gives Chatterjee something of a holistic air.I'm a fan of his podcast, though I switch off when he gives airtime to "experts" who sit at the wackier end of the spectrum, such as Joe Dispenza, who advocates manifestation, says woolly things about how energy and the "quantum field" can cure disease, and claims to have healed his broken back using thought. Chatterjee says he decided to pause practising medicine and put his attention instead to raising awareness because: "We're in a health landscape now where 80 to 90% of what doctors see is driven by our collective modern lifestyles ... Whether we're talking about obesity, type 2 diabetes, anxiety, depression, insomnia, these things are downstream from the way we live our lives."Chatterjee had become increasingly frustrated that the NHS wasn't geared up for preventive health. "If you've had a heart attack, if you've been knocked down in the road, you don't want lifestyle change, you want the best in modern medicine." But for many of the health problems doctors see these days, Chatterjee thinks we need a different approach. "Are doctors the best people to see some of the issues that are coming in if they're driven by lifestyle? What would it look like if every NHS practice in the country had two or three health coaches who also worked there? We need a new approach for prevention." (This might be the mo-

ment to add that Chatterjee is about to launch an individualised programme offering blood tests and health coaching, yours for £249 a year.) What he would like to see is the NHS separated from politics. "If we're really going to transform it, we need a 30-year plan, not a five-year plan."Chatterjee's late father, Tarun, was a doctor who came to the UK in 1962 from India to work in the NHS (his mother followed about 10 years later). In Chatterjee's latest book, Happy Mind, Happy Life, he wrote about the racism his father faced in his career. "My dad's mentality, which I think is common in a certain generation of immigrants from India in the 1960s, is we don't complain, we put our head down and get on with things." Tarun had worked in obstetrics and gynaecology, and was a skilled surgeon who trained other doctors – people who, year after year, were promoted to consultant positions ahead of him. To become a consultant, he had to move to the less popular specialism of genitourinary medicine. Chatterjee remembers his father working relentlessly. "People like my dad are a net positive to this country. He worked as a consultant in the day, he did GP house calls at night. He worked hard, he paid taxes." It's the same all over the NHS, he says. "There are so many phenomenal staff who have come from overseas."For most of his life, Chatterjee says he absorbed his dad's mentality: "You don't complain, you just get on with things." In late 2018, however, at a meeting at his publishing house, someone (not an employee of the publisher) said that a major retailer had not stocked his first book because "they already had a book on their shelves by an Indian doctor. I remember hearing it. I didn't say anything. I felt uncomfortable, I think a few people felt uncomfortable, but we just continued our meeting." He went over it on the train home. The term "Indian doctor" is not accurate. "I was born and brought up in the UK. There was a lot of guilt and shame that came up for me when I thought: I didn't say anything." (He did later bring it up with his publisher.) "I don't think people understand,

unless you've faced discrimination or you're maybe from an immigrant family, how toxic some of this language is," says Chatterjee. "The stuff that I'm seeing now on social media, I'm thinking, are we really seeing this in 2026? But we've now got political figures all over the world who are very happy to say inflammatory things, which then gives members of the public licence to go: 'If the person in charge is talking about things this way, I can talk about things this way.'"Chatterjee moved back to his home town of Wilmslow, Cheshire, to help care for his father, who was diagnosed with lupus in his late 50s, which caused kidney failure. When his father died in 2013, "that was a massive, significant moment for me, like it is for many people". He started to re-evaluate his life. He remembers his childhood as very happy, but it was also – familiar to many children of immigrant parents – typified by a pressure to succeed. "If I ever got 19 out of 20 in a test, their first question was always: 'What did you get wrong?'"I don't want this to come across as blaming my parents. Back then, there was quite a lot of discrimination and the way their child doesn't have to face the struggles they had is to be a straight-A student. I get that, but I think I took on, as a child, the belief that I was only really loved if I got top grades. On one hand, that's great, it drives you to work hard, you go into a prestigious profession. But I realised that for all my so-called success, I wasn't actually that happy or content."He started to separate his sense of self-worth from his achievements. "I realised that where my happiness comes from is the unmeasurables in life." This was in looking after his father, and now his mother, who lives five minutes away and whom he sees most days."I'm happily married for 18 years. I've got children who I spend a lot of quality time with." He's not saying that to sound superior, he says. "I'm saying I've understood that actually, I'm prepared to have less 'societal success' if necessary, in order to make sure my relationships with my mum, my wife, my children, my friends, are front and centre. We know from the research that the No 1 factor for long-term health, happiness and longevity is the quality of your relationships." There isn't, he says, "a scorecard for that. I really think we get seduced in the modern world by metrics."At 48, he says, he has never been happier. After a lot of "inner work", Chatterjee has identified his values, and tries to live by them, which sounds as if he has been spending too much time with American well-being podcasters, even if it also makes sense."I think the more aligned you get, the more you start to live in harmony with your values," he says, "the easier life becomes." Sometimes his work-life balance isn't right, and his main health vice is coffee. "If you'd asked me six or seven years ago, I would say, when I'm stressed, I will go to sugar. It wasn't that I didn't know about the problems with excess sugar use, but knowledge isn't what we need. A lot of these behaviours come as a way of soothing emotions."He brings the conversation back to what screen use is doing to all of us, but especially to children. "One thing I worry about is that we start to lose touch with our emotions and how we feel. We're distracted constantly. And everything good in our lives comes from our ability to be present – our relationships, how we feel about ourselves. We have to be able to be present. And these devices are training distraction."

Day 5 Box Office Revenue for O’Romeo: Shahid Kapoor’s Film Brings in Rs 40 Crore



Mumbai: At the domestic movie office, O’Romeo has made over Rs 40 crore. The Vishal Bhardwaj-directed film brought in Rs 5 crore at the box office on Day 5. As a result, the domestic net market value of the romantic thriller starring

Shahid Kapoor and Triptii Dimri is currently Rs 40 crore. According to the report, the movie made Rs 15.3 crore abroad and Rs 47.2 crore in India. O’Romeo has earned a total of Rs 62.5 crore worldwide thus far. Vishal Bhardwaj

posted a heartfelt message on Instagram the day before the film opened in theaters. He commented, “Through this film, I have realised the immense capacity I hold for love and for violence - together,” mentioning the strong feelings connected to the movie. He also added, “There is so much hatred, violence, and injustice in society that often feel powerless against it.” It hurts me so much. This bottled-up pain had to be let out. The director referred to O’Romeo as “the manifestation of these polarities” and explained how he is “forever torn between two

extreme emotions” in the same note.I’m as bulky as I can be. It’s the most creative thing I can do. It’s as aggressive as I can get. It’s the most poetic I can be. It’s as affectionate as I can be. It’s as vindictive as I can get.” O’Romeo, which is produced by Nadiadwala Grandson Entertainment, is based on Hussain Zaidi’s book Mafia Queens of Mumbai. Vishal Bhardwaj, a writer-director, also wrote the music.The film also stars Nana Patekar, Avinash Tiwary, Tamannaah Bhatia, Disha Patani, Farida Jalal, and Vikrant Massey in addition to the starring pair.

Sunil Malhotra, the father of Sidharth Malhotra, passes away in Delhi

Mumbai: Four days earlier, his father, Sunil Malhotra, passed away in Delhi, leaving Sidharth Malhotra in despair. In order to support the family during this trying time, the actor and his wife Kiara Advani hurried to the capital to attend the final ceremonies.Former Merchant Navy commander Sunil Malhotra had been ill for a while. “He was a man of rare honesty, integrity, and culture,” Sidharth said in an emotional tribute for his father after his passing. His principles were unwavering. discipline that is not harsh. Egoless strength. Despite life’s extreme tests, he remained positive.”From leading the seas as a Merchant Navy Captain to overcoming illness with silent bravery, he never compromised, never lost his grace,” he continued. His spirit remained strong even after the stroke left him confined to a wheelchair. I inherited your integrity, Papa. Every day, I am guided by your strength. This family is still held together by your positive energy. You



departed from us in peace while you slept, but the void you left behind is incalculable. You are the reason I am who I am. And I will always uphold your name, your principles, and your light. I love you, Dad.” Sidharth had been candid in 2025 about

his father’s health issues and the psychological toll they took on his family. In an interview with Lilly Singh, he said that the circumstances had occasionally caused him to become agitated and irritated, particularly with his mother Rimma Malhotra, who was taking care of the majority of the caregiving duties alone. He had stated, “My mother is the one who takes care of the medication, so I tend to be a little harsher on her because I get worried or angry sometimes because my father hasn’t been feeling well for a while. My father isn’t well enough to do that, and I discovered that she had suddenly started talking about 20 years ago when we were much younger, when I wasn’t there, or when I was attempting to start my own life. We were just having coffee and tea in Delhi when we woke up one morning. Sunil Malhotra, who was well-known for leading a disciplined life, was essential in forming his son’s morals and perspective.

Nishaanchi’s special effects are “better” than Sinners

Mumbai: Anurag Kashyap is pleased with the amount of work and dedication that went into making Nishaanchi, his last release. The criminal drama, which is split into two sections, centers on the lives of twin brothers Babloo and Dabloo (both portrayed by Aaishvarya Thackeray) in Kanpur as they become entangled in family conflicts. Anurag has now revealed that he can confidently state that Nishaanchi’s special effects surpass those of the Hollywood movie Sinners. Working with other directors, I am observing this new way of working.” Anurag stated in an interview with The Hollywood Reporter India. In the South, it is pervasive and on the rise. Right there, they shoot and edit. They don’t do shots; they shoot a scene every day.He continued by saying, “I am really proud of what Sylvester and Red Chillies have accomplished in both of the Nishaanchi roles, which have special effects and the actor portraying two distinct double roles. It is superior to Sinners, and I say it with great pride. We shot two

months apart, so they are actually two separate persons. It wasn’t like, “Change your shirt and come.” Everything was genuine. Actor Michael B. Jordan plays twin brothers Elijah “Smoke” and Elias “Stack” Moore in Sinners. For his role in the movie, the actor was nominated for his first Oscar. The 98th Academy Awards saw Sinners, which was directed by Ryan Coogler, get a record 16 nominations—the most ever for a single film—making Oscar history. Anurag is preparing his directing debut, Kennedy, in the meantime. When the movie debuted at the 2023 Cannes Film Festival, it was given a standing ovation that lasted seven minutes. At the Jio MAMI Mumbai Film Festival and the Indian Film Festival of Melbourne (IFFM), the film continued to receive positive reviews. However, because of various problems with the production banner, its publication was put on hold even though the censor board had given its approval. Kennedy, starring Sunny Leone and Rahul Bhat, will be available on Zee5 on February 20.

Anil Kapoor claims that his wife Sunita Kapoor has made a “tremendous” contribution to his work



Mumbai: The actor Anil Kapoor is preparing for the release of his next movie, Subedaar, which is helmed by Suresh Triveni. Anil talked candidly about portraying the title character, who is passionate about both his work and his country, in an interview with The Indian Express. However, who is able to comprehend that intricacy? Anil acknowledged his wife, Sunita Kapoor, and claimed to have been inspired by their bond. In response to the host’s question on whether Anil drew on his relationship with his kids to portray the role in Subedaar, the actor said right away that he didn’t. “I think I dug into my relationship with my wife in Subedaar,” he remarked. Naturally, my relationship

with my daughter is not like this. Sonam, Rhea, and I are like pals. My love for my wife, my love for my job, and my love for the country—waha I am. I love my country and my job, but how do I (pauses) make that work? Then I love my wife, of course. ”Kabhi kabhi ye bhi hota he situation ki film mein scene ye hai ki he is there doing his duty he has to be with his wife also,” he continued. But he says, “I’ll be with you after I finish my duty.” Thus, that constant battle in your life as well. Sometimes you are a person who is extremely passionate about his career, but there are other times when you want to become a better friend, husband, or father. He is torn. My wife’s understanding of my insanity

There is only one condition that Sunita Ahuja will overlook Govinda’s “childhood love”

Mumbai: For a number of months, Bollywood actor Govinda and his spouse Sunita Ahuja have been the subject of public attention. Numerous publications have claimed that the actor cheated on his wife, and there have even been rumors that the couple is getting a divorce. Sunita has now discussed their relationship and whether she is prepared to forgive him in her most recent vlog. Sunita invited a few reporters to her house for a Q&A session in her vlog. She responded, “You never know,” when asked if Govinda was on her list of those she would forgive. He was my childhood sweetheart. Toh main maaf kardungi usse voh sudhar jaaye aur humare hisaab se rahe. “Mujhe yeh sab jo news mein aa raha hai, mujhe yeh sab nahi sunna hai” (I would forgive him if he changes and lives in accordance with our understanding). I don’t want to hear about everything that’s making the headlines. ”This is not the age to go through all of this,” she continued. I’m experiencing menopause. Because our minds change at this time, every woman needs the support of her spouse and kids. We require a loving, stress-free companion. Sunita responded that he must have had his own motivations when asked if she felt deceived after helping Govinda’s career without getting the assistance she thought she was due in return. She went on to say that one cannot prioritize such issues for the

rest of one’s life and that, beyond a certain age, one’s spouse and kids are what really count. She also disclosed if she has ever gone up against Govinda. “Taal dete hain naa voh toh haske. “Unka jawab toh humko samajh hi nahi aata” (He simply jokes and dismisses it). We’re not even sure what his response implies,” she remarked. She went on to say that her mother-in-law had a big influence on him in the past and that he was scared of her, but that since she passed away, he has grown more carefree and doesn’t fear anyone. She said, “Iski sangat kharab hai,” implying that he is in terrible company. I used to treat Govinda like a flower till I was in charge of him. He doesn’t realize that his fame is coming to an end, even though there are new managers to take my place. After more than thirty years of marriage, Govinda and Sunita have two children: a girl named Tina Ahuja and a boy named Yashvardhan Ahuja. “I treat 2025 as a very bad year for me because I’ve been hearing about Govinda’s controversy that he is having an affair with a girl,” Sunita said in an interview in December of last year, acknowledging that Govinda was having an affair. But since actors don’t do stuff like that, I know she’s not an actress. She merely wants his money; she doesn’t love him.Rumors of their divorce became viral in 2025. The pair, however, spoke to the media during Ganesh Chaturthi festivities at their house and denied the rumors.

In response to falling in love with Vivian Richards, Neena Gupta



Mumbai: Neena Gupta has discussed her relationship with Vivian Richards, a cricketer player from the West Indies, once more. She recently talked about why they chose not to get married in spite of having a kid named Masaba Gupta.On Shubhankar Mishra’s podcast, Neena Gupta was asked if she and Vivian Richards were in love. The actress responded, “Go ask him.” They’re all scared to ask him. Why do you all only

ask me? We were in love, I believe. The time we had together was fantastic, even though it was brief. ”It wasn’t practical,” Neena Gupta explained when asked why they never got married. He would have had to give up his career and travel to India, or I would have had to quit my job and travel to the West Indies; neither of these options was feasible.”However, I was blinded by love at the moment. Who pays attention to others in such a situation? Who pauses to consider their choices? Do people pay attention to their parents? I made the choice to become a parent. Neena Gupta recounted, “I asked him

(Vivian) if he was okay with me giving birth to his child, and he said yes.” She went on to say that Vivian Richards never hesitated to publicly identify Masaba as his daughter. She added that raising a child by yourself is difficult and detrimental to the child. Many people have talked about Neena Gupta’s personal life in relation to her opinions on women’s independence. In November 1989, she gave birth to her unwed daughter, Masaba. The actor has previously stated that even though her choice was successful, she would not suggest that others should make the same decision hastily.

Sanjay Dutt and Javed Akhtar Visit Salim Khan at Lilavati Hospital in Mumbai



Mumbai: Dr. Jalil Parkar oversaw the admission of Salman Khan’s father, the renowned screenwriter, to Mumbai’s Lilavati Hospital on Tuesday. The treating physician told the media that although he is stable, he is being closely watched.Javed Akhtar, Salim Khan’s longtime colleague and associate, and Sanjay Dutt, a family friend, paid him a visit at the hospital last night. Salim Khan’s grandchildren Nirvaan, Arhaan Khan, and Ayaan Agnihotri were also in attendance, along with Salman Khan, Alvira Khan,

Aayush Sharma, and Arbaaz Khan. With the family’s permission, more information regarding his health will be disclosed at approximately 11 a.m. today.In a press release yesterday, the hospital stated: “At 8:30 a.m., Mr. Salim Khan, the father of renowned Bollywood star Salman Khan and an icon in his own right, was admitted to Lilavati Hospital under Dr. Jalil Parkar in the intensive care unit. ”Dr. Sandeep Chopra, the family physician, took him to the emergency room. Mr. Salim Khan was moved to the first-floor intensive care unit after

emergency care was started. He was treated by a group of medical professionals, including neurosurgeon Dr. Nitin Dange, cardiologist Dr. Ajit Menon, neurosurgeon Dr. Vinay Chavan, and physician Dr. Bineet Ahluwalia.In accordance with the family’s desire, no additional information will be disclosed today. However, with the approval of the family members and with the highest confidentiality of the patient, we will address a press bulletin tomorrow at 11 a.m. He is stable, but his clinical status is being closely monitored. With their potent writing, Salim Khan and Javed Akhtar, the legendary combo Salim-Javed, transformed and transformed Hindi film in the 1970s. To mention a few, the pair worked together on popular movies like Sholay, Deewar, Trishul, Don, and Kaala Patthar.In the documentary series Angry Young Men (2024) on Amazon Prime Video, the two relived their creative collaboration, cultural influence, and lasting legacy in a poignant way.

At the LA premiere of The Bluff, Priyanka Chopra and Nick Jonas share a tender kiss on the red carpet

Mumbai: On the red carpet at the Los Angeles premiere of The Bluff, Priyanka Chopra and Nick Jonas made a passionate impression. When they arrived at the event, the couple gave each other a tender kiss, demonstrating their close relationship to both photographers and fans.In her role as Ercell’s curiass, Priyanka, who plays the lead in the movie, looked effortlessly stunning in a brown wrap skirt that struck a mix between style and action-ready sophistication. Nick supported his wife’s most recent endeavor by dressing in a brown shirt and fitted pants to match her look. The duo showed off their chemistry by smiling and holding hands while posing for several photos. Priyanka and Nick, who tied the



knot in 2018, are well-known for their public and social media

demonstrations of affection. Nick frequently attends Priyanka’s events and red carpet appearances, and they regularly celebrate each other’s accomplishments. Fans have praised their chemistry, pointing out how they manage prominent occupations while preserving a loving and caring relationship. On February 25, 2026, the fast-paced action thriller The Bluff will debut on Amazon Prime Video. The film, which was directed by Frank E. Flowers and co-written with Joe Ballarini, transports viewers to the Caribbean in the late 19th century. It centers on Priyanka Chopra’s character, Ercell Bloody Mary Bodden, a former pirate who has moved on from her violent past to live a peaceful life in the Cay-

man Islands with her family. She is forced to return

As the opponent creates “specific plans” against Abhishek Sharma, the Indian coach supports him



New Delhi: Suggestions that Pakistan’s tactics against Abhishek Sharma worked off in the previous game, when the attacking opener fell for a duck, were rejected by Sitanshu Kotak, the batting coach for India. His comments came after Mike Hesson, the head coach of Pakistan, discussed focused preparation for India’s two left-handed openers. However, Kotak downplayed that story, saying the ejection was just the consequence of a mistimed shot.

He emphasized that strategy alone cannot pre-script or engineer something. India’s X-factor for the T20 World Cup, Abhishek, hasn’t lived up to the initial expectations. Fitness difficulties, like as a stomach infection that required hospitalization and prevented him from playing in Namibia, have also interfered with his campaign. After being sent off for a

duck in the tournament’s opening round, he was unable to play in the following match due to sickness. Even though he made a comeback for the crucial match against Pakistan, it didn’t work out as he was sent off without scoring again, making it his second straight appearance without scoring. In response to reports that opposing tactics are aimed at the young opener, coach Kotak defended him by saying that teams publicly acknowledging efforts to stop Abhishek simply serves to emphasize his increasing influence and that this attention is a praise rather than a cause for fear. “To begin with, Abhishek deserves a lot of praise if teams are publicly stating that they have particular plans for him and are pleased when they release him. He must be doing exceptionally well for them to be that worried about him. He also comes

up with his own ideas, and we plan together. You can’t really plan that “he will get out at short mid-on” in this sport, in my opinion. It’s okay that he was out in the last game when the ball struck the top of the bat. At the press conference, Kotak stated, “It is a great sign for us and great credit to him for the way he is playing if teams are that worried about him.” He also emphasized Abhishek’s pre-illness performances, emphasizing that even short 30-run cameos can have a significant impact in T20 cricket.

He emphasized the club’s emphasis on team performance rather than focusing on individual players, stressing that consistency, a well-defined strategy, and the correct attitude are more important than sporadic dismissals. “Abhishek had scored runs in the previous games prior to becoming ill. It’s not like he hasn’t contributed; in T20 cricket, sometimes even 30 off 10 balls is crucial. To be honest, we concentrate on every player and batter. We don’t simply say, “He hasn’t scored,” about one player. It’s a high-risk game in T20s; one player will leave. The players will be under needless stress if we worry about that too much. “What matters to us is that he is in good form, has a clear plan, and has a clear mindset,” he continued.

Hindu families should have three children, according to RSS chairman Mohan Bhagwat

New Delhi, Feb 18: Mohan Bhagwat, the leader of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), urged Hindu families to have three or more children on Tuesday. The RSS chief said during a social harmony event that although there is “no threat,” Hindus should keep in mind the true meaning of marriage.

Bhagwat urged Hindu families to think about having at least three children, citing views that cultures with an average birth rate of less than three may eventually vanish. Bhagwat went on to say that newlyweds ought to be informed of this truth. In addition, the RSS chief stated that a marriage’s actual goal is to perpetuate creation rather than just satisfy individual needs. The head of the RSS also urged the unification and empowerment of Hindu community, stating that although there is no threat, caution is required. “Hindus must be empowered and brought together. We are not in danger, but we must exercise caution,” Bhagwat stated. Speaking at the Saraswati Shishu Mandir, Bhagwat urged that religious conversions based on pressure or incentive should be avoided and voiced concern about a “declining Hindu popula-



tion.” In addition, the head of the RSS demanded that infiltrators be “detected, deleted, and deported” after they had been recognized. The RSS president included “matrushakti” (women strength) as the cornerstone of the family in his call for unity and a rise in the Hindu population. He also said that women should not be viewed as weak and should be trained in self-defense. According to him, women are held in high regard in Indian culture, which prioritizes their nurturing traits over their outward looks.

Carlos Alcaraz Fights Through to the Second Round of the Qatar Open



New Delhi: After winning the Australian Open, Carlos Alcaraz triumphantly returned to action on Tuesday, defeating Arthur Rinderknech 6-4, 7-6 (7/5) in the opening round in Doha. Alcaraz defeated Rinderknech, ranked 30th, in two closely contested sets to become the youngest player to complete a career Grand Slam. “It was quite challenging. Arthur is a very risky player. Alcaraz remarked, “No-body wants to play against him in the first round.” “The level is satisfactory to me. I’m glad I made it through the challenging parts of the game. I’m glad I played excellent tennis while being composed and upbeat.

In round two, the world number one will take on

60th-ranked Valentin Royer, another Frenchman. After breaking in the fifth game, Alcaraz won the first set, but Rinderknech put up a fierce fight, forcing a tie-break in the second set with his first break points of the match against the top seed serving. After saving both, the Spaniard ripped a forehand down the line on match point to seal the win in the tie-break. Jan-nik Sinner, Alcaraz’s main opponent, is on the opposing side of the draw. Since Andrey Rublev grabbed the trophy in Madrid in May 2024, neither Alcaraz nor Sinner has won a tour-level title at an event that included both of them. Rublev easily defeated Dutchman Jesper De Jong 6-4, 6-3 to

secure his spot in the second round. If Alcaraz defeats Royer on Wednesday, he might advance to the round of eight, where he would face Karen Khachanov, one of three former champions in the draw. Alcaraz fell in the quarterfinals of his Qatar Open debut a year ago. In three sets, seventh seed Khachanov defeated Japanese fortunate loser Shintaro Mochizuki, and Stefanos Tsitsipas defeated Tunisian wild card Moez Echargui to set up a match-up with Daniil Medvedev, the 2023 champion. In his opening encounter, Jiri Lehecka, who eliminated Alcaraz from the competition the previous year, easily defeated American Jensen Brooksby in straight sets.

The SC rejects Gujarat’s attempt to recapture 108 hectares of Adani Ports grazing land

New Delhi, Feb 18: A Gujarat government order mandating the recovery of 108 hectares of gauchar (grazing) land granted to Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Ltd in Mundra was overturned by the Supreme Court, which ruled that the procedure was flawed due to a blatant disregard for natural justice. The state’s July 4, 2024 judgment restarting the land and the Gujarat High Court’s following directives to carry out that decision were determined to have been issued without giving the impacted allottee a chance to be heard, according to a bench of justices JK Maheshwari and Atul Chandurkar. The court ruled that the state’s decree from July 4, 2024, which violated natural justice principles, could be overturned and a new order might be issued. After court proceedings on January 27, the detailed order was made public last week. The Gujarat government was represented by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, while Adani Ports was represented by senior counsel Mukul Rohatgi. The dispute stems from a public interest lawsuit (PIL) that was launched in 2011 against the Gujarat High Court, contesting the sale and distribution of Gauchar land in Village Navinal, Mundra Taluka, Kutch area. The Gujarat Revenue Department’s June 27, 2005 judgment and the Collector’s July 15, 2005 order distributing roughly 231 acres of Gauchar property to private organizations involved in the Mundra Port

project were both challenged in the PIL. In light of Gujarat’s 18th Animal Survey, it also sought to return the area to the Navinal gram panchayat or provide alternative grazing pasture (2007-08).

In the Mundra Port and special economic zone area, additional requests included stopping development projects like dredging, filling creeks, and removing mangroves while awaiting environmental approvals. In 2014, the PIL was first dismissed by the high court, which issued orders for the demarcation of Gauchar land. However, the petition was reinstated after the state filed a recall application. The Gujarat government issued an order on July 4, 2024, resuming a total area of 108 hectares and 22 ares from Adani Ports while the case was still pending. According to the Supreme Court, this resumption was allegedly made in response to oral instructions given during the high court proceedings. In its contested ruling, the high court ordered that the resuming procedure be conducted in accordance with the state’s July 4, 2024 directive. However, the Supreme Court determined that the appellant corporation was not given a hearing chance during the state government’s decision-making process or during the high court’s directives. The bench noted that the state had not given the appellant a hearing while issuing the resumption order, and that the appellant had also not



been given a fair chance before the high court made consequential orders. The bench added that the high court had successfully ordered the state’s resuming decision to be implemented, but it had not decided the arguments made in the PIL on their merits. The Supreme Court quashed the July 4, 2024 resumption order after a prolonged appeal process of over 18 months, allowing the state government to issue a new decision following due process. The court mandated that parties exchange objections within six weeks and urged a prompt resolution. It also disposed of the 2011 PIL from the Gujarat High Court, stating that stakeholders could seek legal remedies post the new order by the state. Adani challenged the government’s land reclamation, arguing the prior high court order was illegal due to violations of natural justice, highlighting its substantial investments and rights accrued over 20 years.

After leaving the group stage of the T20 World Cup, Australia Great continues its unrestrained tirade



New Delhi: A World Cup without Australia. Yes, starting with the T20 World Cup 2026 Super 8 stage, that will be the new normal. Australia was left in ruins after Zimbabwe and Sri Lanka advanced as the second team from Group B. The 2021 winners were forced to the limit after defeating Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe. Then, a postponed

match between Zimbabwe and Ireland guaranteed the elimination of the Mitchell Marsh-led team. Ian Healy, the great of Australia, was incensed at the outcome. “Well, let’s try to analyze this. The Australians most likely bumbled out in the early stages of a World Cup. Similar to England cricket in the run-up to the Ashes, we were tricked. If it

was ever criticized, there was defiance. When choosing a power team to play in the delicate, specialized conditions of India and Sri Lanka, there was a denial that we would be mistaken. And there was complete assurance that we would be correct,” Healy remarked. “Come on, Australia. In order to fully focus on this event, our captain chose to retire after Bumrah and complete his Shield play in December. The squad that had been growing at every opportunity thrilled him.

Even though they had been on international tours, we lost our top batsman and two bowlers in our likely final game in favor of an all-rounder, a bowler, and the captain himself.

This was done in order to extend our batting order. Healy also expressed frustration with Australia’s

choice. Really, Cooper Connolly? How much longer? Our batting order will be determined by it. For six games, he has failed to reach double figures. It doesn’t make sense, therefore. It left us with a team that is entirely composed of finishers—no starts. In Sri Lanka, they are unable to begin. Healy remarked, “We just discussed Cameron Green at three, Tim David at four, Josh Inglis at five, having been opener and seven. They’re squandering his excellent shape while bouncing him around. The team is simply out of balance. Are you going to play that game? A year ago, they made a mistake in their selection process by putting power ahead of batsmanship, confidence, and tenacity. They then forgot form and what might have happened,” he continued.

Galgotias University was ordered to leave the AI Summit following a dispute over a Chinese robodog

New Delhi, Feb 18: According to sources, Galgotias University has been asked to leave the AI Impact Summit expo area in New Delhi. This comes after a video from the event went viral, exposing the Greater Noida institution’s representatives posing as the university’s Centre of Excellence and showcasing a Chinese-made robotic dog. After Galgotias University unveiled a robotic dog named “Orion” at the AI Summit expo, observers alleged that it was actually a Chinese-made Unitree Go2 instead of an indigenous design, sparking a controversy. In the video, university professor Neha Singh is heard stating that the robot dog, named Orion, was created by Galgotias University’s Center of Excellence. She added that the device can be used for monitoring and surveillance purposes and that it can roam freely across the school. A number of viewers quickly asserted that the robot dog was, in fact, purchased from the Chinese robotics company Unitree. Galgotias University issued an explanation on social media following the internet criticism, clarifying that it never made any claims to have produced the robot dog. According to the



university’s statement, “Galgotias has not built this robodog, nor have we claimed to do so.” “We are creating the brains that will soon develop, design, and produce these technologies in India.” The “robodogs” from Unitree Robotics are a line of sophisticated four-legged robots designed to walk and move like actual animals while carrying out a variety of activities, such as navigating obstacles, inspecting construction sites, and even providing entertainment. Chinese robotics company Unitree is well-known for manufacturing these devices more affordably and making them more accessible than many of its competitors, including Boston Dynamics’ Spot.

When asked why he killed his girlfriend, an Indore guy smiles

New Delhi, Feb 18: When questioned about his motivations, the accused, Piyush Dhamnotia, displayed no remorse days after killing his 24-year-old girlfriend and then violating her body. Instead, he told India with a smile on his face. Today: “Set all things aside. The inevitable has occurred. What will you do if you find out? When questioned further, he gave a few icy looks before stating that he will tell everyone when the time was right. He was then driven away in a police jeep from outside an Indore local police station. Piyush appeared utterly unrepentant throughout. When the victim’s decaying, nude body was discovered in a rented room in the Dwarkapuri neighborhood of Indore on February 13, the crime was made public. A day later, the accused was taken into custody. After police responded to a complaint from neighbors about an unpleasant odor, the finding was found. Officers discovered the woman with evident rope marks around her neck as they busted down the door. The woman’s wish to be married was said to be the main cause of the frequent arguments between the two people, who apparently knew one another from their time as students. Police investigations revealed that the two parties often argued over marriage. To settle their issues, the accused reportedly took the victim to his leased apartment on February 10. According to the police, the two had sex, but they then got into a fight about marriage. The woman died as a result of this argument turning violent. The accused reportedly felt uneasy whenever his girlfriend interacted with other males, according to information obtained by the authorities.

The democratic system is incompatible with nepotism and self-aggrandizement

New Delhi, Feb 18: New Noting that self-aggrandizement and nepotism are incompatible with a democratic system, the Supreme Court has revoked a Haryana government housing society’s decision to give two apartments to a member of the governing body and his subordinate. A Punjab and Haryana High Court ruling that

Brevis, bowlers dominate UAE as South Africa seal unbeaten group stage in T20 World Cup

New Delhi: Dewald Brevis warmed up nicely with some monstrous sixes as South Africa hardly broke sweat during a walk-in-the-park six-wicket victory over United Arab Emirates in their final group league fixture of the T20 World Cup here on Wednesday. Chasing a target of 123, the Proteas romped home in 13.1 overs with Aiden Markram smashing 28 off 11 balls to set the stage for young Brevis who also helped himself to a 36 off 25 balls. Ryan Rickleton hit some lusty sixes to get 30 off 16 balls in an all-round effort. With the big Super Eights match against India coming up on Sunday, South Africa needed Brevis to fire, and he did have a good session out there in the middle. The pull off a bouncer sent down by wrong-footed left-arm seamer Muhammad Jawadullah was a treat for the eyes.

Brevis quickly went onto the back-foot and pulled it from above eyeline into the top tier of the square leg stand. When left-arm spinner Haider Ali tossed one outside the off-stump, Brevis thumped it over extra cover into the Hill B of the Feroz Shah Kotla stands. The two shots were indicators that Brevis was in prime form. He then picked up a slower one from Mohammed Arfan to dispatch it into the cow corner as South Africa finished proceedings



In a jiffy. Earlier, young Alishan Sharafu led a charmed life with double repleves but Anrich Nortje, playing his first match of the tournament, bowled quick and straight to restrict UAE to 122 for 6 in stipulated 20 overs. With Lungi Ngidi and Marco Jansen rested before the India game in Ahmedabad on Sunday, Nortje (2/28 in 4 overs) and

Corbin Bosch (3/12 in 4 overs) bowled Short and quick consistently as the UAE batting unit never really looked in control of the situation. While Sharafu managed a 38-ball 45 with five fours and a six, he was lucky due to the ‘butter-fingered’ Proteas fielders, who dropped two catches. With conditions overcast and floodlights being put on,

Aiden Markram was spot on in opting To bowl and unleash his pace battery on the minnows by making use of the underlying moisture. Although skipper Muhammad Waseem (22 off 12 balls) and Aryansh Sharma moved a bit from the line of quick deliveries and got a few boundaries in the process using the pace, it was left-arm spinner through.

Shooters’ strong Asian Championship return marks step in right direction

Chennai: World Championships, World Cups, Asian Championships or domestic competitions, Indian shooters consistently aim for excellence. The hunger and desire to improve constantly has helped them break numerous barriers in recent years. The sizes of the aforementioned competitions might differ, but the Indians continue to set the bar high.

The recent Asian Championship (rifle and pistol), which was conducted at New Delhi, was a case in point. The season is still raw and there are bigger fishes to fry for the shooting bunch but they did what was expected of them by winning medals in abundance. Powderhouses China gave the event a miss. And so did Iran (reportedly due to visa complications) but Indian, using home advantage to their advantage, shooters ended up being regular podium visitors. With five gold, five silver and six bronze, Indians, led by the likes of Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar, Esha Singh and Elavenil



Valarivan, to name a few, medalled in All the Olympic-discipline events during the continental meet that was held from February 2 to 14. The likes of Elavenil, Esha have evolved to be big-hitters in the sport over the years and they were yet again cornered themselves in glory by capturing gold medals in their respective categories at the Dr Karni Singh Shooting Range.

The fact that more-acclaimed events like the Asian Games and World Championships are scheduled to be held later this year has given the shooters the push to attain good scores. As always, it was a highly important outing for

Shooters who were competing in the Olympic disciplines. Their performance matters, it adds to their rankings, somewhere or the other, their performance could come useful while considering Asian Games squad,” Manoj Kumar, India rifle high performance coach, said. Aishwary, Niraj Kumar and Akhil Sheoran had led the country to podium clean sweep in the men’s 50m rifle 3 positions. That was one of the standout performances. Moreover, the trio were shooting in a new format for the first time at the international level. With all that in mind, the shooters had prepared and entered the event.

Vinicius Jr. racism row erupts in Lisbon during Real Madrid versus Benfica Champions League clash



New Delhi: Vinicius Jr. is known to be a player who always steps up for Real Madrid during big occasions, as we have seen over the years. During Real Madrid’s knockout playoff match against Benfica, the Brazilian provided a moment of magic, scoring a beautiful goal that proved to be the difference as Los Blancos secured a 1-0 win. However, in Lisbon on Tuesday, February 18, he found himself in the middle of controversy, claiming he was racially abused right after he scored the goal.

Vinicius accused Benfica’s Gianluca Prestianni of racially abusing him right after getting the winner in the 50th minute, forcing the Brazilian to go to the referee to complain. The game was halted for 10 minutes as French referee Francois Letexier activated UEFA’s

Racism protocol. Vinicius was seen telling the official that he was called ‘mono’, the Spanish word for monkey by Prestianni. A video clip right after the goal shows the Benfica player covering his face while talking to the Real Madrid star, who quickly went to tell the referee. Vinicius took to social media to respond to the matter on his Instagram story, calling Prestianni a coward for covering his mouth while talking to him and racially abusing him. This isn’t the first time the Brazilian forward has faced racial abuse, after incidents in Valencia and during the Madrid derby with Atltico Madrid fans being convicted. Racists are, above all, cowards,” Vinicius wrote on Instagram, referencing Prestianni covering His mouth with his shirt. “They need

to put their shirts over their mouths to show how weak they are.” But they have, at their side, the protection of others who, theoretically, are obligated to punish. Nothing that happened today should be tolerated in my life or my family’s.” I don’t like to speak out in situations like this but it’s necessary.” The Benfica player pleaded his innocence and said that it was all down to a misunderstanding. I want to make it clear that at no point did I direct racist insults at Vincius Jnior. There was a misunderstanding regarding words he thinks he heard,” he wrote.Benfica themselves stepped in to make a case for Prestianni, by sharing a video clip showing that the distance between the players was too big for the Real Madrid players to hear clearly. During the whole controversy, Benfica manager Jose Mourinho got himself sent off and landed in hot water for making comments that many felt were justifying Prestianni. The Portuguese tactician said that such incidents only happens in matches where the Brazilian is involved in.

“There is something wrong because it happens in every stadium. A stadium where Vinicius plays something happens, always,” said Mourinho. Clarence Seedorf slammed Mourinho for the comment, saying it was a mistake from him to justify his player at the Moment.

Clinical West Indies eye final tune-up before Super Eights, while Italy chase upset in farewell clash

West Indies face Zimbabwe, South Africa, India clash

Kolkata: Two-time champions West Indies will look to fine-tune their combination and deliver yet another clinical performance when they take on spirited debutants Italy in their final Group C match of the T20 World Cup, here on Thursday. Though the Caribbean side has slumped since its second and last T20 World Cup triumph at this very venue a decade ago, it is beginning to peak at the right time in this edition of the global showpiece. As the business end approaches, the Darren Sammy-coached outfit appears to be finding rhythm for a demanding Super Eights schedule. West Indies will face Zimbabwe in Mumbai on February 23, South Africa in Ahmedabad on February 26, before returning here for a marquee clash against co-hosts and title favourites India on March 1.

With that decisive fixture also at Eden Gardens, the Caribbean side would be keen to stamp authority and



build momentum at a venue that has historically been kind to it. Skipper Shai Hope has rediscovered touch at the top just in time. After modest returns of 0 against England, and 19 versus Scotland, the opener responded with a fluent 44-ball 61 not out to steer a nine-wicket chase against Nepal in their previous outing. Shimron Hetmyer has provided solidity and power in the middle-order and struck a 64 in their tournament-opener against Scotland at this venue. He followed it up with an unbeaten 46 against Nepal, scoring at brisk strike rates and lending

stability to the innings.Sherfane Rutherford has flourished in the finisher’s role as the explosive left-hander struck at a strike rate of 200 in his last appearance here and produced a stunning 42-ball 76 not out to power West Indies to 196/6 against England.

He will once again look to impose himself at the death. Among the bowlers, Matthew Forde has been particularly impressive, maintaining a superb economy rate across two matches and providing control in the middle overs, alongside Roston Chase and Gudakesh

Motie. Already out from the competition, for Italy, the clash presents an opportunity to exit with pride. More renowned for their football exploits, the World Cup debutants have nevertheless enjoyed a memorable campaign, including a commanding 10-wicket win over Nepal which was their maiden victory at this level.

They will be playing their third match at Eden Gardens and, with growing familiarity of the conditions, will aim to produce an upset even if only for the record books. The Mosca brothers have been instrumental at the top. Younger sibling Justin returned to form with an unbeaten 60 against Nepal and followed it with a brisk 43 against England. Elder brother Anthony struck 62 not out in the Nepal fixture and their 124-run opening stand became the highest partnership by brothers in T20 World Cup history. two fifties in three matches, while Harry Manenti has led The side admirably.

Architect Pickleball Tournament 2026 ends with thrilling high-voltage final showdown in Mumbai

Mumbai: The Architect Pickleball Tournament 2026, supported by the Indian Institute of Interior Designers (IIID), Mumbai Regional Chapter, concluded with an action-packed final, bringing together over 150 architects and interior designers from across Mumbai to celebrate fitness, teamwork, and community spirit, as per a release. Following weeks of practice sessions held at multiple venues across the city and a pre-event gala dinner at Sofitel, Mumbai, the tournament advanced through league and knockout stages to a closely contested final. Team Nexion clinched the championship title, while Team Steelx finished as runners-up, marking a strong conclusion to Season 2 of the APB Tour. Winning captain ID. Soniya Potdarr described the tournament as a refreshing opportunity to engage with the larger design fraternity in a relaxed yet competitive environment.

The initiative’s core objective of strengthening professional bonds through sport was underscored by Ar. Milind Pai, Hon. Secretary, IIID



Mumbai Regional Chapter, who noted that the tournament successfully brought the fraternity toGether beyond work, promoting health, camaraderie, and meaningful engagement. Captains including Ar. Sandeep Shikre (Steelx), Ar. Ahmed Shaikh (Comlux), Ar. Vipul Tapke (Changi Lights), Ar. Reza Kabul (Heritage Marble), and Ar. Qutub Mandviwala (The Select) echoed this sentiment, highlighting the spirit of teamwork, resilience, and fellowship that defined the event both on and off the court. The tournament was powered by Asian Paints

Beautiful Homes Invogue as Title Sponsor, with sponsor partners Heritage Marble, Comlux, The Select, Steelx, ARC ONE, Nexion, and Changi Lights, each leading a team through the competition. Manish Shah, MD, Asian Paints Beautiful Homes Invogue, highlighted the importance of building stronger connections within the design community through wellness and collaboration, while Rahool Jindal, MD, Heritage Marble, described the APB Tour as a refreshing blend of sport and professional bonding. Nitin Agarwal, MD, Com-

lux, and Pratik Agarwal, MD, The Select, emphasised the tournament’s energetic, collaborative spirit, and Mayur Jain, CEO, Steelx, noted its success in creating meaningful, experience-led engagement. Rashmi Anand, Director, ARC ONE, and Gaurav Khandelwal, AVP, Nexion, praised the discipline, structure, and relevance of the initiative, while Kirti Patel, Director, Changi Lights, summed it up as a platform that fostered lasting connections both on and off the court. Executed by Team IIGNITE Inc., led by Gauri Verma, the Architect Pickleball Tournament continues to grow as a distinctive movement integrating fitness, networking, and community building within the architecture and interior design profession. With the successful conclusion of Season 2, the APB Tour is poised to return with larger participation and deeper industry engagement. The Architect Pickleball Tournament 2026 concluded in Mumbai with a thrilling final that showcased both sporting gagement.

Indian women’s football team to play friendlies against Perth RedStar FC and Perth Azzurri soon

New Delhi: The Indian senior women’s football team will play two friendly matches against Australian club sides Perth RedStar FC and Perth Azzurri on February 19 and 23, 2026, respectively, in Perth, Australia. After wrapping up their training camp in Turkey, the Blue Tigresses arrived in Western Australia on February 11 to continue their preparations for next month’s AFC Women’s Asian Cup Australia 2026, as per an AIFF release.

The first match against Perth RedStar FC will be played at Dalmatinac Park at 14:30 IST. The second match against Perth Azzurri will take place at Macedonia Park at 16:00 IST. Both games will be played behind closed doors. India had earlier played six friendly games in Turkey against club sides from Ukraine, Russia, Switzerland, Germany and Romania, winning three, drawing one, and losing two. The Indian women’s team suffered a 0-1 defeat at the hands of FK Csikszereda Miercurea Ciuc at the Fanatic Tour Serik Sport Centre in Antalya in their most recent friendly. The Romanian club scored in the 12th minute of the match. Prior to the FK Csikszereda Miercurea Ciuc contest, the Blue Tigresses beat Russian side Zvezda-2005 Perm 2-0 at the S&B Sport Football Complex in Serik, Antalya.

In the match, Anju Tamang scored the early goal in the ninth minute, before Lynda Kom Serto netted late on in the

